

# Inspection report for Four Villages Children's Centre at Longcross

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<b>Local authority</b>	Bristol City Council
<b>Inspection number</b>	383758
<b>Inspection dates</b>	31 May–1 June 2012
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Four Villages Children's Centre Longcross EY437062

The inspection of this Sure Start children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

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## Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

An inspection of the co-located/partner primary school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre leader, other staff, and health and outreach professionals, representatives of linked bodies, parents, and representatives of the local authority. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Four Villages Children's Centre at Longcross is a phase two centre which was established in April 2009 in a building a few minutes from the present location. At that time, the centre was known as Freshways. In September 2011, the centre became part of a cluster along with Sea Mills Children's Centre and Avonmouth Children's Centre, all of which are managed by the same manager.

The centre provides the full core purpose, including health, family support, education and childcare. Some activities are held at the other centres in the cluster. There is nursery provision in the centre for two- and three-year-olds as well as crèche facilities. This nursery provision was inspected by Ofsted in April 2012 and the report can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The centre is directly managed by Bristol City Council. The advisory board, which acts as the advisory board for all three centres in the cluster, has a monitoring and guidance function.

The reach area of the centre is predominantly White British though, over the past few years, the area has seen a substantial influx of Polish citizens. There are a few Travellers but they are transient now that a local authority site for permanent residence is no longer used. There are also small numbers from other ethnic groups.

Almost all housing is social. Unemployment is high, with 43% of children living in households dependent on workless benefits. Children’s ability levels on entry to early years provision are below those expected for their age.

## Inspection judgements

**Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

### Overall effectiveness

**The effectiveness of the children’s centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for families**

**3**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

**The centre’s capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management**

**3**

## Main findings

The Four Villages Children’s Centre at Longcross is a satisfactory centre. The centre’s ability to reach the communities it serves is satisfactory but growing. Currently, it serves 55% of local families who have children under five. For the people with whom the centre comes into contact, including its target groups, the help that is given is good and often very good. Difficult problems are resolved through detailed sensitive help from staff at the centre and there is good multi-agency working. The nursery in the centre has recently been inspected by Ofsted and received a good report, with some aspects of its work judged to be outstanding.

The local authority has recently developed an agenda to encourage all centres, including Longcross, to be more effective. Alongside this it has produced high quality statistics, which indicate, for example, the need to improve immunisation rates, obesity levels, indicators of emotional health, outcomes for children in poverty and sustained breastfeeding. The centre is beginning to use both agenda and statistics more effectively to improve its development planning. The current development plan is satisfactory, but the new draft plan, still in development, is not precise enough in identifying or prioritising the target groups or the strategies it will adopt to tackle the issues the groups face.

The local authority has correctly identified the centre’s strengths and weaknesses and has begun to address them. Extending the centre’s reach is identified as a key area for improvement. The establishment of the cluster has already brought good

results, in particular by making provision available to more families. However, because strategies for improvement are still being identified and developed, the capacity to improve is satisfactory.

The advisory board is good at what it already does and is beginning to extend its role to monitor how well the centre is succeeding, using national criteria. There are satisfactory opportunities for parents to participate in governance. They have good opportunities to comment on the quality of the service they receive and their comments influence provision. However, their participation in the parents' forum and advisory board is still developing.

## What does the centre need to do to improve further?

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Given its governance role, the local authority, supported by the advisory board, should work with the centre's management to take full account of statistics and sharpen the centre's draft development plan so that:
  - it clearly identifies and prioritises specific target groups
  - it defines appropriate strategies to engage more families in the target groups by addressing their needs more effectively.
  
- Increase opportunities for parents to participate more fully in the governance of the centre.

## How good are outcomes for families?

<b>3</b>
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Overall, outcomes are satisfactory. Outcomes are mostly good for families and target groups who are already engaged with the centre. However, its limited reach means that others in the area are not benefiting sufficiently from its services.

For those in contact with the centre, there are often good outcomes in all aspects of health, education and personal development. For example, families with a history of abuse are helped with emotional, financial, housing and other problems. Case workers support families' attendance at sessions in the centre to provide knowledge and experience as well as opportunities to discuss problems or concerns.

Vulnerable families are helped through successful inter-agency cooperation in the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) team. Statistics for the area which includes Longcross indicate that 95% of adults expressed satisfaction with the help they had been given and only 3% of families required further support after one year. The support given to children subject to child protection plans is equally successful. Staff have a very good understanding of problems and are skilled at adopting a multi-agency approach to addressing them. One case involved a health visitor, social worker, a paediatrician, portage and a physiotherapist. The outcome was that a single parent better understood their child's disability and was able to contribute positively with greater patience and less frustration.

The recent separate Ofsted inspection of the Nursery provision found that children made good progress in their learning. Four of the outcomes for children were judged to be good and two were outstanding. Children’s performance at the end of Reception in three of the four local schools has improved over the last three years and so have statistics on local immunisation, the emotional health of children and substance misuse. Breastfeeding rates beyond eight weeks, however, remain relatively low.

Polish families feel well supported, for example through a recent special event to celebrate Polish culture and good efforts to welcome adults and children to sessions in the centre. Individualised support takes into account cultural issues and families are also supported with language issues by helping them find suitable language courses.

In contrast, although adults using the centre give opinions on the help they receive, they have limited voice in the governance of the centre. Because there is only one parents’ forum and one advisory board for the cluster as a whole, the effect is to limit the contribution that parents from Longcross can make. This contrasts with the nursery, where children’s ability to make a positive contribution was judged by Ofsted to be outstanding.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for families*

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment</b>	<b>3</b>

## How good is the provision?

<b>3</b>
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The centre provides a satisfactory range of services to meet the identified needs of its target groups and others in its reach area. The range of services is satisfactory overall because of the limits to the centre's penetration into the reach area.

