

# Inspection report for Brightfields Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	410987
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<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Susan Smith HMI

<b>Centre leader</b>	Julie Butcher
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Farcet CofE Primary School URN 110811
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Brightfields Pre-school URN EY391695

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 early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, the local authority locality manager, health professionals, local authority representatives, parents, the chair of the advisory board and front-line staff. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Brightfields Children's Centre is a phase two centre which was designated in 2008. It operates from purpose built premises in the grounds of Farcet C of E Primary School. The centre meets its core purpose through a range of services offered directly at the centre or at outreach venues. It serves part of the most northern area of Huntingdonshire and its reach includes Yaxley, Farcet and Farcet Fen. It is on the border with Peterborough unitary authority and is much closer to the city of Peterborough than it is to Huntingdon.

About 737 children aged under five live in the reach area. A very large majority of families within the area served by the centre are of White British heritage. There are very small numbers of migrant workers, mainly from Eastern Europe.

The economic position of families is mixed. The proportion of families claiming benefits, or those who are workless, is broadly average. The percentage of children living in poverty is low. However, there are pockets of deprivation and the percentage of children eligible for free school meals is significantly above the average for Cambridgeshire.

The centre is managed by Cambridgeshire local authority. Governance is through an advisory board made up of representatives of partner bodies which also oversees the work of the Sunshine Children's Centre in Sawtry. The centre manager oversees four children's centres serving a large geographical area.

The centre does not provide early year's childcare, but Brightfields Pre-School, which is run by the Pre-School Learning Alliance, operates from the same building. This is subject to a separate inspection. On entry to early years provision, children's skills, knowledge and abilities are below those expected for their age.

## 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 overall effectiveness of the centre is good and improving. This is due to the effective leadership and management of the centre and a highly skilled and professional staff team. They are self-critical and constantly search for ways to do things better. Together they have a good understanding of the challenges they face in the area they serve and are determined to improve the lives of families. As a result, the centre is building a strong and positive reputation within the community and this has established trust and confidence in the staff, partners and the services it delivers.

Staff skilfully implement the centre's effective assessment procedures and sensitively assess the individual needs of families. Many families have benefited from help in crisis situations and advice on strategies about managing children's behaviour. Users of the centre are full of praise for the help and support they receive and say 'The staff are so friendly, they help with everything and my children love it'.

A high priority is given to safeguarding and keeping children and families safe and protected, and the centre works effectively to ensure that this is maintained across all of its work. Governance is good, and clear lines of accountability are established. Self-evaluation is accurate and the views of families are regularly sought and promptly acted upon. Parents are involved in the advisory group and regularly have their say in the running of the centre. A sensible number of priorities underpin the centre's good capacity for sustaining improvement.

Although, the majority of families in the reach area are registered at the centre, including those from targeted groups, the centre is not complacent and has a

number of initiatives in progress or planned to increase registration and engagement so that more people can benefit from its services.

Most relationships and partnerships are good. The centre works well with different services and professionals as well as with neighbouring children's centres, enabling it to offer an overall good range of provision and signpost families to specialist services where necessary. However, shortage of health visitors and having a reach area which is served by two health trusts means that partnerships with health providers are not as strong as with other professionals in the area. In addition, data received from health services are neither always specific to the centre's reach area nor up-to-date. The centre is aware of this difficulty and works hard with other agencies to overcome it. As a result, the majority of families in the reach engage well with health services.

Parenting courses and a range of provision to enhance family relationships and children's play and communication skills are effective and often take place within the home environment. Whilst the centre quite rightly focuses on developing parents' confidences and self-esteem and is helping some parents to employment, it is aware that it should do more.

## **What does the centre need to do to improve further?**

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Increase the opportunities for adult learning to enable a larger majority of families in the area, including those from target groups, to further improve their economic stability and employability skills.
- The local authority should continue to work with the appropriate health authority to:
  - improve partnership working at a strategic and operational level
  - obtain precise data about the reach area to enable the centre to show impact on users' outcomes.
- Continue to work with health visitors and midwives to increase the registration levels of families, particularly those most in need of help, so that the vast majority of families in the reach are able to benefit from the services and activities provided by the centre.

## **How good are outcomes for families?**

<b>2</b>
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Families have a satisfactory but improving awareness of how to lead healthy lives and a majority engage well with health services. Access to baby massage, for those families identified as most in need, has made an important contribution to ensuring secure bonding and attachment. Centre Family Workers are Unicef trained which has enabled mothers to receive positive support for breastfeeding. Children develop positive attitudes towards food by eating healthy snacks and fresh fruit at activities

offered by the centre; although the precise impact on children's obesity levels is not yet clear. Family activities during the school holidays and on Saturdays are helping adults to understand the benefits of physical exercise for themselves and their children.

