

Inspection report for Bulkington Children's Centre

Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	406994
Inspection dates	27–28 February 2013
Reporting inspector	Joy Law HMI

Centre leader	Angela Gormley
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Woodlands Day Nursery EY316243 Jack & Jill Pre-School EY347082

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.

Inspections of the registered early years/childcare provisions were carried out prior to the inspection of the centre under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. The reports of these inspections are available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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

The inspectors held meetings with the Community Interest Company board of directors, local authority, centre staff, representatives of the advisory board, partner agencies and parents. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the centre's self-evaluation form, data provided by the local authority and the centre, documents and policies, and minutes of meetings.

Information about the centre

Bulkington Children's Centre is a phase two centre which opened in January 2008. It is based within the Bulkington Village Centre building in the Nuneaton and Bedworth district of Warwickshire. Areas of relative prosperity are interspersed with pockets of deprivation. There are two primary schools, four nurseries, two pre-schools and 12 childminders in the area. The centre has close links with the Bulkington Village Centre on-site services which include a doctors' surgery, health clinic, library, pre-school and nursery.

The centre fulfils its core purpose by offering a range of services for families by working with other partner organisations and by referring parents and children to other specialist providers. Due to its rural location, many of the centre's services are delivered at Gamecock Barracks, Arden Infant School, Traveller sites and Bulkington Library.

The centre is managed by the Community Interest Company Limited on behalf of the local authority. An advisory board, comprising representatives from various partner organisations and parents, is in place. It is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day running of the centre and its strategic development. The centre has a parents' forum. The centre manager, who reports directly to the board of directors, was appointed in 2012 and is responsible for the day-to-day management of the centre.

The centre does not provide early years childcare but links closely with the two on-site private early years providers. The centre also offers advice and guidance to parents, and signposts to other agencies available within the local community. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years provision, are variable; some children are well below and others are in line with those expected for their age.

The children's centre serves the Bulkington ward within the district of Nuneaton and Bedworth, which is one of the most deprived areas in Warwickshire. Bulkington Children's Centre's reach area population is 309 families in which there are 392 children below five years of age. The percentage of workless households and those dependent on benefits is low (5% – 15%). There are approximately 124 lone parents within the reach area. The children's centre serves a mainly White British community, with the remaining population being from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds, including Nepalese and Traveller families. Poor access to services and poor transport infrastructure are major issues facing the rural community.

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

Bulkington Children's Centre is a good children's centre. It is an inclusive, warm and welcoming place. The centre's vision to serve its community well is at the heart of the work of leaders, staff and all those who are involved in the centre. The centre is a good example of what can be achieved, even given the challenges of the diverse needs of the community and the rural location. This is the result of the shared vision

and commitment of many people to serve the local community.

Outcomes for children and families are good. Outreach work is a particular strength of the centre's work and is having a significant impact on some of the most hard-to-reach groups, particularly the Nepalese families living at Gamecock Barracks and Traveller families.

Leadership and management are good. There are clear links between strategic planning, development plans and service provision. Although only in post for six months as manager, the centre manager has a clear vision and commitment to develop the centre's services further. She is supported by a passionate, caring and dedicated team. Leaders' and staff's knowledge of the reach area is good. The manager has a good understanding of the centre's main strengths and areas for development. For example, she acknowledges that systems to track children's progress and the future success of users who have been supported in accessing outside services, training and employment are not as effective as they could be. She provides effective day-to-day management and professional supervision arrangements for staff. The local authority provides good support and robust challenge through regular monitoring visits. It provides an accurate appraisal of the centre's work to inform planning. As a result, the centre has set realistic and challenging targets for improvement. The centre has increased the number of families accessing good-quality services. It is reaching the large majority of families within the reach area as well as supporting many families from outside the area who choose to attend the centre. Consequently, the centre demonstrates good capacity to improve.

Partnership working, for example, with the Ministry of Defence, Nepalese worker, schools, Welfare Rights and health visitors, is effective. However, partnership working with midwives is less well established. Safeguarding is the centre's highest priority and at the heart of what it does. Children who are subject to child protection plans are very well supported across the multi-agency partnerships and through the effective use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes.

The inclusion of all children and their families is central to the centre's vision. Staff are effective in removing barriers to ensure that all families are included and not disadvantaged due to where they live or their personal circumstances. Much of the centre's work takes place out in the community delivering sessions such as 'Stay and Play', 'Chatter Matters', parenting programmes, breastfeeding support and toy library. Partners, such as speech and language therapists, health visitors and benefits advisors, attend these sessions to give parents additional support and advice. Staff also provide good one-to-one support to families within their homes resulting in good improvements in children's and their families' lives. Parents speak very positively about the centre's services and how these have improved their health and well-being, and helped them to overcome feelings of isolation and low self-esteem.

