

Inspection report for Barton Hill Specialist Children's Centre

Local authority	Bristol
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Centre leader	Simon Robinson
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Barton Hill Primary School and Specialist Children's Centre URN: 130997
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Barton Hill Primary School and Specialist Children's Centre EY 363806

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 staff and senior leaders, parents and members of the advisory board. They met with a range of partners, observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Barton Hill Specialist Children's Centre opened in September 2006. The centre operates from three main sites including Barton Hill Primary School, the Family Centre, known locally as the Barton Hill Settlement, and the Wellspring Healthy Living Centre, which is where health services are delivered. The full core offer is provided through a range of supporting services including health support, adult courses and workshops. The three organisations have shared bidding processes, commissioned services and partnership working across the locality with a specific emphasis on adult learning, public health, family support and early years. It is a phase two centre located in Barton Hill, Bristol. The centre physically forms part of the Barton Hill Primary School which also caters for disabled children under seven years of age and also provides for 120 nursery-age children.

The community the centre serves is socially, economically and culturally diverse. Families living in the reach area come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds; the largest group of families being of White British heritage at 68.3%, with the remainder comprising of families from different minority ethnic heritages, including White other, Somali, Turkish, Black Caribbean and Black African. The three main communities are of White British, Eastern European and Somali heritage. Statistics show that families living in the reach area live in one of the most deprived areas in the country, being in the top 10% across all multiple deprivation indicators. The area

has a mixture of types of housing with some privately owned, a significant proportion are privately rented and a high number of families live in social housing.

Currently 936 children under the age of five years live in the centre's reach area, with a large majority registered with the centre; 60% of these children live in households dependent on workless benefits. The percentage of families benefiting from the childcare element of Working Tax Credit is also high at 59.2%. The large majority of children enter early years provision with a range of skills and knowledge below expectation, particularly in communication, language, literacy and personal, social and emotional development.

The local authority is responsible for governance of the centre. It does this through the main school governance board via a children's centre sub-committee consisting of local professionals and a parent. The centre is also supported by a centre improvement officer who is an employee of Bristol City Council. This post has been in place since September 2012. As a result of many recent staffing issues, the headteacher of the primary school formally became the centre lead in October 2012.

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

Barton Hill Children's Centre is a satisfactory centre that provides adequately for the large majority of local families who achieve satisfactory outcomes overall. The centre makes effective use of Barton Hill Settlement and the Wellspring Healthy Living Centre, combining other community-related activities with centre activities. This has proven popular for families, as one mother said, 'We like the idea that we can go to different venues within the area, it's a nice change.'

The care, guidance and support given to all families are good because there are effective support systems in place to help families most in need of support. This, coupled with good collaborative working with most partner agencies, secures a swift and appropriate response to families, particularly in times of crisis.

Equality and diversity are promoted very successfully because the inclusion of all children and families is given high priority. Centre staff have successfully engaged with the three main communities living in the area. Registration of families at the centre clearly reflects the demographic breakdown of the local community. The centre has been particularly successful in increasing the engagement of families with disabled children.

Clear advice is given on a range of health-related matters that help families to live more healthy lives. However, the level of childhood obesity has risen recently. The centre's development plan correctly addresses many areas for improvements, for example the need to improve obesity profiles for Reception-age children. The headteacher works closely with staff, users and community partners to provide a varied range of services, activities and groups which meet the needs of those users who attend regularly. Parents are positive about what the centre provides for them and their children, which is why the centre's overall effectiveness is satisfactory.

Self-evaluation is effective and planning for improvement is appropriate and provides the centre with satisfactory capacity for improvement. Some data are being used well by the children's centre; however, a lack of data analysis at a reach level hampers the centre's ability to evaluate its effectiveness objectively. Not enough is being done at a strategic level, especially with partners from health services and Jobcentre Plus, to make data available to support the centre in planning events that better meet the identified needs of local families.

Whilst governance is satisfactory overall, the advisory board, operating as a sub-committee of the main school governing body, is not fulfilling all aspects of its role and does not sufficiently challenge the centre about its work. The centre recognises this and has appropriate plans in place to reconstitute the advisory board and train new members.

