

Inspection report for Bright Futures Children's Centre

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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 one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre's leadership team, members of the district advisory board and steering committee, staff and a representative from the local authority. They also spoke with partner agencies, including those from the health service, and parents. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Bright Futures serves an economically mixed community. There are pockets of affluence as well as families in the area who experience some social or economic hardship. The proportion of children who live in households which are dependent on workless benefits is slightly lower than the national average. Cultural diversity in the area is increasing. Almost one third of families are from a range of minority ethnic groups, including those from Asian, Black African and Eastern European backgrounds. Punjabi, Slovakian and Polish are amongst the different home languages spoken.

The centre is located on the same site as Shears Green Infant and Junior Schools, and The Owls Pre-School. It opened as a phase two centre providing a core offer of family learning, health and support services in February 2010. Early education and childcare are provided by voluntary and private providers, childminders and local authority maintained nurseries at two schools. The knowledge, skills and understanding of children entering early years provision in the area are in line with those expected for their age.

The centre is managed by the local authority as part of a network of seven children's centres in the district. They share staff and resources. A team of health professionals is based at the centre. The centre manager reports to the local authority through a

district advisory board. She is responsible for the day-to-day running of Bright Futures and two other centres in the network which share a joint senior leadership team. Advice and assistance is provided by a steering group of parents and partner agencies. There have been recent changes to the centre's leadership team. A new district manager took up post in October 2012. The centre manager and team leader joined in January 2013.

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

Bright Futures is making a satisfactory contribution to improving outcomes for children and families in the area. Families who use the centre's services benefit from a suitable variety of activities, information and guidance that the centre provides. They feel welcomed by friendly, approachable staff and enjoy learning and playing with their children. Outcomes are satisfactory. Parents feel safe, supported and cared for because there are good safeguarding procedures in place which are adhered to closely by well-trained, vigilant staff. One parent commented, 'All staff are great here. They have helped me and give me lots of information to support my family.'

Partnership working with relevant agencies, such as health and social care, ensures that parents have an appropriate understanding of how to keep their families safe and healthy. Children enjoy the varied activities which contribute to their age-appropriate levels of development. Parents have positive relationships with their children, learn new parenting skills and contribute to decisions about the services that the centre provides. There are fewer training and adult learning opportunities for them to strengthen their future employability and financial security.

Most families in the area are registered with the centre but fewer take advantage of the services that it offers, including fathers, and children with disabilities. The centre has relevant information about the local community but has not analysed why more families are not using its services. Universal services are offered and some are targeted to meet the specific needs of particular groups, such as teenage mothers and Traveller families, but not enough to engage even more groups in the wider community, including fathers.

The new leaders know that they need to engage more families to improve outcomes further. They have accurately evaluated the centre's effectiveness. Appropriate steps are being taken to build the centre's capacity to improve and they have quickly gained the confidence of staff and partners through their clarity and focus. Staff have a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They know that they need to measure more rigorously the impact that services have on improving outcomes for parent and families. Although there are established supervision, monitoring and reporting systems in place, performance targets are too vague to hold staff to account robustly.

A new service development plan is being established. It includes the right priorities and appropriate actions but not all of the targets are specific or ambitious enough. Timescales for actions and how success will be evaluated lack precision. There are no milestones to help the advisory board and steering group measure the progress being made towards the targets during the year.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Secure good outcomes for families, particularly in relation to their future employability and financial security, by:
 - increasing the numbers engaged in the centre's activities, including fathers
 - targeting services more closely to the specific needs of the community
 - analysing why some families are registering at the centre but not using the services offered.

- Build a better capacity to improve by:
 - setting specific, measurable performance targets for centre staff and partners
 - using these targets to hold them to account for engaging more families and improving their outcomes, including those who are most in need.

- Sharpen the service development plan by including:
 - specific, realistic and ambitious targets
 - precise timescales for actions
 - measurable milestones to measure the progress being made towards the targets
 - quantifiable measures to evaluate the impact of actions on improving outcomes.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Parents understand the importance of providing healthy meals and snacks and ensuring that their children are physically active. Obesity in children in the Reception year has fallen and the physical development of most children is in line with that expected for their age. Parents feel calm and bond with their babies through baby

massage. A parent noted, 'My baby slept really well after baby massage yesterday.' Mothers feel well supported when breastfeeding and weaning their babies, although the numbers of mothers that have sustained breastfeeding at six to eight weeks fluctuate. Parents learn about oral hygiene when they move their babies on from using a bottle.

Parents feel safe at the centre and value the good attention given to ensuring that they are safeguarded well. Those who attend the centre's activities learn how to keep their families safe and free from harm through home safety equipment assessments, road safety days and baby and child resuscitation courses. Hospital admissions for children have fallen and there have been no fatalities in road accidents. Vulnerable children and families in crisis, including those in need of protection and those who have experienced domestic violence, are kept safe through the good use of the Common Assessment Framework and coordinated multi-agency working. However, there is a limited focus on supporting fathers who may be victims of domestic abuse. The number of children subject to protection plans and children in need have fallen. Although there are case studies which show some parents are better able to manage their child's behaviour, these are not extensive and parents need to be reminded on occasion about the use of mobile phones in the centre.