The strong partnership working with Arden Forest School results in good transition

arrangements which enable children to settle well, having a positive impact on their learning and development. The effective partnerships with Wolvey School and The Red Cross mean that Traveller families are now accessing the centre's services. Consequently, children make good progress in their social, communication and language skills, closing the gap between the most disadvantaged children and their peers.

The centre has an effective advisory board. Members are highly supportive and have a strong commitment to the centre and its development. Parents are actively encouraged to have their say and are becoming increasingly involved in decision making through the parents' forum, advisory board, evaluation of sessions and suggestion box. Parents say that they feel listened to, respected and valued. Parents are developing some understanding of how to support their children's learning through play. The centre successfully supports a small number of volunteers within the centre to gain skills which help them move on to further learning and employment. It supports parents in accessing learning and development opportunities, such as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses. In addition, adults access a range of activities through Adult Community Learning in partnership with the Village Centre. However, the centre rightly acknowledges that this aspect of its work is not as effective as it could be.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work with the local authority to develop partnerships with midwives to enable the centre to provide early support and advice to pregnant women.
- Increase the range of learning and development opportunities for parents to improve their skills in supporting their children's learning as well as to secure future economic stability and independence.
- Track, monitor and evaluate services more thoroughly in order to measure the full impact of the centre's work, particularly children's progress and where parents have been supported in accessing training, employment and other services.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The centre offers a good range of opportunities for parents and children to increase their understanding of how to keep healthy, through targeted support groups such as 'Family Nosh', 'High Five' and 'Forest School'. Parents reported that they felt better able to support and enhance a healthy lifestyle for their families as a result of attending the sessions, and that most children are learning to make healthy choices.

The large majority of families in the area are engaging with appropriate health

services. Uptake of immunisation is high. Obesity in Reception-aged children across the reach area varies, being marginally above the average in some areas and well below in others. Staff work effectively in partnership with health visitors and other agencies to improve the physical and mental health outcomes for young children and their families to reduce health inequalities. For example, weekly clinics, nine-month and two-year-old development checks take place at the centre. Fortnightly 'Family Matters' meetings with the health visitor enable sharing of crucial information resulting in early identification and action taken for those most in need. Where provision did not exist, sessions such as 'Bumps to Babes' and 'Chatter Matters' now provide opportunities for parents to socialise and gain new skills to support them in caring for their children. Partners comment positively on how the work of the centre has helped reduce the feeling of rural isolation among families. Parents' comments such as, 'I feel less isolated' and 'You have helped me feel a lot more confident', are typical.

Parents say they feel very safe at the centre and are confident to share information with staff. Parents are well informed about safeguarding. They are helped to learn how to keep their children safe in the home and out in the community through activities during 'Stay and Play' sessions and national campaigns such as 'Child Safety Week'. As a result, most families report improved outcomes around safety. Hospital admissions have decreased year on year. Parents who completed training in paediatric first aid reported feeling more confident in their ability to know what to do with regard to children's accidents and emergency situations. Families subject to child protection plans are known to the centre and receive effective, integrated support to keep children safe.

Staff are knowledgeable and have a secure understanding of how to raise children's achievement across all areas of learning. They make good use of what they know about the children and plan sessions to meet their individual needs. Parents participate in activities and courses which build their confidence and develop their parenting skills. Children who attend the centre's 'Stay and Play', 'Jo Jingles' and 'Chatter Matters' sessions benefit particularly from focused support and a good range of play opportunities to help develop their communication and social skills. Children enjoy attending the centre and feel safe and secure.

The centre has established itself at the heart of the community. Parents report increased understanding of how to deal with their children's behaviour; consequently, children are well behaved. Parents have positive and mutually respectful relationships with staff and with each other. Parents make a good contribution to the centre's work through governance and decision making. Parents say that they feel listened to, respected and valued.

A few parents have engaged in volunteer work and have made gains in their personal development and achieved qualifications which have helped them develop skills and move on to further training and employment. For example, several parents are now employed to work at the centre. Staff recognise the importance of supporting volunteers and link with the Volunteer Bureau; however, they

acknowledge that the number of volunteers working at the centre is relatively low. Effective partnerships with agencies, such as Family Information Service and Warwickshire Welfare Rights Advice Service, mean that families are provided with a range of information to help them improve their economic stability or independence. However, links with Jobcentre Plus services are less effective, thereby limiting the centre's ability to provide up-to-date information regarding employment opportunities.

