

Inspection report for Yate Cranleigh Court Children's Centre

Local authority	South Gloucestershire
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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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre's senior leaders, frontline staff, a range of partners, members of the advisory board, local authority officers, childminders and parents. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the self-evaluation form and improvement plan.

Information about the centre

This purpose built phase two centre was designated in 2007. It is located in the town of Yate situated in the south western corner of South Gloucestershire, about 11 miles from Bristol. The centre serves a large sparsely populated area with pockets of deprivation. About 17% of children under five years old live in workless homes and a similar proportion of households claim the child care element of working tax credit. The centre is located within an area that has been designated a 'Priority Neighbourhood' by the county council. The centre is open Monday to Friday all year round.

There are 971 children under five years old living in the area. Most (95%) local families are from White British backgrounds, with a very small number from other minority ethnic backgrounds, including Polish, Russian and Chinese. The skills, knowledge and abilities of children on entry to early years provision are typically below the level expected for their age.

The centre forms part of a cluster of five children's centres and is governed directly by the local authority. The practice manager oversees all five centres, supported by team leaders at each centre. Yate Cranleigh Court is the main full-time centre with a satellite at Westgate: the other four centres are subject to separate inspections. An advisory board is established and comprises a cross-section of partners and a parent.

It is responsible for supporting and challenging decisions, identifying priorities, monitoring progress and evaluating performance.

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

The centre’s effectiveness in meeting the needs of the majority of local families with young children is good. Staff provide a warm and friendly welcome which parents value highly and say encourages them ‘to come through the door to seek help that is non judgemental’. Families from different ethnic minority groups thoroughly enjoy activities, such as creating mathematics games to share with their children. The ‘Stay and Play’ session for Polish families – ‘Pobytu i Play dla polskich rodzin’ – is one example of the centre’s good attention to ensuring equality of opportunity and promoting community cohesion. Participation rates are improving well as the centre establishes itself in the heart of its community. Work is ongoing to more finely assess the needs of those families who do not engage with centre services.

Keeping safe, enjoying achieving and making positive contribution outcomes are all good, due to the high impact of the centre’s well-planned and effective provision. Families’ suggestions help shape services and the centre shows a strong commitment to using their post-activity evaluations to inform its forward planning. Health outcomes are currently satisfactory rather than good. This is because key performance data concerning obesity levels and breastfeeding rates have not improved enough despite the centre’s concerted actions to make a positive difference. Economic well-being is judged as satisfactory overall. Children build good skills for the future, as reflected in the above average proportion who achieve a good level of development from a low baseline. In contrast, although some parents improve their financial stability and others their employability skills, for example through the highly effective volunteering programme, only a small number are engaged in further learning or skills training , particularly those from workless homes.

Safeguarding is given high priority, and policies and procedures meet all requirements. Strong partnerships coupled with well-timed guidance and support

result in well-coordinated services that are particularly effective in assisting families who are most in need, especially in times of crisis. Some parents told inspectors about their ‘personal journeys’ and how much they had benefited from the high quality of outreach work that helps them make sensible lifestyle choices and take control of their lives.

Governance arrangements are satisfactory and developing. New systems for ensuring accountability are still being embedded, with the role of the advisory board earmarked for review. The local authority has ultimate responsibility for the centre’s performance and undertakes regular monitoring that draws heavily on data to check for effectiveness. In contrast, the annual conversation process, though well-conceived, has not injected sufficient challenge into the priorities set for improvement.

Leadership and management are good. The practice manager motivates and inspires the upbeat and enthusiastic staff team to strive for best practice. She has her finger firmly on the pulse of the centre’s strengths and areas for development. A sensible number of priorities have recently been set, together with precise targets and clear milestones. The centre’s track record of improvement demonstrates its good capacity for further improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Further increase the centre’s reach by engaging with more families, particularly from workless homes, and extend the opportunities that enhance families’ future economic well-being.
- Work with the local authority to increase the effectiveness of governance by adding rigour to the annual conversation process and ensuring that the advisory board provides challenge as well as support and involves more parents in its work.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Well-chosen activities improve families’ health and emotional well being. For example, the young mums group go swimming with their babies, and enjoy soft play at the leisure centre. Buggy walks are a regular feature of provision which, together with ‘Cooking on a budget’ activities, raise awareness about the value of exercise and a healthy diet. Initiatives such as the ‘Breastfeeding support group’ are geared towards improving the proportion of mothers who sustain breastfeeding their babies. Eight mentors have completed training and all families with a new birth are invited to contact a mentor or a helpline. The number regularly attending sessions is rising but it is too early to see the impact of the centre’s work reflected in the key performance data.