Children learn to take turns, share their toys and develop their physical coordination and social skills. They are content, happy and have fun, particularly when playing with the paint in Stay and Play. Parents regularly give their views on how much they and their children have enjoyed activities and make suggestions about how services can be improved, including through the parent forum and their evaluations of sessions. Some teenage parents are obtaining additional qualifications. However, adult learning courses to prepare parents for future employment and improve their financial management skills are limited. Adult learning to help those who speak little or no English is also limited. One parent volunteer has returned to work and there are currently no other volunteers.

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	3
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	3
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?

3

Parents who use the centre's services are very satisfied that it meets their needs and say it is making a difference. All new-born babies and parents have attended health services at the centre. However, the centre is not yet well enough established in the community to engage all groups and increase the numbers of families it is reaching. Consequently, the involvement of different target groups is variable. There is an active young parents' group and a Black Caribbean group but the numbers of fathers and of disabled children using services are small. This is because outreach work has not been well targeted or sufficiently focused on engaging those who are hard to reach. The centre's services are promoted through newsletters which are displayed in other centres and some community venues such as the library and doctors' surgeries but not more widely, at the local supermarkets and leisure centre, for example. The numbers of families using services have remained relatively static over the past couple of years.

The activities on offer are enjoyed by those who attend and they promote purposeful learning and development effectively. Improvements in the planning of sessions have given a clearer focus to identifying and building of children's particular interests. This is contributing positively to their enjoyment and development. Parents are encouraged to learn alongside their children in Play and Stay, Baby Talk and Waddle to Toddle. Achievements are celebrated and certificates awarded as children progress to different groups. The tracking of progress over time and through transition into pre-school and school is not well developed.

There is an appropriate range of information leaflets to signpost families to other services and offer health advice about pregnancy, parenting and immunisation. The location of the health team at the centre means that advice and support is easily accessible for families. A translation service is available for parents with little or no English but there is limited information displayed and readily available in other languages that are relevant to the local community.

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

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Lines of accountability and reporting arrangements across all levels of leadership are in place and understood. Governance arrangements are well established and involve parents in the local steering group and the district advisory board. All key partners are suitably engaged in the governance of the centre and information shared. Appropriate arrangements are in place to manage staff performance through regular supervisions. Targets are not specific enough to hold staff and partner agencies to account robustly for the impact of their work on improving outcomes for children and families in the area. The new leaders are fully aware and have taken prompt action to put this right but it is still in the early stages. Consequently, the quality of evaluations of activities and services, as reflected in case studies, for example, is not sharply focused on the difference made to support robust planning for improvement.

The safeguarding of children and families is paramount. The centre's policies, recruitment procedures and staff checks are thorough. Risks assessments are detailed and carried out regularly. Staff are well trained and all clearly understand their duties and responsibilities to protect children and promote their safety and well-being. They cooperate well with other agencies, particularly social care, Home Start and health, to provide good early intervention and reduce the risk of harm where concerns are identified. Regular case reviews ensure that cohesive services responses to the needs of the most vulnerable families are timely and effective.

Equality and diversity are promoted satisfactorily. The local community is reflected in the cultural and ethnic diversity of those who use the centre, although fewer fathers and fewer disabled children access services. Relationships are positive. Respect and consideration are shown by everyone towards each other. The centre is accessible for disabled children and adults. Signs such as fire evacuation procedures are supported by pictures and simple words to help those who have difficulty reading. Resources are of good quality and promote positive images, although disability and sexual orientation are not reflected. There are some dual language books for parents to share with their children in the home languages spoken by those who use the centre but none in Punjabi. Satisfactory outcomes, and provision which meets the needs of the majority of families in the area, demonstrate that the centre provides satisfactory value for money.

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	3

The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	3
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	3
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

None.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Bright Futures Children's Centre on 20–21 February 2013. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Those of you who use the centre are rightly happy with what it has to offer. You told us that the staff are friendly and welcoming. You feel safe, well cared for and are confident that if you have any questions or concerns the centre will help you. If staff cannot provide you with information or support themselves, then they point you in the direction of someone who can.

The centre is helping you to know how to keep your families healthy and safe. The baby and child resuscitation classes are useful. Information about breastfeeding and weaning your baby is helpful and those of you who attend baby massage said you are able to bond with you baby more. One of you pointed out that your baby slept better too as a result. Stay and Play, Baby Talk and Waddle to Toddle are popular and you value the opportunity to learn and play with your children. There is a variety of toys, and messy resources such as paint and large outdoor play equipment which make these sessions not only useful but fun. We heard that there is an allotment nearby on which some of you are preparing to grow your own fruit and vegetables.

You regularly tell the centre's leaders what you think about different activities. You make suggestions about what could be done differently, including through

consultations, the parent forum, steering group and advisory board. The centre staff listen to what you have to say and make some changes where they can. Some of you are getting additional qualifications and training which will be really useful to you in the future. We have asked the centre to provide more of these opportunities for you, particularly those that might help you with finding future employment, developing new skills or managing the family budget.

Not as many families who could do so take advantage of the services that are available from the centre. We have asked the centre to look at why this is and try to increase the numbers who benefit from what it has to offer. You could help too by encouraging others and letting the centre know what you think they can do about it.

The centre runs smoothly and is an attractive, calm place for you and your children to be. There have been some changes to how it is led and managed and staff are now clearer about their roles. We have asked those responsible for the centre to make sure that everyone knows exactly what they need to do to help make the centre even better for you. We have also asked them to check regularly that what they are doing to improve things and involve more families is really making a difference. They will need to make some changes to the action plan they are developing to help them achieve this.

Thank you for contributing to the inspection by talking to us and sharing your views.

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