

# Inspection report for Bankwood Children's Centre

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Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	383315
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Bankwood Children's Centre EY384090

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 registered early years/childcare provision was carried out immediately prior to the inspection of the centre under Section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre coordinator and centre manager, members of the staff team, members of the advisory board, representatives of the local authority, and statutory and voluntary organisations working in partnership with the centre. They also talked to children and parents.

Inspectors observed the centre's work and visited the designated day-care provision. They also looked at a range of relevant documentation, including evaluations, key policies and safeguarding procedures.

## Information about the centre

Bankwood Children's Centre covers the Heeley and Newfield Green areas of Sheffield. This large geographical area is made up of distinct communities, located along the length and breadth of the Gleadless Valley. Travel between these communities is difficult because of the hilly nature of the terrain and limited public transport links.

The centre's two-storey, purpose-built premises are sited adjacent to Bankwood Community Primary School. The centre has no formal governance or management links with the school as Sheffield City Council has direct responsibility for the governance of the centre. Operation of the centre is overseen by a children's centre coordinator, who also has responsibility for three neighbouring centres. This coordinator has been in post since January 2011, following a period of unsettled leadership.

The area has a diverse socio-economic mix. Of the 951 children aged under five in the area, almost a quarter live in areas which are in the 15% most disadvantaged nationally. A similar number of children live in the 70% least disadvantaged areas. Across the reach area, 30% of families are reliant on income support and other benefits and 40% of children under five live in families with a lone parent. The majority of the housing is social housing with a combination of maisonettes and high rise flats. There has been a recent increase in the numbers of refugees and asylum seekers moving into the area. Over a quarter of children accessing funded early education and childcare places come from minority ethnic backgrounds with 21 different languages used by children in the centre's nursery. When they start school, usually at three years of age, children's skills, knowledge and abilities vary considerably, but generally are below those expected for their age.

This phase two centre was designated in March 2007. Services delivered through the centre include health, adult education and advice to support employment, which are provided by a range of partners. Outreach and family support services are commissioned from a voluntary agency. The centre's on-site nursery, Bankwood Children's Centre, is registered for 82 children. The nursery was inspected immediately prior to the children's centre inspection. The report for the nursery inspection can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

## 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

Bankwood Children's Centre offers satisfactory support and services to improve outcomes for children and families in the reach area. Following a period of unsettled leadership, the

centre is now benefitting from having a stable team of well-focused, highly motivated and enthusiastic leaders, managers and staff.

Care, guidance and support are good as families increasingly see the centre as a place where they can access information and advice when they need it. Staff are committed to providing an inclusive, attractive and informative environment, which immediately makes users feel welcomed. Many parents highlighted how friendly and approachable staff are and described the support they received as a 'lifeline' when they were in need of help. One mother described the centre as being like 'part of a big family' and parents who said they did not speak much English appreciate 'lots of smiling from their new friends.' Provision overall is satisfactory as the centre has been slow to engage with families in the reach area and to target services for specific groups. Despite impressive recent improvements, the centre still does not reach the majority of families in the area.

Lack of user participation limits the impact of the centre on improving outcomes for children and families, which are satisfactory overall. The centre's approach to safeguarding is one of its strengths as it can demonstrate a real impact in helping to keep children and families safe. Staff have a good understanding of child protection procedures, they are well trained and liaise very effectively with other agencies as they are clear about their own professional boundaries. Good partnership working and effective systems for assessing families' needs through the multi-agency support team have a positive impact on outcomes for children, including children subject to a child protection plan. Warm and trusting relationships with users are fostered by the dedicated staff team which have increased parents' confidence to ask for additional help when needed. Staff routinely assess safety in the home on each visit and hospital admissions as a result of accidents are low compared to other areas of the city.

