

Inspection report for Claremont Children's Centre

Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	386960
Inspection dates	11–12 July 2012
Reporting inspector	Kathryn Townsley HMI

Centre leader	Alison Irvine
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Butterflies Early Years Group EY372550

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.

Report published: July 2012



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.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years' inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre's manager, staff, parents, and representatives from the local authority, the advisory board and partner organisations.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Claremont Children's Centre is directly managed through the centre manager by the local authority. Designated as a phase two children's centre in October 2007, the centre was fully operational from May 2008. Operating from a converted Victorian school, it serves around 1000 children and their families living in the Brownsover, Newbold and Benn areas of Rugby and some areas of Rugby Town West. The centre provides outreach services for families in need and works with a range of partners. A variety of activities for parents and children are provided at the centre and in a number of local centres including two local primary schools. Health visitor clinics operate at the centre and a community midwife will shortly be offering on-site antenatal care. Part-time early years provision is provided on site by Butterflies Early Years' Group, which was inspected in 2008.

Much of the centre's reach area encompasses localities which are in the 20% most deprived areas of the country. Approximately a quarter of children in the reach area live in households dependant on workless benefits. The level of children's skills when they enter early years provision is below average. Many families using the centre live in poor-quality, privately rented accommodation. Around 25% of the local population changes each year as the locality attracts many economic migrants before they move to other areas. In addition to well-established Asian heritage and African Caribbean communities, the locality is home to large numbers of Polish, Lithuanian and

Portuguese families. Eighteen different languages are spoken by families registered with the centre. Almost half of the children attending the early years group within the centre speak English as an additional language, the majority being Polish speaking.

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

2

Main findings

Although the overall effectiveness of the centre is currently satisfactory, there are a number of key strengths of the provision. In the 18 months since her appointment, the centre manager has made significant progress in developing the provision to meet all requirements of the core purpose of children’s centres. Development of the centre has been very successfully focused on providing good-quality services for parents as well as children. Although overall leadership and management are satisfactory, operational management is good. The quality of services for families and children are now high, but the impact of some of these is not yet showing in data used by the centre. The capacity to improve is good, and there are many examples of actions to improve the provision that have had positive impact on the lives of families. In the last 18 months, the range of services has expanded significantly to meet the wide range of needs identified in the community it serves. Although some outcomes are still below national averages, there is clear evidence to show significant improvement. Self-evaluation is focused on operational matters but it is sound and clearly demonstrates that the centre knows the strengths of provision and the areas that need further development.

Governance arrangements through the advisory board have developed well in recent months, and it now supports and monitors the work of the centre as does the local authority. However, neither hold the centre fully to account by the use of detailed, challenging targets in relation to specific aspects of the centre’s work, for example targets for improved outcomes for specific target groups.

Although data on the numbers of families in specific target groups are limited, the centre manager has an excellent knowledge of the local community, in part informed by long-serving staff who live in the community. This local knowledge and the data

that are available are used to plan services so that the provision meets the needs of most families in the reach area.

The centre provides a very welcoming inclusive environment for families, and the centre and staff are well regarded by all sections of the community. Children and their families receive a good range of relevant, high-quality services most of which are supported by very strong partnership working. Many parents who have recently moved to the area make their initial visit to the centre on the recommendation of a friend or neighbour who already uses the centre.

Despite delays in receiving live-birth notifications, excellent relationships with health visitors help to ensure early identification of families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Very effective partnerships have developed within the last 18 months with a wide range of professionals and these are starting to have an impact on outcomes for families. These ensure that families now receive outstanding support to help them improve their home circumstances, develop healthier lifestyles and better parenting skills. Many families report that the centre has been responsible for helping them to make major improvements in their lives.

Families engage well with the centre, and their views on services are actively sought. They evaluate activities they attend, but the results are not used to inform the detailed, but only recently implemented, quality impact measurement of programmes.

Data on performance against key indicators from the local authority are starting to be used by managers to analyse progress. However, these are presented against the different geographical areas of the reach area and do not yet include data on specific target groups so that staff are clear about the use and impact of services by specific groups of users, such as lone parents. Tracking of families and children is effective for some aspects of provision, for example children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and parents engaging in classes for English as an additional language, but not for all services and activities.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work with the local authority to develop the use of data to support:
 - more effective identification and engagement of specific target groups
 - measurement of the impact of services on specific groups of families.
- Work with the local authority and advisory board to set and monitor detailed and accurate targets based on a sound evaluation of the centre's performance.
- Work with the local authority and health partners to ensure that data on live births is received much earlier.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Outcomes are satisfactory overall and are showing signs of significant improvement, but it is too early to see the full impact of the work of the centre in some areas. Children and their families are benefiting from good-quality services run by well-qualified staff. Many staff are trained in special areas such as speech and language. Although the collection of data is improving, the centre lacks enough detailed local data to clearly measure the uptake or impact of services on different groups of target families. Well-documented case studies record examples of the excellent impact of family support work on improving healthy lifestyles for families.