Examples of successful provision for those who use the centre include health workers encouraging new mothers to sustain breastfeeding and illustrating the dangers of smoking. There are also sessions at the centre devoted to issues such as weaning, sleeping and managing children's behaviour. Tackling obesity is a strong theme in almost all sessions such as the 'Parents' Group' and in the play-and-stay 'Peep Group'. Evaluations completed by families indicate greater awareness of the importance of good nutrition. As a precursor to the use of the CAF, the centre is providing significant support to 27 vulnerable families and places strong emphasis on improving parenting skills and relationships between partners. The latter provision is made in response to the increasing domestic violence in the area. It is a good example of the care, guidance and support provided, albeit for a relatively small group.

Education for families to address the high hospitalisation rates in the area is a strong theme in outreach work and a small amount of safe equipment such as kettles and stair gates is also provided through the help of local charities. This outreach work is still developing. Nursery staff are aware of children's achievement by the end of Reception Year in the reach area and the need to improve even more. As a result, there is a strong focus on developing children's early writing and language skills.

The family support team is making inroads into helping the high workless population with housing, debt and nutrition, though the centre is not yet able to demonstrate fully the impact of this work. There are chances to volunteer and help is provided to find work, sometimes directly but more often through a local employment charity. Adults are helped to find a place in a college, for example to learn a trade or to improve their language skills. 'Without the help of staff in the centre, I would be lost' is a commonplace comment. Some courses run by the centre, such as the popular mathematics course, effectively build parents' confidence as well as providing useful qualifications and skills.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</b>

## How effective are the leadership and management?

**3**

The centre is governed directly by the local authority. The authority now has a challenging five-part agenda for children's centres, which recognises that they must do more to address the deep-seated issues facing the community. The introduction of 'locality working', involving Longcross nine months ago, is part of this agenda but this is only a beginning and the full content of the agenda has yet to be applied in the cluster. However, the agenda provides a good basis for the future development of the centre.

Day-to-day management of the centre is good. Roles and responsibilities are clear and there is an effective new appraisal system. The advisory board operates effectively within important yet relatively limited areas, for example property and finance. It acts as the advisory board for all the centres in the cluster. It is beginning to consider how best to monitor the performance of Longcross using national criteria.

In some respects, the centre managers and staff evaluate the centre's effectiveness well. Families are regularly asked what they think of courses and staff take these considerations into account. The views of professionals working in the community are also noted and this influences provision. But the evaluation does not go far enough, as managers do not make best use of performance data. In part, this is because much of the local authority's data has only recently become available in its present easy-to-use form. As a result, the new draft development plan is not yet at a stage where it adequately reflects the information on present and future target groups. Current development planning, however, is satisfactory, leading to the present satisfactory outcomes, use of resources and satisfactory value for money.

Equality is promoted satisfactorily. Useful effort has gone into supporting Polish families, and all families, whatever their background, are treated equally. This includes families from the small minority ethnic population. Disabled children and their families, though few in number, are well provided for, with referrals to appropriate professionals to support their needs.

Families which have contact with the centre benefit from the good working relationships that it has with key agencies, thus ensuring a coherent approach to safeguarding the vulnerable. In the centre, families are well protected. There is a record that all staff have been security checked. The site is safe. Risk assessments are undertaken regularly and the results recorded. All staff have undertaken child protection training to the appropriate level.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets</b>	<b>3</b>



<b>which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision</b>	<b>3</b>

## **Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection**

The Ofsted report on the centre's nursery. It was inspected on 19 April 2012.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Four Villages Children's Centre at Longcross on 31 May and 1 June 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Although the centre is judged to be satisfactory overall, those of you who are currently using the centre receive help and support that is good, and often very good. Your problems are resolved through detailed sensitive support from staff at the centre, whom you trust. They work well to ensure that you get help from a wide range of people. We also noted that the nursery in the centre has recently been inspected by Ofsted. It was found to be good with some outstanding aspects.

We were particularly pleased with the help that mothers receive in supporting new babies, for example with weaning and helping children behave well. We were encouraged to see how aware many of you are about issues such as obesity and how to prevent it through healthy eating. We were also pleased with the way in

which you all appear to get on well with each other, including welcoming families coming from outside Britain.

But we have also identified a number of areas requiring improvement. The centre is not yet reaching and engaging enough families in the local area. The local authority has produced high quality statistics for the centre, setting out the challenges such as helping families with aspects of health and economic wellbeing. The centre already addresses these issues to a satisfactory extent but it needs to do better, given the scale of problems in the community. We would like staff to find ways of increasing the number of people who use and benefit from the centre and its services. We would also like the local authority and staff to continue to identify particular groups in the community who need more support and target their resources carefully to meet their specific needs.

The local authority recognises the weaknesses that the inspection has identified and has appropriate plans for improvement which clearly focus on identifying and prioritising people's needs. You will know that Longcross centre is now part of a group of centres, which includes Avonmouth and Sea Mills. This is already enabling a better use of shared resources, which is important in the present economic climate.

One final issue that you need to think about is the way you participate in running and developing the centre. We have asked the local authority and the centre's managers to find ways of helping you to do this more effectively.

We would like to thank those of you who took time to speak to us. We have carefully considered your views and we have reflected your positive conclusions in this report.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).