Appropriate opportunities are provided for children and parents to have fun playing and learning together. The quality of nursery provision at the centre is good. Health visitors report the positive impact of funded places for two-year-olds in widening their horizons and enhancing their development. From low starting points, there has been a consistent increase annually in the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development when they are assessed at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. A small number of parents, who accessed courses for personal development, develop an enthusiasm for learning and successfully progress to gain accredited qualifications. However, the number of courses is limited and take-up is generally low. Opportunities for users to contribute to the centre's work through involvement in decision making and volunteering are under-developed.

Leadership and management are increasingly strong. The coordinator maintains a good understanding of the needs of the families in the reach area and leaders demonstrate a clear vision for the centre. Centre staff show a sense of common purpose focused on the centre's current priorities. The recent reconfiguration of the advisory board, to support three children's centres, has increased participation of key partner agencies as it offers a time-efficient approach. However, the involvement of local community groups is less evident at this stage. Most partners have a sound understanding of their role, but some agencies do not fully appreciate the importance of their contribution in supporting the centre to achieve its targets. For example, some are just beginning to identify how their own priorities link

with those of the centre and the need for more detailed record keeping of outcomes for families who are signposted by centre staff.

The provision of more reliable and relevant data has enabled increasingly efficient monitoring of the centre's work by the local authority, resulting in the setting of more challenging, specific and measurable targets. This robust approach is not yet matched by the advisory board whose challenge in self-evaluation and development planning lacks rigour.

Leadership which is committed to improving outcomes for children and families, progressively productive partnerships and the provision of increasingly reliable data to inform development plans, indicate that the centre has satisfactory capacity to sustain its recent improvements.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve outcomes for more local children and families, including those from target groups by:
  - implementing additional strategies to increase engagement of children and families from the reach area in children's centre services
  - increasing take-up of learning opportunities and extending pathways to learning so more parents can gain accredited qualifications to support their future employment prospects
  - providing opportunities for parents to make a positive contribution to the centre's work through volunteering and involvement in decision making.
- Strengthen the role of the advisory board by:
  - ensuring that parents and agencies with local knowledge of the centre's reach area inform its work
  - raising awareness of how all partner agencies can contribute to the successful achievement of the centre's targets
  - increasing the rigour of its critical challenge in evaluating the centre's work and setting future priorities.

## **How good are outcomes for families?**

<b>3</b>
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Health outcomes for those using the centre are satisfactory, although some aspects are particularly strong. Take-up of universal services, such as attendance at antenatal appointments, is high and immunisation rates are above the national average. Mothers increasingly prefer to breastfeed their babies with 61% of babies still being breastfed at six to eight weeks, which is well above the national average. This change in local culture is due to the wide range of information and help available, including a dedicated breast-feeding worker who supports mothers pre- and post-birth. Baby massage sessions at the centre

enhance both parents' and children's well-being. Healthy snacks are provided at all centre activities, occasional oral hygiene sessions offer practical advice on how to clean teeth properly and children enjoy regular outdoor play. Work is being undertaken on improving health data to provide more detailed information for the centre about trends and national comparisons, but this has not yet been completed for all indicators. Current data indicate that the number of children who are obese and overweight at the age of five are low compared with the rest of the city but are not yet precise enough to evidence any recent improvements in young children's dental health.

Users feel safe and confident when visiting the centre as staff are thorough in assessing risks and minimising hazards. Talks on safety at play and learning sessions have increased parents' awareness of how to keep their children safe at home by fitting smoke alarms and using appropriate car seats. Children are developing a good sense of how to keep safe, for example, by asking for hats before going out in the sun and demonstrating a considered approach to risk taking when balancing unaided on narrow planks. Centre staff provide good individual care and support for families in times of crisis and promptly share any concerns with relevant agencies. Partners and staff intervene early to support families and, through effective use of Common Assessment Framework procedures, have helped to reduce the number of children deemed in need.

