

Inspection report for Braunton Children's Centre

Local authority	Devon
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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.

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

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, representatives from the local authority, senior leaders and front line staff. Discussions were held with a wide range of partners, members of the core offer monitoring group, parents and carers. They observed the centre's work across several sites, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Braunton Children's Centre serves two distinct areas; phase 2 work began in 2006 and is centred around the ward of Heanton Punchard containing a Royal Marine Base. The remaining rural areas around Braunton and including a number of small villages were designated phase 3 areas in 2008. The centre developed from the Sure Start Local programme for Ilfracombe. The children's centre has no central premises or designated building in the Braunton area. Staff are based at the 'MyStart' Children's Centre in Ilfracombe and the majority work across both areas.

The centre is run by Action for Children and managed by a core offer monitoring group who provide the governance of the centre. The area has some employment opportunities and, when compared with other centres in the county, a higher than average proportion of families benefiting from the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. The vast majority of centre users are White British. A higher than average proportion of families has one or more parents in the armed services.

Overall, children in the local area enter a range of settings with expected and age appropriate levels of knowledge and skills. These settings are subject to separate inspection. The centre provides additional childcare facilities in registered crèches for parents attending activities and training at Ilfracombe and Braunton.

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

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Braunton Children’s Centre is a good centre which is improving outcomes for families in the centre’s reach area. Good provision and strong leadership are underpinned by a close supportive team of experienced and knowledgeable staff ensuring that the overall effectiveness of the centre is good. Senior managers and leaders are strongly focused on a limited number of ambitious targets. The centre has dedicated time, maintained a consistent focus and through good leadership has developed a range of partnerships that result in high numbers of families using the centre’s services. The centre manager contributes to a number of national initiatives and is intent on further developing integrated working, including information sharing. Through the well-established partnerships, active governance and strong leadership the centre demonstrates a good capacity to improve further.

Well-developed partnerships with a number of key agencies and good levels of communication assist the development of shared strategies. Partnerships with the local military base have developed over time to the extent that armed forces families regularly attend and participate in the centre’s activities. As a result of the support for early years providers in the local area, the centre now receives an increasing number of referrals from these settings. Pre-school and voluntary toddler groups are in direct contact with the centre and provide support for families and submit applications for funding for two-year-olds’ early education. The local primary school has developed a well-furnished and decorated community room ‘the Bungalow’ which will enables the centre to provide volunteer training and courses closer to families.

Health services include a wide range of sessions for families with young children and include baby clinics, child health and antenatal clinics. These sessions are held at venues around the local area and at times to suit families and consequently are attended by the large majority. Staff at the centre have developed strong relationships with key health practitioners so that families with identified needs are quickly directed to specialist staff and appropriate services. The centre has focused on raising the profile of breastfeeding in ante-natal classes and in developing staff skills and expertise around breastfeeding support. This has helped to maintain higher

than average rates of breastfeeding in the centre's designated geographical area.

Users receive good care, guidance and support. The centre works closely with a number of families to support them during challenging circumstances. Staff use the Common Assessments Framework process well to ensure a shared approach to working with families between many different agencies. This approach ensures that support is well organised around the needs of the family. When working with higher level of concerns, information is shared well to ensure that contact with families is maintained and progress reviewed regularly. As a result, a rising proportion of those families identified as most in need are helped to increase the safety and well-being of children and families.

Parents regularly participate in the Core Offer Monitoring Group (COMG) and provide local views and opinions on important decisions. A range of information and data is provided to the COMG that has been used by partners and parents to monitor the work of the centre. This has helped the COMG to identify, plan and act to improve key priorities. However, until recently the centre did not gather information on the number of service personnel at the centre's activities and receiving support. Parents regularly evaluate sessions and activities but are not routinely informed of the actions taken by the centre in response to their feedback. In addition few families, including many who hold the centre in high regard, are contributing to focus groups or the forum. Too few of the identified high priority groups such as families in the armed forces in the reach area are actively involved in shaping services and activities to meet their needs.

Opportunities for adults to participate in accredited training courses, increase their literacy and numeracy skills and complete volunteer training are available at neighbouring centres but these are not easily accessible for all families. As a result few families most in need of support are provided with clear routes via a selection of courses to gain qualifications and progress to higher level accredited courses. The centre in partnership with the armed forces has obtained an agreement to provide rooms near to the military base. The centre has plans to provide additional volunteer training and adult courses in new venues closer to families' homes.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase opportunities for families to build progressively on their contact with the centre and improve their economic well-being by:
 - establishing a wider range of pathways that lead to accredited learning
 - increasing volunteering opportunities
 - locating adult learning and accredited courses within the local reach area.
- Ensure that available data and information are used effectively to monitor the

levels of engagement from target groups, especially service personnel.

