

Castle Batch Children's Centre

Castle Batch Community Centre, Bishop Avenue, Worle, Weston-super-Mare, BS22 7PQ

Inspection date 15–16 January 2014

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.

- A large majority of local children and families are registered with the centre and using health, education and support services.
- Centre workers are well qualified and highly skilled. As a result, centre groups and activities for adults and children to learn and develop are of a consistently good quality.
- Established links with early years settings and childminders are good and ensure that eligible children take up places in high quality early years provision, and their families are supported fully.
- Partnership with other workers means that support for disabled children and those with special educational needs makes a big difference to the lives of local families.
- Services are improving well because leaders are having a positive impact on the centre.
- The links between the Castle Batch Children's Centre, Locking and Locking Castle Children's Centre, and Milton and Old Worle Children's Centre are coordinated and led well. As a result, the centre makes good use of its resources.
- Members of the centre partnership board know the centre in detail and give valuable support in helping it to improve.

It is not outstanding because:

- Pathways to employment are not promoted well enough and there are insufficient opportunities for adults to take up training. In addition, centre leaders do not always keep good records of adult learners' development towards being in work.
- Not enough parents are involved in advising the centre through the partnership board.
- Some data from the local authority are too complex for leaders to judge what difference services are making to children and their families.
- Some records that review the work of the centre are too long and unclear to show all of what the centre is achieving.

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. It was carried out at the same time as the inspections of two other children's centres which were Locking and Locking Castle Children's Centre, and Milton and Old Worle Children's Centre.

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

The inspectors held meetings with staff, leaders, partners, and representatives of the parent forum, partnership board and the local authority. They observed the centre's work, spoke informally with parents and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Tim Vaughan	Her Majesty's Inspector, Lead Inspector
Joyce Cox	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Castle Batch Children's Centre is located in the coastal town of Weston-super-Mare. The children's centre is managed directly by the local authority and has its own partnership board. It works collaboratively with two other centres, Locking and Locking Castle Children's Centre and Milton and Old Worle Children's Centre, which together with Banwell, Winford and Sandford Children's Centre, from February 2014, will make up East Locality Children's Centre group.

The centre serves 1,496 children under five years of age living within 10 super output areas. Of these areas, two are ranked in the top 30% poorest areas in the country, while some other areas are much more affluent. The proportion of young children who live in households that are out of work and claiming benefits is estimated at 16%. Data demonstrate that the population is mostly White British with a small number of children and families from a range of minority ethnic groups. The centre has identified target groups which include: mothers under 20 years of age; children living in workless households; and families living in the poorest areas. Children start early education with a range of skills that are either below or broadly in line with those expected.

The centre is a phase three children's centre, designated in March 2010. It offers a range of activities and services to meet its core purpose, including family support, outreach work, stay and play groups, child health clinics and parenting programmes.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Increase the economic stability of families by:
 - promoting pathways to employment
 - providing a wider range of adult learning and courses to help parents return to work
 - developing better systems to track adults' progress towards gaining new skills and gaining employment.
- Improve the leadership, governance and management of the centre by:
 - ensuring the local authority provides a clear and succinct set of data for centre leaders to use
 - ensuring that records of evaluation of the work of the centre are clear and succinct
 - increasing the number of parent members on the advisory board.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families Good

- There is a high level of contact between health visitors and families in the local area which enables good promotion of the children's centre. As a result, most families are registered with the centre and an increasing number of expectant mothers are attending a helpful range of clinics and health-focused groups on site.
- Centre leaders have established positive links with the two nearby children's centres. This has helped families to access services wherever this makes most sense for them. Over the past three years, the large majority of local families have used at least one of the three centres. This has helped all three centres to work together and increasingly refine their efforts to reach those families in greatest need.