The centre’s good work to keep the most vulnerable families safe results in many

living more positive lives. For example, the incidence of domestic abuse is high and strong cooperative work between centre staff and professionals from 'Survive', the charity that runs local refuges, involves a programme of support at the first sign of anyone disclosing a concern or when a referral is made. The comment of one abuse sufferer sums up others, 'My journey has been difficult but so rewarding because of the help of the centre and I wouldn't be where I am today without them.' There is compelling evidence in case study files that shows how effective the centre's work is in improving the outcomes for children subject to a child protection plan. Parenting courses effectively help families to understand the boundaries required to ensure their children's behaviour is managed positively and safely. The injury prevention course run in partnership with 'Avon Safe' covers home and fire safety, first aid, online safety and road safety, and improves parents' knowledge and understanding so they take responsibility for their own and their children's safety and well-being.

Sessions such as 'Story Makers' provide good quality experiences for children's learning and development. High-quality resources stimulate their interest and extend creativity and curiosity, for example when playing with sand, foam and baked beans and experiencing the different textures. Children achieve well from their starting points, as reflected in the good-quality 'Learning Journeys', which usefully transfer with children to early years settings. At 74%, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development is above the national average, and at 25.2%, the gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest is much narrower than seen nationally.

Literacy and numeracy short courses, together with family learning sessions, help parents who attend to extend their basic skills and confidence to initiate play experiences, thereby helping their children to become successful learners. One family who had very negative experiences of primary school commented that the sessions made them 'realise that learning can be fun!' Funding is available to support child care costs and this removes any potential barrier to attendance, and participation rates are good. The centre signposts parents to other courses, such as English as an additional language and job-seeking preparation. It arranges talks, for example to the young mums group, about what is on offer at college. Some families improve their financial situation as a result of budgeting workshops and debt counselling, but few are involved in courses that directly extend their employability. A work club is planned in the New Year in partnership with Jobcentre Plus.

Parents make a good contribution to centre life. The Polish group is well established and parents meet weekly at the specific 'Stay and Play' session. The dads' group is well supported and takes a lead in the activities provided, which include messy play, crafts, cooking and walks in local parks. The volunteers programme is a very positive feature that has empowered a high number of local parents to build their skills and take full advantage of the opportunities available that extend their work experience, such as co-delivering sessions. Parents' views are encouraged and develop enterprising behaviour, for example in organising the 'swishing party' that involved swapping clothes and unwanted toys. Involvement in governance was positive last year but, with only one parent currently on the advisory board, the parents' voice is

no longer as strong.

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	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	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

Staff have a very good knowledge of the local area and through this have pinpointed where their support is needed most. The numbers of families overall who are registering are increasing, with the highest reach seen in the priority neighbourhood. There is still work to do to ensure that more families from the wider area are reached. Staff have been particularly successful in engaging young parents, fathers and carers and families from minority ethnic groups. However, the proportion of families from workless homes who use the centre does not reflect the growing number in the community.

Learning and development opportunities are good. The programme has been revised in recent months to provide a balanced mix of targeted sessions and universal services and adapted to meet local needs. 'Drop-In' sessions are very popular and groups for specific purposes, such as 'Stay and Play Plus', which runs alongside a respite crèche, all have a clear focus on enhancing personal development and promoting children's learning. This leads to good outcomes for the majority of families. Achievement is celebrated well, for example through journals and the award of certificates for completing courses. Consequently, aspirations are raised and built on effectively through extending skills further or through the very positive volunteering programme.

The quality of care, guidance and support is enhanced by the strong partnerships that enable tailor-made packages to be put in place quickly. The use of the Common Assessment Framework is a highly effective tool for enabling a multi-agency approach to assessing and meeting needs. Parents describe the staff as 'really welcoming' and say, 'You get a really nice feeling when you come into the centre.' They encourage families to access help, accompanying them to appointments, for

example when seeking citizenship. Their support is especially effective and appreciated by the most vulnerable families in times of crisis, such as when they or their children are at risk. Looked-after children and those on children-in-need plans receive very good one-to-one outreach support from development workers. Some parents have been empowered to improve their own circumstances by being given a renewed sense of purpose and self-confidence.