The proportion of mothers sustaining breastfeeding is improving but still remains below the national average. The centre offers good support to mothers through a range of activities including innovative events in the community, such as 'Booby Tuesday', peer support groups and the National Childbirth Trust. Health visitors spend significant time in the centre and, along with other professionals, work closely with the centre to offer an interesting programme of services that engage parents and improve outcomes. A particular focus is on improving healthy lifestyles through sessions on diet and exercise, such as 'Toddler Nosh' and 'Little Laces'. Obesity levels for children in Reception Year in Rugby have reduced to below national and regional levels but appear to be higher in some of the centre's reach area. The centre does not yet have data on the proportion of children who achieve a healthy weight. The good range of activities aimed at particular outcomes, for example breastfeeding, have not always benefited from a coordinated oversight to track progression and ensure that maximum benefit is gained by all families who are engaging with them.

Although the centre is provided with data on all live births by the local health authority, these are sometimes not received for several weeks. Health visitors work closely with the centre and make early referrals of vulnerable families to ensure that staff do quickly identify issues and support families to improve many aspects of their lives. Case studies show the centre and health partners are effective in the early identification and assessment of children at risk. Support is quickly escalated when required, particularly where there are delays in intervention by external agencies. The centre works closely with the local refuge for victims of domestic violence and, along with a programme of learning about violence against women and its effects on children., has made a positive impact on the lives of such families.

The overall level of skills and abilities of children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has increased in recent years to slightly above the national average. The gap between the lowest-achieving children and others is narrowing slightly. Levels are lower in one ward where around one quarter of all local families moves each year and many of the families do not speak English as their first language. Staff are working hard to forge partnerships with these parents to identify and assess need and ensure that interventions, mostly focused on speech and language, raise the level of skills in the children. A new detailed system to track the progress of children through to school admission is linked to a key worker system to promote continuity of the support.

A number of parents have benefited from courses to improve their English language skills, and detailed tracking documents show the progression of some to further training. However, opportunities to engage in education or training courses have not yet been extended to all parents in the area. Many families in the reach area are in receipt of workless benefits or working tax credit, but the numbers taking advantage of support, such as a credit union and advice on benefits or additional day care for children to enable a return to work, have been low.

Children using the centre are well behaved and develop positive relationships with others. This is mirrored in parents, and the centre is exceptional in the close, harmonious relationships between parents from a large number of ethnic backgrounds. Contribution to the parents' forum is good and rapidly improving. There are many good examples of the influence parents have on provision from the centre. The centre benefits from the contribution of a number of volunteers, particularly in supporting parents who speak very little English. Many of the volunteers had very low self-esteem and confidence when they first came to Claremont but have benefited from services at the centre. Training and support for the volunteers is good.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	3
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	2
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	3

How good is the provision?

2

Almost 90% of families in the reach area are now registered with the centre and a very large majority of them are regularly using services. However, there are some pockets of the community served by the centre that are not yet using services on a regular basis. The centre does not yet have a fully accurate picture of the proportion of families from their specific target groups who are regular users.

Families benefit from attending well-planned, good-quality sessions such as 'Busy Bodies' and 'Toddler Time'. Centre staff and partners work closely to ensure these

meet the needs of all families, offering bespoke sessions where needed, for example the Child Development Centre's 'Little Apples' group. Drop-in sessions, such as the health visitors' 'Weigh and Stay' and the well-used toy library, are effective in attracting parents into the centre. Parents report significant improvements in their self-confidence and self-esteem, with one mother stating that before coming to the centre she had never left the house. Planning is highly responsive and meets the needs of target groups that are identified through feedback from sessions, for example 'Toddler Time' for parents with very young toddlers. Centre staff are now starting to plan a pathway through activities for families and track their engagement, but this is at an early stage. The number of men engaged in activities is increasing, both with the weekend 'Dads Group' and at other activities during the week.

Early Years Foundation Stage provision, including the on-site part-time provision, is good, as is that provided by most of the childminders with whom the centre works. Good links with the local adult education service and further education college provide access to education for some parents, particularly for those for whom English is an additional language. Many parents join in the informal sessions to improve their English at the centre and later progress to more formal education sessions. Some now help other parents who speak very little English to improve their skills and volunteer at the centre.