- Encourage more families to participate in decision making and use their views to shape services and activities by:
 - providing detailed feedback of activities
 - making them more aware of opportunities to participate in the parent forum
 - sharing the action taken in response to their views.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Parents report that the centre's involvement has helped to improve their health and well-being. A number of agencies provided specific support for families with special educational needs, including portage, speech and language therapy and hospital staff that help in preparing children for transition to school, with support programmes well established.

Senior leaders have focused on developing staff skills and expertise around breastfeeding support. This enables staff to respond immediately and provide impromptu support at times of need. Breastfeeding initiation rates have consistently been higher than the county average. Flexible support encourages mothers to continue to breastfeed, so that the proportion still breastfeeding their children at six to eight weeks is above average. Centre staff have encouraged early years settings across the reach area to promote nutrition and healthy lunch boxes. As a result, the proportion of children overweight or obese in local Reception classes is far lower than in most other centres across the county.

Most families are helped to develop their skills, especially their parenting skills, well. 'Incredible Years' and 'Triple P' parenting courses are held on a recurring programme and these are provided by two members of staff in partnership with local schools. These help to develop parenting skills and to improve children's behaviour by developing routines and responsibilities in the home environment. A number of home visits have raised parental awareness of hazards in their homes. Parents make better progress in developing children's safety and well-being and in reducing the risk through effective support. However, other opportunities for parents to develop their knowledge and skills through participating in a range of adult learning accredited courses are less easily accessible.

The proportion of children achieving 78+ scale points and working at expected levels in their literacy and social skills has been consistently higher than national and county average over the last few years. The more recent introduction of joint transition meetings between pre-school and private nurseries is leading to improved communication and is helping to prepare children for transition to mainstream

settings. The centre’s mobile resource van is used regularly by 23 early years settings. Resources are organised to support children’s development of communication, language and literacy skills and to support their learning in the home. The centre provides support to families, including access to funded places for two-year-olds, for children to access good quality pre-school education and make good progress from their starting points.

A number of families are actively engaged in the governance of the centre. The majority of families using services provide evaluation and feedback on activities. Evaluations for parenting courses and adult learning show high levels of satisfaction and report positively on the knowledge and expertise of course leaders. However, there are too few opportunities for families who are most in need of support in the reach area to make their views known and to actively shape services to meet their needs. For example, several families from the military base reported their high levels of appreciation. Parents describe ‘the immense involvement of the centre that has helped to make a huge improvement financially, socially and knocked the edge off their isolation’. However, few of the many parents who spoke of their appreciation and willingness to put something back into the centre are active participants in parent focus groups and meetings.

Parents report high levels of enjoyment and satisfaction. Many parents are supported by the centre to develop closer more caring relationships with their children. Parents attend courses on developing their child’s early communication skills and encouraging their speaking and listening. The centre has a volunteer training programme in place and plans to engage 15 volunteers in career development support training. The centre has appointed a dedicated lead to develop volunteer training locally and increase opportunities. The centre is working to capture adult users’ personal development and achievements through learning portfolios so that armed service families may continue to develop their learning and skills when moving to other parts of the country or abroad.

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	2
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	2
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	3
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic	3

How good is the provision?

2

Staff, partner agencies and the local authority have a good understanding of the particular circumstances of a children's centre without a designated building at the heart of the community. Several different agencies contribute to ensuring that the centre's provision for families in the local area is good. Take-up rates for the majority of local areas ensure that the large majority of families in a wide rural area attend services and activities. Health partners contribute to the high rates of families improving their health and well-being. Staff at the centre have worked with determination over an extended period to develop partnerships with armed forces personnel and increase the provision and support for families at the local military base. The effective referral process and good use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) ensure that social services and centre staff work closely with families so that they receive support which is tailored to their needs. Families feel supported in times of crisis with high proportions signposted or receiving direct one-to-one support. As a result of improved communication, early years settings are more aware of centre's services and have increased referrals to the centre's provision to support target families with '2gether' funding and Family Intervention Services. Centre staff and a school's Parent Support Advisor provide parenting programmes that help parents to deal with children's negative behaviour and develop their parenting skills. Schools have made their premises available over holidays for highly successful and well-attended open days. Many families attended for the first time and enjoyed several creative and artistic activities put on by a wide range of voluntary and professional agencies.

Provision to help children learn is well organised. The centre has a well-resourced toy library used by the overwhelming majority of local pre-school settings. The resources available are carefully linked to areas of learning with a particular emphasis on developing children's communication, language and literacy. Planning of sessions for children outline the activities and learning intentions and help their personal achievement and social development. More detailed plans outline the precise learning that will be covered, for example plans specify that children will use mathematical language of 'full' and 'empty' when describing pouring water into containers, but on occasion this level of planning is not replicated across all crèche sessions. Activities located at the separate sites across the cluster provide opportunities for families to access services close to their homes and accommodation, and are helping to improve healthy lifestyles and keep children safe. Parenting programmes are provided within the area in partnership with local schools. The centre is developing opportunities for volunteers and is currently providing training sessions attended by some parents from the reach area. The centre provides good quality adult learning courses to help parents develop their literacy and mathematical qualifications. However, adult courses and volunteer training are located currently at the Illfracombe site some 25 minutes away from Braunton making it difficult for some families to attend, including those most in need. The centre has identified and recently obtained premises to increase the range of activities available to families at the military base and a local

school has recently opened a newly refurbished community room.