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	3
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	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Good leadership and management are the driving forces behind the centre's good effectiveness in meeting local needs and delivering good outcomes for families. Resources are used well and the limiting factor of the relatively small amount of available space in the centre is overcome by creative planning and the staff's determination to do their best for families. In consequence, value for money is good.

Leaders are strongly focused on a sensible number of ambitious priorities that are in place to guide development over the next 12 months, but with clear milestones built in at regular intervals to take stock of progress. Increasingly robust monitoring by the local authority ensures that the centre's performance is kept under close review. However, the annual conversation process is not rigorous enough and a sharper focus on challenge is needed in the work of the advisory board, in order that governance is better than satisfactory.

Equalities are promoted effectively and regarded as central to the centre's vision, as seen in the rapidly reducing achievement gap for the most vulnerable young learners. Diversity is celebrated, for example in the positive multicultural imagery in displays and book resources. Shared celebrations of important cultural events, such as Chinese New Year, involve families enjoying a Chinese banquet together prepared by one of the mothers. Parents with children with a disability are well supported by centre staff who work cooperatively with staff from the co-located school to ensure a smooth transition. Relationships are respectful and harmonious as a result of the good role modelling by staff, who themselves work as a happy upbeat highly skilled team.

Safeguarding policies and procedures are effective and meet all statutory requirements. Staff vetting checks are robust and training, particularly concerning child protection matters, is relevant and up to date. The centre works proactively to

inspire families' trust; its positive ethos engenders respect and parents say that they feel confident to share serious problems because they feel these will be handled sensitively. The referral system works well and the good partnerships with health and social service partners in particular result in well-integrated services that are very effective in reducing risk when assisting families in times of acute crisis.

Families using the centre have their say in evaluating and developing provision and children's views are logged during sessions and taken into account. As a result, most families express high levels of satisfaction and feel their opinions are valued. Parents' involvement in governance, however, is not strong enough. The centre has begun to explore why more families are not engaging with services and has set a target to increase the participation of families from workless homes by 8% which would take it above the county average.

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	2
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 Yate Cranleigh Court Children's Centre on 28 and 29 November 2012. We judged the centre as good overall with good capacity to build for future success.

We talked with some of you, your children, staff, childminders and a wide range of partners, advisory board and local authority representatives linked to the centre. We really enjoyed hearing how supportive you feel the centre staff and partners are in delivering services that help you live happy, healthier and safer lives. Thank you for sharing your views so openly.

We agree that the staff provide a warm and friendly welcome which you value highly. It was good to hear someone say that the centre encourages them to come through the door to seek help that is non-judgemental. Families from different backgrounds share in activities together, such as creating maths games to play with their children at home. The 'Stay and Play' session for those of you from Polish families is a good example of the centre's close attention to enabling everyone to enjoy mutually respectful relationships and appreciate cultures different from their own.

Outcomes are good because the centre makes good provision for all the families who use it. The good programme of well-planned activities results in you learning how to prepare nutritious meals, get involved in regular exercise and know how to keep your children safe. Children build good skills for the future. However, though some parents improve their parenting skills and financial stability and others their employability skills, only a small number are engaged in further learning or skills training, particularly those from workless homes. We have asked the centre to look at this in going forward.

Safeguarding is given high priority and policies and procedures meet all requirements. The centre works well in partnership with other agencies to provide services which are particularly helpful to you and your children, especially in times of crisis. Some of you told us about your 'personal journeys' and how much you have benefited from the high quality of outreach work that helps you take control of your lives when things are tough.

Leadership and management are good, but governance is currently satisfactory. This is because new systems for ensuring that the centre's performance goes from strength to strength are still being embedded. The local authority undertakes regular monitoring but its annual meeting with centre leaders has not led to sufficient challenge in the priorities set for improvement. Also, too few of you are involved in the work of the advisory board and we have asked the centre to look at improving this.

Thank you once again for your helpful contributions, and best wishes for the future.

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