As a result of the centre's input, a large majority of children and families who use the centre make good progress in developing their understanding of safety in and around the home. Staff use the activities on offer to highlight safe practices. For example, they gently remind parents that lentils and oats have been put in the sand so they are not suitable for babies. Attending first-aid courses means that parents learn skills, such as how to respond if their child is choking and how generally to keep their children safe. Parents report that they are confident that their children are safe while attending the centre because of the security systems in place and staff's attentiveness. Good support is given to families who are subject to child protection plans in order to safeguard vulnerable children.

Children are helped to get ready for school through well-planned activities such as 'Let's Play', which help them build good attitudes to learning and grow in confidence. The fun activities offered at sessions enable parents to become more involved in their children's learning and to recognise the value of play in supporting development. At 67.4%, the proportion of children across the reach area who attain a good level of development is above the national average. Some children have received helpful advice and support or have been referred for more formal speech and language therapy as a result of the Speech and Language therapists attending 'Stay and Play' sessions. Both are proving to be successful. The centre is putting considerable effort into ensuring that children who are entitled to two-year-old funded places receive this. As a result, these children receive good early support to enable them to catch up with their peers in their learning and development.

Programmes, such as those to develop parenting skills, are showing a positive impact. As a result, parents say that they have a better understanding of why their children behave in certain ways and are better equipped to manage their children's behaviour. Staff work well to promote cohesion within the community so that families now show each other high levels of respect. Children's behaviour in the centre is good and staff are good role models.

Parents and childminders have opportunities to express their views, including parents from target groups. These include direct links with the advisory board and regular evaluations of activities. As a result, the centre staff adapt the sessions on offer to ensure an even better match with the needs of families.

The centre contributes well to motivating and building the confidence of families. Some adults who attend the centre are supported to develop the skills needed to gain employment through access to training and volunteering opportunities. However, the centre realises that more adults should be supported in this way and it is working very effectively with other agencies to explore how best to expand training opportunities.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

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

## How good is the provision?

**2**

Overall, provision is good. The centre provides a wide range of good quality services and activities that meet the needs of the reach area well. The quality of activities offered at the centre is good. They are well organised, informative and thoroughly enjoyed by those attending. Specialist support for those experiencing domestic violence and for young parents is available within the cluster and reflects local need well. Working with families in their home is an established strategy which is used appropriately and effectively by many of the staff linked to the centre. Outreach provision is being developed and is now offering suitable opportunities for families in the community to access services. For example, 'Rhyme Time' is offered from the library and 'stay and play' sessions are offered in the Queens Park Pavilion at Yaxley.

Parents praise the good level of care, guidance and support received from the staff at the centre. They state that staff are approachable, friendly and make everyone feel welcome. This is because the staff adopt a sensitive, friendly and non-threatening approach to assessing need, thereby successfully engaging users in the process. Good, tailored support develops families' well-being. Users feel well supported, particularly when in times of crisis. All parents who spoke to inspectors were positive about the centre and articulated clearly the impact different services have had on their families' lives. The 'team around the child' and Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes are used effectively to ensure good multi-agency working between centre staff and a suitable range of other professional partners.

Parents have access to a good range of opportunities to develop their parenting skills. Joint sessions for parents and children are fun and purposeful and staff effectively model good parenting skills. The progress and achievements of children who attend the sessions are observed by staff and recorded. These records are valued by parents who comment that they, 'did not know that children could learn so

much through activities’.

Staff regularly celebrate the success of families. They award certificates at the end of courses and value the work undertaken by children and their parents. A ‘WOW’ board catches important moments and achievements in children’s lives.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

**2**

Despite a period of recent disruption in the leadership team across the cluster, the centre is managed well. The staff work well together, and morale is high as a result. They are focused on local need and improving outcomes for centre users. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Day-to-day management ensures that the premises are used effectively. Resources, including the deployment of staff expertise are managed effectively. Outcomes overall are good, and the centre, therefore, provides good value for money.

Staff supervision is robust and is valued by the team, as are the professional development opportunities they receive. The local authority provides a clear framework for the centre and effective oversight. Governance and accountability are clear. Although, attendance levels at the advisory board have declined a little at the past few meetings, it is functioning well, increasingly holding the centre to account and challenging it to improve further.