The overall quality of care and support for families is good. Staff focus initially on promoting positive and trusting relationships with families. As confidence grows they are then able to support them to become more aware of their child's development. A warm and friendly ethos and welcoming environments are created in sites across the centre's reach area by displaying large scale pieces of tapestry, collage and weaving that have been produced by adults and children. Families using the neighbouring centre enjoy good quality activities matched to their needs, with many activities available in local buildings. All staff provide good role models to parents and are able to build trust and develop relationships with families that remain strong over time.

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	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Senior managers and leaders are strongly focused on an appropriate number of ambitious targets. Self-evaluation is honest and includes a thorough examination of the effectiveness of services and activities that has led to the identification of key priorities. The local authority supplies well-organised information and data that provide an accurate picture of the local reach area and the composition of different groups. Annual conversations and quarterly reviews of the centre's work are used effectively to set clear targets based on the identified needs of the local area. However, senior leaders have only recently begun to use available data and information to monitor the engagement of families from the armed services and have missed opportunities to present this information to strengthen partnership working. Partnerships have developed to provide a range of services and activities that meet the needs of users and promote equality of opportunity. Across the local area the gap between the range of achievement of children in Reception is narrower than that found nationally. This is an inclusive centre with high participation rates from across the centre's reach area and by priority groups of users. The proportion of fathers attending activities is the fifth highest in the county. Despite the absence of a designated building, a high proportion of families with one or both parents in the armed services benefit from the centre's activities and support. With the acquisition of new premises, the current proportion is well placed to increase further.

The centre has developed its strategic plan to include local priorities that complement the key priorities but are based on a robust analysis of local needs.

Governance arrangements are clear and understood and include representation from key partners. The COMG meets on a 6-8 week basis and regularly receives reports and data from the centre manager. The data presented to the COMG allows it to monitor the centre's progress against the key priorities and provide good levels of support and challenge. However, the centre's evaluation is satisfactory overall because until recently data have not been used effectively to monitor engagement from some areas of the centre's reach and of families of service personnel.

The centre's budget is comparatively smaller than those of neighbouring centres reflecting the relatively low rates of deprivation in the centre's reach. Staff knowledge and the precious time available are used flexibly across the centre to ensure that the quality of support for families facing challenging circumstances is high and that services represent best value. The centre provides good value for money because it is adept at focusing limited resources on key target groups to ensure the majority of outcomes are good.

Safeguarding arrangements are clear and understood by staff and parents. Volunteers and students are provided with induction training that raises awareness of safeguarding. The most recent annual conversation noted the high level of the centre's involvement with families at risk or in need of additional child protection. The centre's use of the CAF to initiate and lead multi-agency response is effective and higher than in the vast majority of other centres across the county.

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	2
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	3

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

Not applicable

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Braunton Centre on 3–4 October 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

The centre's staff team works well across Illfracombe and Braunton to provide a range of services and activities that help you to make good progress in many key areas. Senior leaders and staff are a close and supportive team who work well together. You were quick to tell us that you have respect for staff and hold them in high regard for the work that they do and the support that they give. You describe their friendly and approachable manner that helps to build trust and confidence.

The centre works closely with a number of different partners to provide services and activities that meet your needs. They have developed links with the military base, and many families with one or both parents in the armed services regularly attend the centre's sessions. Health professionals provide a wide range of baby clinics and antenatal sessions which are attended by centre staff. As a result the vast majority of families in the area are improving their health and well-being. A high proportion of you manage to continue to breastfeed your child because of the centre's support and advice. Their encouragement to eat healthily has been taken up by the majority of pre-school settings in the area and is helping to reduce levels of obesity and overweight children. Staff at the centre work well with social care agencies to provide sensitive and timely support for families. Staff at the centre are quick to identify potential hazards and provide families with the support they need to improve their own and their child's safety. They visit regularly and keep a watchful eye on your progress so that they can provide more help if necessary.

You are regularly asked to evaluate sessions and to give your views on the quality of sessions. However, you are not always provided with information on the changes that have resulted from your evaluations. Many of you give high praise to the centre and staff, however few of you regularly attend parent meetings and groups. We have asked the centre to encourage more of you to join parent groups and to help the centre develop its services and activities.

The centre provides adult learning sessions and volunteer training. The majority of these sessions are based at Illfracombe and this makes it difficult for many of you to attend. We have asked the centre to provide a range of courses and volunteer training in Braunton closer to your homes. A local school has developed an attractive new community room and the armed forces have agreed the use of a room at the military base that will be helpful in providing a suitable venue.

Thank you to those who took the trouble to talk with us about your centre. We enjoyed the chance to meet with you.

Mark Lindfield
Her Majesty's Inspector

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