

The Berries Children's Centre

Berrybrook Primary School, Greenacres Avenue, Wolverhampton, WV10 8NZ

Inspection date	24–25 July 2013		
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families	Good		2
The quality of practice and services	Good		2
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management	Good		2

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a good centre.

- The centre engages well with its local community. A very large proportion of families, particularly those in most need of support and those who live in the most disadvantaged areas within the community, use the centre's services.
- Good leadership, management and governance and the proactive work of a highly-skilled centre leader have led to rapid improvements over the last 18 months, and have resulted in many more families engaging with the centre.
- Centre staff know the families in the area really well and have a good understanding of their needs.
- Efficient use of resources, increased registration and participation rates and the wide range of high-quality services which help families to improve their lives indicate that the centre provides good value for money.
- Children and adults benefit from strong multi-agency partnerships and well-targeted individual support, which includes staff working with families in their own homes. This results in children making good progress and parents learning new parenting skills and gaining a better understanding of their children's needs.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good and safety is actively promoted. Parents appreciate the advice and support on home-safety checks to help them protect their families.
- Parents speak highly of the centre, its good resources and enthusiastic and very committed staff. Parents are fully involved in shaping its services through volunteering and representation on the advisory body.

It is not outstanding because:

- There is insufficient access to accredited courses and functional skills programmes to further enhance adults' employability skills.
- The centre has not been successful in reducing the proportion of young children who are obese, which is much higher than the national average.
- Services delivered with health partners to encourage mothers to breastfeed have not improved breastfeeding rates.
- The centre does not provide enough opportunities for children to see words in print.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre manager, centre staff, officers from the local authority, parents and users of the centre, partners from health, education and early years services, and representatives from local schools, voluntary organisations and the advisory board. They also had a telephone conversation with the adult learning manager from Walsall College.

The inspectors visited activities which took place at the centre and a 'Stay and Play' session in the community room at the fire station in Cannock. They also accompanied family support workers as they visited families in their homes.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Qaisra Shahraz, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Karen Cooper

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

The Berries Children's Centre is a stand-alone, phase one centre which opened in 2006 and operates from Berrybrook Primary School. It is one of 17 centres in the city of Wolverhampton. It offers a wide range of services such as family support, adult learning, health services and work with childminders. Linked childcare provision is provided by Berrybrook Primary School. This provision is subject to separate inspection arrangements and was last inspected in May 2006. The centre is managed by the governing body of Berrybrook Primary School on behalf of Wolverhampton local authority. An advisory board, comprising partners and parents, assists with governance.

The large majority of families living within the local area are White British. There are 767 children under five years of age living in the area, some parts of which are in the 10% most disadvantaged areas in the country. Unemployment is above the national average; 35.4% of families are dependent on workless benefits. Most children in the area enter early years education with skills typically below the level expected for their age.

The centre's key target groups are families living in the most disadvantaged communities, lone, young parents, those living on low incomes or in workless homes, and vulnerable children living in households with domestic violence.

A public consultation on the proposal to reduce the number of children's centres has recently been completed by the local authority. The findings will be published at the end of July.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Improve adults' economic well-being and widen the opportunity for more parents, particularly those from workless homes, to enhance their employability by:
 - reviewing adult learning provision to ensure that adults have good opportunities to develop employability skills and to progress to further education, including to accredited learning opportunities
 - developing the partnerships with training providers to widen learning programmes including those to improve adults' literacy and numeracy skills.
- Improve health outcomes for parents and children by:
 - working with health colleagues to develop more antenatal support that encourages a much higher proportion of mothers to breastfeed for longer
 - helping families to adopt healthier lifestyles and better eating habits in order to reduce the proportion of children at the end of the Reception Year who are obese.
- Create a stimulating environment including wall displays of children's work which is rich in print where children can learn about words, such as using label and names.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The Berries Children Centre is in the heart of the local community and is highly valued by the families benefiting from its services. The proportion of families engaging with the centre has increased significantly in one year from 49% to 81%. The centre is particularly successful in engaging with a very large proportion of its targeted groups, especially families from the most deprived areas. For example, the number of lone, workless families and fathers who access its

services has increased markedly.