Children enjoy and achieve well in the nursery. For example, inquisitive learners had fun exploring whether water always flows down a slope, while others concentrated, unassisted, on addressing letters to their friends. 'Tiny Pops' and 'Early Days' sessions provide useful opportunities for younger children and parents to play and learn together. A range of carefully planned activities cover all areas of learning to help develop children's physical, social and communication skills, encouraging some parents to extend their child's learning at home. Although some children still enter school with under-developed communication skills, their personal, social and emotional skills are well developed, so they are 'ready to learn' and quickly progress. Consequently, the proportion of six-year-olds now reaching a good level of development is close to the national average.

Outcomes for adults' learning are less positive. Those who access courses offered through the centre achieve successfully and are keen to extend their learning, having raised aspirations for themselves and their children, but these are very few in number.

Children behave well and develop positive relationships with each other. Many are confident to engage adults in conversation. They take pride in their work and their environment, treating each other, staff and resources with respect. Users get on well together, including those from different cultures and backgrounds. Feedback on centre services indicates a high level of enjoyment and satisfaction and increasingly effective systems are being introduced to measure the impact of services on outcomes for children and their families, particularly those who receive individually tailored support.

Family support workers have a detailed knowledge of support available for families who need help with their finances or when seeking employment. Local agencies provide these services but little data are available about the outcomes for families signposted through the

centre. Case studies show that help given by centre workers in making successful applications for grants to purchase essential household items and donations of basic baby equipment and food hampers has a material impact on the lives of families.

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>2</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?

**3**

The centre has an increasingly accurate knowledge of the reach area through its developing work with local agencies and improved data so that it can identify its target groups and align services more closely to meet their needs. Although participation rates of families in the reach area are still low, good progress has been made in increasing user engagement. Last year the numbers of families recorded as participating in centre services and activities was successfully doubled. This continuous increase has been sustained effectively in the first quarter of the current year, with a noticeable increase in the proportion of minority ethnic families using the centre. As a result, the centre has been able to start assessing the needs of users for wider service delivery across the reach area more effectively.

Purposeful play and learning is promoted well for children attending the on-site nursery. The 'Imagination Library' successfully encourages parents and children to engage in activities, such as matching games, to promote communication skills. Effective early identification of children's needs by centre staff and health visitors ensures that all two-year-olds who require extra support are quickly offered a place in the nursery. Each child's development is meticulously tracked at regular intervals so that well-targeted, individual help is promptly provided. Consequently, all children maintain good progress, including those who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs. However, it is unclear how effective overall the provision is for two-year-olds, as only a small minority attend the nursery or other play and learning sessions offered by the centre and its partner agencies.



A few users have attended courses to enhance their parenting skills and report that their increased understanding of child development has helped them manage their children's behaviour more confidently. Successful completion of courses is rewarded with a certificate presented at a celebration event.

Care, guidance and support are good, particularly for some targeted groups. Pregnant teenagers are well supported in preparing for their parental responsibilities with a structured programme, covering essential topics such as safe sleeping, routines and safety in the home. Although Jobcentre Plus has limited direct input at the centre, current job vacancies are displayed weekly and some users signposted for appointments have successfully gained employment. Parents with disabled children are very appreciative of the centre's support in successfully helping them to access their entitlement to additional benefits.

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>2</b>

## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

**3**

Leaders and managers generally have a sound understanding of their responsibilities and accountability. The advisory board is evolving its role and acknowledges the need to ensure a balanced representation from professional partners, parents and local community groups. Under the stable leadership of the experienced senior team, the centre has improved markedly over the last year. Improved data have enabled the local authority to set challenging, measurable targets for user engagement which is helping to increase the involvement of specifically targeted groups.

Self-evaluation of the centre's current strengths and areas for development is broadly accurate. Managers have a realistic awareness of the over-arching priority to increase user engagement before they can assess the impact of the centre's work more precisely. The views of users who access centre services are regularly sought, listened to and used when planning future activities. The centre recognises that there is work to be done to include parents in more formal decision-making processes and to develop opportunities for volunteering.