The outreach support from the centre is outstanding, especially in times of crisis. Help for parents with very poor self-confidence and for mothers with postnatal depression is particularly good. Parents with significant needs speak highly of the outstanding support they receive; for example, one parent said, 'The centre saved my life and made me realise what I can do for myself.' Many of the centre's activities, such as parenting programmes, and speech and language support, are provided individually at home if that is more appropriate to families' needs. Staff offer excellent advocacy for families with local landlords and other agencies, but also promote increasing personal autonomy to deal with issues themselves. Very strong links with other agencies, such as the local food bank, legal advice lines and the Citizens Advice Bureau, ensure that families can access relevant support and advice. Family support workers now monitor the range of issues affecting families that become evident as they work with them, and the information is used by staff to plan suitable provision. Good links with other children's centres in Rugby help to ensure that families who move continue to receive support.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Day-to-day operational management of the centre is good, but the centre does not yet have a clear strategic direction. Staff are clear about their roles, and supervision clearly results in further improvements in planning and monitoring provision. The manager knows her centre well and the self-evaluation is accurate in identifying the strengths of the centre and the areas for improvement, especially the need to use appropriate detailed data and intelligence to plan and evaluate need and provision more effectively. The centre's development plan sets out clear and relevant priorities for further improvement of services but does not identify which specific target groups these will be aimed at or how any impact on them will be measured. Resources are well managed, attendance levels and usage of services are good. Although some outcomes are not yet good, they have improved significantly and the centre offers good value for money. The advisory board offers good support to the centre manager but does not support the centre manager to set a strategic direction for the centre or in setting targets for improvement.

The centre meets its duty to promote equality and diversity and tackle discrimination well. Claremont Children's Centre is very inclusive. Although there are some pockets of families in the area not yet using services provided by the centre, a wide range of backgrounds is represented in families using the centre and also engaged in the parents' forum. The focus of the centre to reduce barriers to access to services is demonstrated well in a number of services including the provision of a parenting skills group with an interpreter for Portuguese families. The gap between the lowest-achieving children and others is narrowing.

Safeguarding arrangements are good, and there is high-quality work to protect vulnerable children. Children's centre staff are well trained in safeguarding. Sharing of information between partners is good, particularly for families engaged in the Common Assessment Framework process. Monitoring and support is notably good for families who are on the threshold of a referral to social services, in many cases removing the need for such referrals.

The range and quality of partnership work are a key strength of the centre; there are innovative partnerships with the local parks and community development workers. Many families come to the centre though their initial involvement with partner services, for example mothers attending sessions with a health visitor at the centre are then introduced to the benefits of other services. Activities in the local parks are successful in widening the awareness of the centre. Although some specific target groups of families, for example, teenage parents are not fully represented, the centre is using a number of innovative ways of trying to engage this group in partnership with other organisations. Parents views are actively sought on both current and future provision at the centre and many are involved in peer support groups or volunteering at the centre.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	3
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
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	2
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	2

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

The findings of the inspection of Butterflies Early Years Groups in 2008 were used to guide the inspection team's findings with regard to outcomes for nursery-aged children. Provision and outcomes in the setting were judged to be good.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaining about inspections*, which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the Claremont Children's Centre (formerly Rugby Parents Centre) on 11–12 July 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We very much enjoyed our visit to your children's centre and would like to thank all of you who gave your time to speak to us and tell us your experiences of using the centre. Your views have helped to inform us how well the centre is doing.

Everyone we spoke to told us how much they value the support they receive from staff at the centre. The manager and her staff work very hard to provide you with activities and services that meet your needs. Although the manager has only been in post for 18 months, she has made a big difference to the services available to you all, and many of you told us that the centre has helped to change your families' lives for the better. You all have good opportunities to give your views on the centre and it is good to see some of you involved in the parents' forum and on the advisory board.

Although we have judged the centre as satisfactory overall, the quality of services you receive is good and, in particular, the care, guidance and support you receive are outstanding. For those of you experiencing a crisis in your lives, the centre is quick to respond and offer you excellent support to deal with issues affecting your family. The centre manager and staff have an excellent knowledge of the local community and work very effectively to ensure that the provision meets the needs of families. The centre provides a very welcoming inclusive environment, and you told us how well regarded the centre and all the staff are by all sections of the community. Many of you told us that you found out about the centre from friends who encouraged you to go and try the centre out.

You and your children receive a good range of relevant, high-quality services, and a number of partners, such as health, work hard with the centre to provide these. Good early years provision is available at Butterflies and many of you enjoy many different activities, from drop-in sessions to help your children's speech to 'Toddler Time' and activities in the local park. You value the toy library service and enjoy being able to offer your children different toys to play with. Some of you enjoyed helping staff at the centre with the recent 'Booby Tuesday' event aimed at encouraging more mothers to breastfeed. It was good to see quite a few fathers using the centre and some enjoy the Saturday 'Dads Club', but it would be good to see more involved. Some of you are working as volunteers at the centre and enjoying the opportunities this offers. It is good to see the opportunities some of you are taking to improve your English and other skills, but more of you could benefit from this.

We were particularly impressed with the links the centre has made with the local credit union but surprised that not many of you are using the service it offers.

There are some areas the centre needs to improve. Although the centre is very good at responding to the needs of the community, they do not always identify which of you especially need to attend sessions. More needs to be done to show the benefit of all the activities and services on different groups of families. We have asked the centre to try to make sure that as many families as possible from all areas served by the centre have the opportunity to attend services it provides.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.