Parents make an effective, albeit informal, contribution to the centre's work through regular discussions with staff. However, too few parents are actively involved in shaping centre activities. For example, there is no parents' forum and no parents acting as volunteers at the centre.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work with health colleagues and community outreach workers to reduce obesity rates, by increasing the number of health and fitness related activities for families, whilst reinforcing parents awareness of the need for children to eat healthily.
- Press ahead with implementing the plans in place to work with the local authority, Jobcentre Plus and health partners at a strategic level to improve the

- quality of reach area specific data so that the centre can plan future activities clearly focused on better meeting the identified needs of all target groups.
- Improve governance of the centre further by establishing a centre advisory board with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, ensuring that a broad range of appropriately appointed members are suitably trained to be able to effectively challenge and support the centre.
- Widen the involvement of parents in the centre by increasing the use of parents as volunteers, establishing an active parents' forum and ensuring more parents are represented on the advisory board.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Outcomes for families are satisfactory overall. Parents are relaxed and enjoy the welcoming atmosphere of the centre in the knowledge that their babies and older siblings are happy. The number of mothers who breastfeed their babies at six to eight weeks has risen significantly over the last two years and, at 68.7%, is well above the national average. However, despite much good work in educating families about the benefits of exercise and healthy diets, the proportion of children classified as overweight or obese at the end of the Reception Year, at 14%, was above the national average last year. Detailed research by the centre has shown that cultural influences regarding diet and eating habits are a major factor for one significant minority ethnic group predominant in the reach area. Health visitors are aware of the situation locally and are working with centre staff to pursue the actions in the centre's improvement plan, although it is too soon to measure the impact of this work.

The vast majority of users who attend activities say that they feel safe and that their children are appropriately protected. Parents and carers are confident that they know what to do in an emergency. Accidental injuries in the reach area are below national figures. Children, who are subject to a child protection or child in need plan, are carefully supported and staff are clear about their responsibilities when working with families at a time of crisis. Parents of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive good support through The Pod, where well-qualified and experienced staff provide sensitive safe support for families.

Children and parents enjoy and achieve satisfactorily at the centre. The proportion of children achieving 78+ scale points by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage including in personal, social and emotional development and in communication, language and literacy is improving each year. At 60%, outcomes were just below the national average of 64% in 2012. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and the rest is closing faster than the national rate. It has reduced by 215 over the last three years and, at 30%, is currently broadly in line with the national average. Much good work is being done by the local authority children's centre improvement officer with staff and parents helping them to improve children's school readiness.

Children who attend the centre's groups enjoy the experiences provided. Parents are

very happy about the progress of their children and speak positively about improvements to their child's speech. As one mother said, 'He speaks so clearly now, he can express himself and doesn't get so frustrated.' Children behave well during all activities run by the centre. Staff are good role models for parents who demonstrate that they are learning parenting skills as a result of clear guidance and support from staff. However, parents are not sufficiently involved in running the centre. Although parents informally give feedback to staff following the sessions they attend, there is no active parents' forum and only one parent currently on the sub-committee which governs the centre. Furthermore, not enough is being done to develop parents as future volunteers during centre activities.

Childminders are actively involved in working with centre staff and a local speech therapist to support families in the area. Parents, including fathers, attend a range of courses held at the Barton Hill Settlement to improve their parenting and other skills, with first aid and English conversation for non-English speakers being the most popular. The centre offers opportunities for parents seeking to improve their employment chances through attendance at activities run at other locations. Parents seeking advice and guidance about employment are appropriately signposted to various partners' services.

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

The range of activities, services and groups offered by the centre is satisfactory and meets the needs of a large majority of local families who engage with the centre. Registrations at the centre have increased steadily recently as a result of focused centre activity to improve engagement with more families. The headteacher has budgeted funding for the provision of an additional outreach worker who will have a clear mandate to engage with targeted families within the reach area. There are some examples of good quality outreach work, including regular play sessions designed to meet the varying needs of children, a rolling training programme for

parents, a 'women only' group and a popular Eastern European group which successfully attracts families from all over Bristol. While services are appropriate, the centre has yet to work more effectively with the local authority, Jobcentre Plus and health colleagues to improve the availability and use of reach data in order to further improve the outcomes for all target groups, for example fathers.

The provision to help children to learn and develop is satisfactory. All sessions involving children are planned with the Early Years Foundation Stage areas of learning in mind and successfully promote children's development. Participation rates and attendance levels on all courses for adults are good. All activities, for children and adults, are appropriately reviewed and changes are implemented in light of families' views and evaluation of their effectiveness. All centre users report they feel valued and respected. English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses are effective in raising the confidence of users as well as improving their use of English. Achievement, although celebrated by the centre and partners by displaying the work of users on walls, could be more prominent.

There are good support systems in place to help families most in need of support. Advice, support and guidance given to families are effective because the enthusiastic staff work hard to make contact with hard-to-engage families, closely assess and respond well to their needs. The centre is fully aware of the difficulties and challenges faced by many families within its reach area, including feelings of isolation and issues of domestic abuse. Very effective care and guidance, plus good collaborative working with partner agencies, for example the police and social care, secure a swift and appropriate response to families, particularly in times of crisis.