The centre provides a range of short courses and workshops, for example, 'Family Nosh' and 'Family First Aid'. In addition, staff are working in partnership with Arden Forest School and Adult Community Learning to develop outreach opportunities to support the most isolated families, particularly the Traveller communities. Celebration events take place acknowledging parents' and children's achievements through presentation of certificates, attendance stars and the 'You Did It' board.

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	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	2

How good is the provision?

2

Those involved with the centre have a secure understanding of the communities' needs. Assessment is used well to ensure the centre targets resources where they are most needed. Staff deploy resources well given the restrictions placed on them. They make good use of venues out in the community, such as schools, Gamecock Barracks and the library to deliver their sessions enabling the most vulnerable and isolated families to access services where previously there was no opportunity. As a result, take-up of most sessions is high, and outcomes for those in most need of intervention and support are good and improving.

Good-quality services and good care, guidance and support for families in difficulty are promoted through strong partnership working. A wide range of good-quality information covering issues such as benefits, childcare, safety and health is provided either directly by the centre or through signposting to other services. Detailed

assessments lead to an individual plan for the child and their family, avoid duplication of services and minimise the risk of the most vulnerable families falling through the net. Parents are treated with sensitivity and respect and they very much appreciate this. Many parents speak of the invaluable support they have received in parenting, and to promote health and well-being. They know they can turn to the centre when they are most in need and receive constructive advice and guidance. The centre provides well for children and families who are disabled or have special educational needs. Staff go that extra mile to ensure each child is included and not disadvantaged.

Provision to help children learn and develop is good. Activities are well located and well attended. A varied range of adult learning opportunities results in some parents gaining qualifications and support into employment. Parents and children gain from the sessions run by the centre, including good speech and language support and the enjoyable 'Stay and Play' sessions which are planned around the Early Years Foundation Stage to encourage exploration and enjoyment of learning.

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	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The centre is led and managed effectively by leaders who are committed, passionate and focused on the needs of the community. Governance and accountability arrangements are good at all levels. The advisory board is well informed and has a good understanding of local needs and the centre's priorities. Parents have representation on the board and members are confident and well equipped with the necessary skills and provide good levels of challenge and support. Strategic planning is based on good self-evaluation involving all staff, partners and the local authority. Professional supervision of staff and regular meetings with managers promote the shared values of staff and their ability to meet organisational expectations. Teamwork and morale among staff are good.

The effective partnership working means that families receive integrated services. Family support workers liaise effectively with social care and health services and voluntary partners to ensure that families at risk or facing challenging circumstances receive support tailored to their needs. This helps to ensure children are kept safe and adults at risk receive the support they need. Good-quality training and regular updates ensure that all staff are fully aware of safeguarding and child protection procedures.

Safeguarding is of the highest priority and all policies and procedures are implemented. Vetting and recruitment processes for staff and volunteers are robust. All staff are well trained in safeguarding. The centre plays a pivotal role in seeking to ensure that children are safe and, where necessary, child protection plans and the Common Assessment Framework are implemented effectively.

Equality and diversity are actively promoted in all aspects of the centre's work. All groups are welcomed and included and feel well supported. Celebration of festivals, good multi-cultural resources and displays reflect the diverse community, and parents respect this. Home visits and outreach work are invaluable in reaching families with the greatest need. Staff are constantly looking at ways in which to reach those families who are not accessing services. They ensure activities are signposted and promoted well, for example, through the distribution of leaflets, the centre's website and verbal recommendations. Subsidised childcare and crèche facilities enable parents to access training sessions. Families from the Nepalese community are extremely well supported and value the centre's work which is effectively breaking down barriers and integrating them into the community. The centre's efforts to engage with the Traveller families are becoming increasingly successful, resulting in more families accessing health services, early years provision and education. The families appreciate the centre's efforts, as one partner reported that parents show an overwhelming gratitude for being accepted and not being judged.

Children, including the most vulnerable two-year-olds, make good progress in their learning and development, with an increasing percentage gaining at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scales. Consequently, the gap between the lowest-achieving and the rest is being reduced.

A culture of self-evaluation and continuous improvement is integral to the work of the centre. A variety of resources and methods are used to gain users' feedback which is used to inform services development. All activities are routinely evaluated and discussed at weekly staff meetings. The centre has access to a range of data and has systems in place to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the centre's work. However, systems to track children's progress and the future success of users who have been supported in accessing outside services, training and employment are not as effective as they could be.

The centre provides good value for money by targeting resources where they are most needed, working in partnership with agencies to deliver services at local venues and training staff to deliver a range of services. For example, breastfeeding, speech and language, baby massage and baby signing.