Staff are well supported and their caseloads robustly supervised at regular individual and team meetings. Good opportunities exist for staff's continued professional development, especially in relation to wider safeguarding issues; awareness gained from this training is used effectively in identifying additional issues families may have, such as alcohol and

substance misuse. Comprehensive safeguarding policies and procedures are effectively understood and implemented by staff and partner agencies, including checks on children who no longer attend without reasons being given and ensuring that Criminal Records Bureau disclosures are obtained for all those working unsupervised in the centre.

Equality and diversity are promoted satisfactorily. The centre's environment, activities and resources are carefully designed to ensure the centre is accessible to all and promote respect for the rich cultural diversity within the area. Key documents, such as information to support those experiencing domestic violence, are available in multi-lingual versions and nursery managers proactively enlist the support of bi-lingual staff and users to ensure effective communication with all parents. However, the centre's work in promoting equality and narrowing the achievement gap cannot be fully effective while the majority of families from its targeted groups are not yet accessing the centre's services. As outcomes overall are also satisfactory, this results in the centre's value for money being satisfactory.

Strong partnership working is evident with most key partner agencies. The coordinator's effective strategic approach to partnership working has already ensured productive engagement with local groups whose work complements the centre's core purpose in improving outcomes for children and families. These emerging partnerships are not yet fully embedded but plans, such as those to include childminders in the centre's work on a regular basis, are developing well.

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 which secures improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>3</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>2</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**

Information from the inspection of Bankwood Children's Centre nursery and from the inspection of Bankwood Community Primary School was used to inform judgements, as both provisions were inspected by Ofsted immediately prior to this inspection.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected Bankwood Children's Centre on 04–05 July 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We were pleased to spend time at the centre looking at its work and talking to some of you, members of the centre staff team and other professionals who work with you.

We understand that the centre has had a large number of changes in its leaders. This has resulted in slow progress being made in getting to know children and families in the area and ensuring that they know about the centre and its services. This has made it difficult to assess the needs of families, although the centre coordinator has worked hard to develop partnerships with lots of agencies who also work with families in the area to understand better what services will make the most difference for you. We have asked the centre to find other ways of making sure that more families in the area are aware of and use the services offered by the centre. We have also asked that the centre ensures that these agencies know how to support the centre better in showing the difference it has made for you and your families.

The centre is successful in providing a friendly and welcoming place for all parents where you feel safe to share your concerns or seek help. Staff work effectively together and with a wide range of other agencies to find out about those of you who might be in difficulties. They act quickly to assess with you what will help you cope and make things better for you and your family. This helps to keep children safe and we saw good examples of how children are also learning about their own safety as they asked for hats before going out in the sun and were careful balancing on narrow planks. It was good to hear that a large number of you are now breastfeeding your babies, and that many of you manage to continue for at least several weeks with the help of the breast-feeding support worker.

Your children learn well and the majority reach a good level of development when they are assessed at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children who need additional help are quickly identified so that when they start school they are ready to learn. Although there

are some courses for adults on offer, very few of you attend. Those who do report positive outcomes in being able to manage children's behaviour better and some of you have successfully progressed to gain qualifications which you plan to use to develop your future career. We have asked the centre to make sure that it offers courses which you want to attend and to provide more learning opportunities for you to gain qualifications. The centre is good at asking your views on the services and activities you use. Staff use your suggestions when planning future activities. However, there are currently no opportunities for you to volunteer at the centre or to be involved in decision-making, so we have asked the centre to find ways of providing these opportunities for you.

The leadership of the centre is increasingly strong as managers now have sufficient information to see which groups need most help and are becoming more aware of the services which will help you most. The advisory board, which helps the managers to evaluate how well the centre is making a difference for you and supports future planning, has just extended its responsibility to cover three centres. We have asked the centre to make sure that those who have local knowledge, partners and parents are also involved in providing information to support the advisory board's work.

Thank you very much for your welcome and for taking the time to talk with inspectors. We thoroughly enjoyed meeting you and sharing your experiences. We wish you every success in the future.

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