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	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

The leadership and management and overall effectiveness of the centre are satisfactory. The narrowing achievement gap reflects the good work the centre is doing to promote equality and the inclusion of all children and families is prioritised well. The centre is fully accessible and has been extremely successful in increasing the engagement of families with disabled children, with 21 children happily attending the purpose-built provision provided by The Pod. Staff ensure that all children and parents, regardless of background, aptitudes or other differences, have equal access to the provision available. The centre meets its statutory duties well.

Partnerships are satisfactory because there are good links with other agencies, such as the police, Barton Hill Settlement and voluntary, faith and community groups, although relationships with colleagues at the Wellspring Centre could be improved. Effective use is made of commissioned services via the Barton Hill Settlement to expand the activities on offer to families. Staff morale is now high following many recent changes and all involved with the centre are keen to provide a good service for families. Senior managers within the local authority are increasingly supportive, understand the issues facing the centre and are working closely with centre staff and the headteacher to improve services. Staff training is appropriately targeted towards developing staff skills and services further.

Following significant recent changes, which have effectively clarified the role of governors, governance of the centre is satisfactory. However, the existing sub-committee responsible for the centre requires expansion so that it better represents key partners working in the reach area. The headteacher, together with the children's centre improvement officer, has appropriate plans in place to form a new advisory board, to replace the sub-committee and to recruit and train new board members. Self-evaluation is effective and planning for improvement is appropriate. However, the headteacher acknowledges that insufficient attention is being given to evaluating the impact of the centre's work on target groups or to using data to meet the needs of all groups in the area better.

Safeguarding arrangements, including all statutory requirements, are satisfactory, including those for child protection and looked after children. Criminal record checks are completed appropriately. The centre has clear policies for safer recruitment and risk assessment, which are appropriately implemented in practice. Safeguarding training is regular and up to date and staff are confident when dealing with safeguarding issues.

Senior leaders ensure a satisfactory range of enjoyable services are matched to the wants and needs of the families who use the centre. Value for money is satisfactory. The centre is increasingly successful in engaging with the community and with families whose circumstances make them hard to engage. All users reported that they found the centre, and also outreach facilities, welcoming and that all staff were friendly. As one mother told us, 'It doesn't matter who you are, they (staff) treat you with respect and listen to you.'

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	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	3
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

The recent inspection findings at Barton Hill Primary School and Specialist Children's Centre, URN: 130997, and Barton Hill Primary School and Specialist Children's Centre, EY 363806, were used to inform this inspection.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Barton Hill Specialist Children's Centre on 20 and 21 March 2013. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you for telling us about how much you and your children enjoy coming to the centre and its outreach sites such as the Settlement Centre and the Wellspring Healthy Living Centre. Positive relationships with staff and each other help those of you who have a concern or worry to seek help quickly. Many of you told us how much you value the personal support you have been given from time to time and how you value the groups that take place.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is assisted by a skilled centre staff team which offers good care, guidance and support to help you and your families improve your well-being. This is especially so for those of you who experience significant challenges in your lives from time to time.

Governance of the centre is satisfactory. The headteacher and his staff are well supported by a children's centre improvement officer from the local authority; they

are clear about the issues facing the centre. We have recommended that the centre creates an advisory board ensuring that new members, including more parents, are appropriately trained so that they are clear about the role and responsibilities of the board to challenge and support the centre.

The centre helps you and your families to keep safe by encouraging you to follow procedures for signing yourself and your children in and out of groups. A varied range of activities supports those of you who attend well, but outcomes are currently satisfactory because a significant number of people living in the reach area are still not engaging with the centre's services, especially those from some target groups. We have asked the centre to make better use of data produced by the local authority, Jobcentre Plus and also health partners. This is so that it can offer services which will better support the most vulnerable families living within the reach area.

A high proportion of mothers breastfeed their babies, but obesity levels in young children give some cause for concern. The centre is working to address this with health partners, although much more needs to be done. We have asked the centre to increase activities which promote exercise for children as well as increasing support to enable you and your children to lead healthier lives. There is satisfactory support to help those of you who are out of work to return to education, training or employment.

Many of you tell centre staff what you think of the centre and the work that it does, but do so informally. Therefore, currently there are limited opportunities for you to contribute to the centre's work. We have recommended that the centre establishes a parents' forum, makes more use of volunteers within the centre and ensures parents are well represented on the soon-to-be-formed advisory board.

Your children learn well and enjoy their learning. Many of you commented on how centre staff have helped you to become better parents, especially how to help develop your child's speech and language. Results from the Early Years Foundation Stage profiles show that your children reach an improved level of development from their starting point and achieve successfully. The centre is doing good work to promote equality and the inclusion of all children and families is prioritised well. The centre is fully accessible and has been extremely successful in increasing the engagement of families with disabled children.

We understand why so many of you enjoy attending the centre and again wish to thank you for sharing your thoughts with us during our visit.

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