A range of monitoring and evaluation systems ensure services are improving outcomes for families and help staff to identify where they need to develop services further. As a result, self-evaluation is accurate and leads to the setting of priority areas for improvement. Systems to measure the longer-term impact are yet to be fully embedded.

Information sharing protocols are good. Centre staff attend early intervention team meetings, especially when working with families who have complex needs. Specific work with families where children are subject to a child protection plan or identified as in need has led to improved outcomes reducing the risk of harm to children. Safeguarding requirements are fully met. Staff are well trained and have a good understanding of their responsibilities to safeguard and protect children’s welfare. Parents are also well informed about the centre’s expectations and respect rules such as those of not using mobile telephones or cameras in sessions. Recruitment and vetting procedures are robust and follow the local authority requirements and



recommended good practice. Staff carry out daily risk assessments to ensure the centre and community venues are safe.

Everyone at the centre is treated with high levels of respect, and the range of families who access services reflect the community it serves. The inclusion of all families is promoted effectively by the centre. The centre is successful in removing barriers to services, such as providing crèche places so parents can access parenting courses. The centre provides effective support for families with disabled children and those with special educational needs.

Parents feel confident to share their views and opinions and they play a developing role in helping shape the centre's services, for example through their survey responses and post-activity evaluations. A parents' forum is in place, although membership is currently low. Staff at the centre are encouraging more parents to join. A parent is the chair of the advisory board which enables users to be involved in more formal decision making about the centre.

The centre has numerous, potentially effective, initiatives planned with partners to further increase health registration levels, training opportunities and user engagement.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

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

The findings from the most recent inspections of the Early Years provision on site and local primary schools were used to inform the judgements made during the inspection.

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Brightfields Children's Centre on 28 February- 1 March 2013. We judged the centre as good overall.

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

We found that staff are highly enthusiastic and passionate about their work. This is because the leadership team provides a clear sense of direction and purpose, which is driving improvement. Leaders have a clear understanding of the centre's strengths and what they need to do to improve.

The centre uses data about its area and what it knows about the community to identify need, and to plan and review services. Although the centre serves the community well, staff are not complacent, and the centre has a number of initiatives in progress or planned to increase registration levels and engagement further. We have asked the centre to continue to work with health visitors and midwives to increase the registration levels of families, particularly those most in need of help, so that the vast majority of families in the reach are able to benefit from the services and activities provided by the centre.

The centre works well with most partners to deliver a good range of services both at the centre and in community venues. However, a shortage of health visitors and having a reach area which is served by two health trusts means that partnerships with health providers are not as strong as with other professionals in the area. In addition, data received from health professionals is not always specific to the centres reach area and up-to-date. The centre and the agencies it works with are aware of this difficulty and working hard to overcome it. We have asked the local authority to continue to work with the appropriate health authority to improve further partnership working at a strategic and operational level and to obtain precise data about the reach area to enable the centre to show impact on users' outcomes.

You told us you enjoy you time at the children's centre. It enables you to spend time with your children, playing and learning together. You told us how this enables you to support your children's learning at home. At 67.4%, the proportion of children

across the reach area who attain a good level of development is above the national average.

The centre has put considerable effort into ensuring that children who are entitled to two-year-old funded places receive this. As a result, these children receive early support to enable them to catch up with their peers in their learning and development.

All staff place the utmost importance on you and your families and always provide a listening ear for you. They are passionate about creating a welcoming environment where you feel at home and are able to talk freely about things that matter to you or are causing you concern. As a result, you value the centre, which means you have no hesitation in using the services regularly.

Many of you told us the positive impact the centre has had on your lives, particularly when you may be experiencing difficulties. We found the staff are extremely caring towards you and provide you with the relevant guidance you need.

You told us that you think that the centre is a safe place for parents and their children. Inspectors agree with this view and think that staff work very well to ensure the health and safety of all who use the centre. Procedures for safeguarding children and families are good. Staff are dedicated to providing a secure environment and they work closely with other agencies to obtain the specialist support you need.

You told us how much you and your children enjoy attending the activities on offer to you and developing new skills. We noted that some of you develop your confidence, self-esteem and emotional well-being. This leads to a few of you undertaking formal training and qualifications and being successful in returning to work. We have asked the centre to provide more opportunities for more of you to attend adult learning and obtain qualifications to improve your economic stability and independence.

We enjoyed our time at your centre. It was a privilege to be able to talk with you. Your honesty and openness helped us immensely during the inspection. We are very grateful for your help and we wish each of you every success for the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).