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	2
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understood	
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	2

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

None.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Bulkington Children's Centre on 27–28 February 2013. We judged the centre as good overall.

Bulkington Children's Centre is a good children's centre. It is an inclusive, warm and welcoming place. The centre's vision to serve its community well is at the heart of the work of leaders, staff and all those who are involved in the centre. The centre is a good example of what can be achieved, even given the challenges of the diverse needs of the community and the rural location. This is the result of the shared vision and commitment of many people to serve the local community.

The centre manager has a clear vision and commitment to develop the centre's services further. She is a good manager and is supported by a passionate, caring and dedicated team. The manager has a good understanding of the centre's main strengths and areas for development. For example, she acknowledges that systems to track children's progress and the future success of users who have been

supported in accessing outside services, training and employment are not as effective as they could be. Therefore, we have asked them to improve this.

Outreach work is a particular strength of the centre's work and is having a significant impact on some of the most hard-to-reach groups, particularly the Nepalese families living at Gamecock Barracks and Traveller families. The centre is reaching the large majority (76%) of families within the reach area as well as supporting many families from outside the area who choose to attend the centre.

Partnership working is good overall. For example, staff work very well with the Ministry of Defence, Nepalese Worker, schools, Welfare Rights and health visitors to ensure they provide services you need. However, partnership working with midwives is not as strong and, therefore, we have asked the centre to work with the local authority to develop these partnerships so as to enable the centre to provide early support and advice to pregnant women.

The centre offers a good range of opportunities for you and your children to increase your understanding of how to keep healthy, through sessions such as 'Family Nosh', 'High Five' and 'Forest School'. You told us that you feel better able to support and enhance a healthy lifestyle for your families as a result of attending the sessions and that your children are learning to make healthy choices.

Almost all of you are engaging with health services where required. The good partnership with health visitors and other agencies means that you are able to easily access services at the centre, such as weekly clinics, nine-month and two-year-old development checks. For those families who are unable to access the centre, staff provide sessions such as 'Bumps to Babes' and 'Chatter Matters' out in the community. These provide opportunities for you to socialise and gain new skills to support you in caring for your children. Partners talked positively of how the work of the centre has helped reduce the feeling of rural isolation among families. Comments from parents such as, 'I feel less isolated' and 'You have helped me feel a lot more confident' are typical.

You told us that you and your children feel safe at the centre and you are confident to share information with staff. The staff ensure you are informed about safeguarding. You are helped to learn how to keep your children safe in the home and out in the community through 'Stay and Play' sessions and national campaigns such as 'Child Safety Week'. As a result, you report improved outcomes around safety. Families subject to child protection plans are known to the centre and receive effective, integrated support to keep children safe

Staff are knowledgeable and have a secure understanding of how to raise children's achievement across all areas of learning. They make good use of what they know about the children and plan sessions to meet their individual needs. Consequently, children are making good progress in their learning. You participate in activities and courses which build your confidence and develop your parenting skills. You are supported well in helping your children learn and play through good role modelling

by staff and the excellent toy library provision. Children who attend the centre's 'Stay and Play' sessions, 'Jo Jingles' and 'Chatter Matters' sessions benefit particularly from focused support and a good range of play opportunities to help develop their communication and social skills. Good transition arrangements on to school enable children to settle well, and have a positive impact on their learning and development.

The centre successfully supports a small number of volunteers within the centre to gain skills which help them move on to further learning and employment and supports parents in accessing learning and development opportunities, such as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Some of you access a range of activities through Adult Community Learning in partnership with the Village Centre. However, the centre knows there is more work to be done to increase opportunities for you to become volunteers and to increase the range of learning and development opportunities for you to be able to support your children's learning and to gain skills and qualifications that will help you move into employment. Therefore, we have asked them to take action to make sure this improves for you.

The inclusion of all children and your families is central to the centre's vision. Staff are effective in removing barriers to ensure that you and your families are included and not disadvantaged due to where you live or your personal circumstances. Much of the centre's work takes place out in the community delivering sessions such as 'Stay and Play', 'Chatter Matters' and parenting programmes. Partners, such as a speech and language specialist, health visitor and benefits advisor, attend these sessions to give you good support and advice. You speak very positively about the centre's services and how these have improved your health and well-being, and helped you to overcome feelings of isolation and low self-esteem, and how much your children enjoy attending the sessions.

We would like to thank everyone who came to speak with us. It was a privilege to be able to talk to you. Your honest and open discussions with us helped us immensely during the inspection. We thoroughly enjoyed spending time at your centre, and we wish you and your families the best for the future.

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