- Through close liaison with health colleagues and other partners, children's centre staff and leaders gain a good knowledge of the needs of the local community. Where necessary, services are delivered in the home, often alongside other professionals, such as health visitors. This enables families who cannot come into the centre to access the valuable services they need.
- When planning services, staff make good links to other organisations, including those in the voluntary sector. Consequently, the number of families, including younger mothers and workless families, who register and use the centre is good and continuing to increase. Leaders are not complacent and they quickly use any new information to refine who their target groups need to be.
- The centre helps families who are eligible to take up their free entitlement to good quality early years places with local nurseries or childminders. As a result, a high number of eligible two-, three- and four-year-olds are accessing places in the local area and there is good, dedicated support for their parents from family support workers.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The children's centre is increasingly a hub for referrals from other professionals. It provides a good balance of activities aimed at specific groups of people as well as those open to all. A wide mix of children and families participate in centre groups and the centre values the heritage, language and abilities of each individual, thus promoting equality and diversity.
- Care, guidance and support for families are coordinated and successful across the area and the centre is providing good early help to those in greatest need, including those who live in poorer areas. This has resulted in high rates of immunisation, declining levels of smoking in pregnancy, low levels of obesity, good take up of ante-natal and post-natal support and a good proportion of breastfeeding mothers.
- Due to useful support from local health visitors and centre workers, and activities such as the 'Keeping Well' group, many local mothers have improved how they feel after the birth of their baby.
- The quality of services available to families across activities is consistently good. The wide range of support to help disabled children and those with special educational needs is a strength of local services and is highly valued by local families.
- Centre staff are highly qualified and skilful. They model ably how to play, talk and listen to young children at a range of centre groups. Sessions for children and for parents are planned and resourced well, with good use of external expertise such as from health services. As a result, children attending the centre make good progress from their starting points. Adults report that they have become better parents in how they support their children's development and safety.
- The centre makes positive links to support local childminders, early years settings and schools. The shared emphasis upon improving quality, for example, in the learning of boys, is improving children's outcomes and narrowing the gaps between groups at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage in the local area.
- The centre provides good opportunities for volunteers to learn new skills and to progress on to further training and study. Parents value opportunities for community learning through the centre, covering topics such as applying for benefits, form filling, and applying for school places. There is good evidence that younger mothers, a target group, are benefiting from such support. However, the centre does not provide enough opportunities for adult learning. In addition, leaders do not keep good enough records of the progression that adults make towards employment.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Leaders have a clear overview of how well the centre is improving because they check the quality

of centre activities frequently. They review which target groups are attending services and the difference that is being made to the lives of local families. They ensure that the small number of families from minority ethnic groups are included in the centre and that discrimination is not tolerated. Leaders consider parents' evaluations of activities and review centre data regularly. As a consequence, services are improving year on year. However, some records of self-evaluation are too descriptive and over long to show what is being achieved.

- Centre staff are supported fully through good access to training, clear appraisal processes, structured supervision sessions, and regular team meetings. As a result, staff are confident that leaders recognise what they do well and support where improvements are needed.
- The centre is suitably resourced and good use is made of sharing the premises with other services such as the local youth group. Leaders collaborate very closely with two other children's centres in the area when planning, delivering and evaluating services. Hence, resources are used competently to tackle local priorities and meet the needs of targeted children and families.
- Support and challenge from the local authority through the annual review, and through appraisal and supervision for leaders, have a good impact upon the centre. As a consequence, centre leaders are focused upon what will make the greatest difference to children and families. However, some data provided by the local authority are too detailed and extensive for centre leaders to use when they are reviewing their work.
- All referrals to and from the children's centre are via a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) assessment. Children subject to a child protection plan, children in care and children in need are supported well by the centre and partner organisations. This is because the centre has established close links with other services to share information about families, and good use is made of centre staff to offer individual support.
- Child protection and safeguarding procedures within the centre meet statutory requirements. Appropriate safe recruitment practices are in place. Staff have good access to child protection training provided by the local authority. They know how to raise concerns about safeguarding. They understand about the role of the Local Authority Designated Officer in dealing with issues relating to safe staff behaviour.
- Partnership board meetings have a good level of attendance. Members know what is happening in the centre and ask challenging questions of the centre manager, and about information on the centre's performance. They attend the annual discussion with the local authority to review progress. Consequently, members of the partnership board have a clear view of centre priorities and where improvement is needed.
- The partnership board has regular access to training provided by the local authority. This helps members to understand that gaps in achievement are narrowing for local children and families. The partnership board recognises that staff are managed successfully and that the centre makes good provision to meet the needs of local families.
- Too few parents are involved in shaping the direction of the centre and holding it to account through the partnership board. In spite of this weakness, parents do feel respected and listened to, including through the parents' forum.

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 details

Unique reference number	22195
Local authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	430164
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,496
Centre leader	Madeline Williams
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01934 427242
Email address	Castlebatchadmin@n-somerset.gov.uk

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