- Centre staff work productively with a range of partners from health, early years, social care and education organisations. As a result of this work and through effective referrals and sharing of information and data, families with the greatest needs are quickly identified and early help is provided to ensure that problems do not escalate.
- The centre provides a good balance of universal and specially made services that benefit families from target groups. Families benefit enormously from a wide variety of sessions with their children such as 'Stay and Play', 'Home Learning', 'Bookstart', 'Terrific 2s', 'Safety in the Home', and the child safety programme 'Say No, Say No'.
- The uptake of free entitlements to early education is high. It has a positive impact on outcomes for children, including improved language, personal, social and physical development.
- Home visits form part of the highly effective outreach support that assists families who are most in need. For example, in the 'Home Learning' sessions, children are encouraged to learn through play in their own home environment. This enables parents to take good ownership of their children's development.
- A number of case studies and tracking of children subject to child protection plans, demonstrate the centre's very positive impact on families' lives as a result of using its services. One very grateful father said, 'The centre has made a major difference to my family's life.'
- Although the proportion of mothers breastfeeding their babies has increased over the last two years, the centre's partnership with the breastfeeding team has not been successful in bringing the proportion of mothers who sustain breastfeeding for at least six to eight weeks up to the national average. Too few mothers access antenatal support for breastfeeding.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- Staff demonstrate a strong commitment to improving services at all levels. Through effective care, guidance, targeted support and working in partnership with others such as health professionals, the centre makes a good contribution to meeting the needs of the community and to reducing inequalities.
- A large majority of parents benefit from a wide range of good-quality learning activities that improve the lives of their families. For example parenting programmes such as 'Parenting Puzzle' are having a positive impact on parents' ability to manage their children's behaviour.
- Staff plan enjoyable learning experiences for both parents and their children. Sessions such as 'Stay and Play' help children become better prepared for the transition to school. Data for the local area show that children's attainment across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile is improving strongly and the gap between those who do well and those who do not is narrowing, and is currently at 24.5%.
- Parents make a valuable contribution to shaping the centre's services, for example through the active parents' forum, as volunteers or as representatives on the advisory board.
- Through its strong partnerships and the work of the family support team, the centre is highly successful in reducing inequalities and safeguarding the most vulnerable families including looked after children and those at risk of domestic abuse. Good care and expert guidance result in a large

number of families benefiting from tailor-made packages of support including those delivered in their homes.

- The centre is committed to promoting healthy living styles. Parents are encouraged to develop their knowledge of healthy eating through informal guidance, 'Let's Get Cooking' sessions, 'Yums' group and the 'Fruity Fridays' fruit bags initiative with recipe cards. However, these initiatives have not been successful in increasing significantly the number of families who adopt healthy lifestyles or in reducing the proportion of children in the Reception Year who are obese; at 21.1%, this proportion is much higher than the national average.
- The centre does not do enough to help families to reduce the high level of unemployment in the area by providing sufficient access to accredited adult learning programmes which would improve the skills, knowledge and employability of adults who are out of work. Partnership with the YMCA, however, has been very effective in helping adults to complete their curriculum vitae and to practise for job interviews. New programmes to develop literacy and numeracy skills in conjunction with Walsall College are planned for the next academic year.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Leadership, management and governance arrangements are effective in enabling the centre to meet its priorities. All partnerships speak highly of the improvements to the centre's services in the last few months and the good relationships established with the centre.
- Accurate self-evaluation indicates that leaders know what is working best and where scope for improvement lies. The collection of data is sufficient and is used well by local authority managers, governors and staff to accurately monitor the impact of all the services provided to families.
- The centre is led by a highly proactive and skilled centre manager who is very knowledgeable and ambitious, and demonstrates a strong commitment to improving services at all levels. She supports an equally hard-working and skilled team who share the centre leader's vision and commitment.
- Local authority managers work well with centre staff to monitor the centre's performance by regular formal and informal discussions with staff and monitoring reviews which are well informed by good-quality information. Discussions taking place in monthly 'special interest groups' meetings have resulted in effective decision making, resulting in clear policies underpinned by a good focus on the centre's priorities.
- The advisory group has good representation from a wide range of partners with relevant expertise, which is well used. It both challenges and supports the centre while keeping a close eye on service delivery planning.
- Staff are committed to the removal of inequalities in accessing services for the most vulnerable families and meeting individual users' needs. The centre promotes diversity well through celebrations of world festivals, use of appropriate multicultural resources in the play area and positive images of people from around the world.
- Safeguarding of families is a top priority for the centre. Robust security systems with coded locks on most internal doors, staff vetting procedures and risk assessments help to ensure children's welfare is well protected. Staff implement policies and procedures effectively to reduce any risk of harm to children. This includes using the Common Assessment Framework for all first face-to-face meetings in order to assess needs and to ensure that the most appropriate agencies provide early

intervention and support to families, particularly those with the greatest needs.

- Accommodation and resources are good and used efficiently to meet agreed local priorities and the needs of children and families in the area. Children benefit from a good range of children's toys, including in the large, creative and well-resourced outdoor playing area. However there are few displays on the wall in the nursery area including of children's work. This is a missed opportunity to create a stimulating early years environment rich in print where children can learn about words and names.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Practice consistently reflects the highest aspirations for children and their families and as a result inequalities are reducing rapidly and gaps are closing.
Grade 2	Good	Practice enables most children and their families to access good quality services that improve children's wellbeing and achieve the stated outcomes for families.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	Performance is not as good as it might reasonably be expected to be in one or more key areas.
Grade 4	Inadequate	The needs of children and families in its area are not being met and/or the leaders and managers are not providing sufficient challenge to bring about improvement to the quality of services.

Children's Centre

Unique reference number	23155
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	423067
Managed by	The governing body of Berrybrook Primary School on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	767
Centre leader	Kate Lees
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected.
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