

Barley Fields Children's Centre

c/o Barley Fields Primary School, Lamb Lane, Ingleby Barwick, Stockton-on-Tees, Cleveland, TS17 0QP

Inspection date	25–26 March 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.

- The centre has a strong presence in the community and the large majority of those who are most in need of support make good use of their services. There is a wide range of weekly activities that take place both at the centre and out in the community. A bistro in the reception area gives a very friendly welcome to families.
- Staff carefully plan activities that families really enjoy. The story and rhyme sessions have a clear aim of developing children's social, communication and language skills. Staff effectively help to enhance parents' understanding of how these activities impact on their children.
- The 'nearly nursery' sessions have a positive impact on preparing families for the next stage in their children's education, whether it is nursery or school. Schools promote these sessions and value their contributions.
- Multi-agency working supports families well to make good progression. The centre is particularly effective in supporting grandparents who contribute a great deal to the extended care of children. Sessions dedicated to development of grandparent's understanding of child development has helped them to have a positive impact on children's learning.
- The centre has strong partnerships particularly with health services and schools and as a result, family lives are improved. The centre's effective support, training and advice shared with early years providers results in the quality of the majority of settings being good or better.
- Good leadership, management and governance have brought about improvements in the access of families as well as the quality and range of provision. The main priorities of the local authority are carried through to the centre by well-targeted action-planning and thorough reviews of progress. As a result, it has a good capacity to sustain future improvement.

It is not outstanding because:

- Not enough adults participate in further education and training or are supported to improve their chances of employment.
- The centre's data are not always effectively used and evaluated to demonstrate the impact of services and enhance planning.
- The centre is not always accurately analysing how well targeted families are reached and engaged in services.

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 three additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager; officers from the local authority, centre staff, parents, members of the advisory board and a number of partners including health, education and early years providers.

The inspectors visited a number of sessions held during the inspection including; ‘Messy Play’, ‘Story and Rhyme’, ‘Baby Social’ and a group with breast-feeding support. They also visited a day nursery.

They observed the centre’s work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centre’s self-evaluation and development plan, parent evaluations, key policies and the centre’s equality and safeguarding procedures, as well as a range of other relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Jean Webb, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Cathryn Parry	Additional Inspector
Eileen Grimes	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Barley Fields Children's Centre is a phase two centre situated in the grounds of Barley Fields Primary School. It offers a range of services which include ante-natal care, family play sessions, including one specifically for grandparents and family outreach. The centre delivers services across a rapidly growing purpose-built housing estate in Ingleby Barwick.

There are 1,625 children aged nought to five years in the locality. It is an affluent area that is predominantly White British, although there is a very small but diverse range of minority ethnic families where English is not their first language. The main issue in the area facing families is isolation. Some children's language and communication and social skills are below those typical for their age due to reduced adult interaction. There are also some lone parents and workless households. All housing is privately bought or rented and most working members of the family are in professional work and commute outside the area. Families rely on mainly childminders and grandparents for childcare. Most children enter early years provision with skills that are above those typical for their age. The number of children aged four to five classified as obese is lower than the local and national average. There are links to four local primary schools which are subject to separate inspection arrangements. The reports of these inspections are available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

4Children is commissioned by Stockton Borough Council to manage the centre in conjunction with an advisory board that includes partners, parents and carers.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- To further improve the use and evaluation of data to more accurately identify current performance and enhance the planning of provision by:
 - better analysis of feedback from families so that it identifies strengths and areas for improvement
 - better use of data to capture target groups and define meaningful interventions.
- To ensure that the education and learning needs of adults are clearly understood and met by:
 - regular consultation with adults
 - effective partnership-working to deliver training and support effective signposting, information and advice.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families Good

- The centre knows the community very well and has skilfully used this knowledge, alongside feedback from families, to shape services that respond to their needs. Isolation for families is a key issue and universal services have been highly successful in ensuring that a very large majority of these families engage in services, develop friendship groups and feel comfortable to ask for advice or support.
- Highly effective partnerships with health and other partners ensure that families' needs are quickly identified and they benefit from individual targeted support. All ante-natal appointments are held at the centre so the centre engages with all pregnant mothers and they become familiar with the centre and what it has to offer. Partners have a raised awareness of the children's centre services.
- Home visits play a key role in engaging with parents and successfully enabling and encouraging them to access services, both in the centre and with partners. Parents benefit from help with establishing routines and improving parenting skills. All minority ethnic group parents engage with centre universal services as well as accessing targeted services which they are referred to by the centre.

- The take-up of places for children aged two, three and four years old is very good, with 95% of three-year-olds accessing free early education. Those children not eligible for the two-year offer attend a 'nearly nursery' group at the centre. The very small numbers of disabled children are known to the centre and receive appropriate support.
- Grandparents play an important role in the extended care of children in this community and they attend a weekly session at the centre specifically for the purpose of supporting them with their understanding and care of children.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- A good range of high quality sessions at the centre well resourced and organised with clear objectives and aims which are understood by parents. For example, the 'Story and Rhyme' session has clear aims of developing children's social, communication and language skills. In this six-week group of sessions, children who start with skills below those typical for their age make good progress and finish with skills in line with those typical for their age. Parents are very involved in these sessions and staff effectively help to build links on how to extend children's learning at home.
- Effective evaluation systems demonstrate the positive impact on children's progress. Observations are used well to inform planning and differentiate for children. Evaluations also confirm that parents feel more empowered to support their children and understand the importance of their role in developing their learning.
- Good procedures are in place to identify children with additional needs. Staff effectively track their progress and target interventions, linking them with health services through the use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). As a result, this reduces inequalities and improves life chances for families.
- Health services work well with the centre to track those who use other centres, such as teenage mothers. This ensures that they are receiving the support they need and encourages them to use the centre services. There is improved sustained breastfeeding through the use of peer support sessions held in the centre and the large majority of new mums access these.
- Strong partnerships ensure that there is a coordinated approach to meeting the needs of children and families. Schools promote the 'nearly nursery' sessions which prepare children and parents well for school, valuing the contribution they make for families. One school commented that; 'children centre staff are very good at listening and use these skills to recognise need'.
- Support and training for early years providers are very good. This results in the quality of the large majority of childminders and day care providers being of a high standard which impacts positively on children making good progress in their learning and development.
- Centre staff successfully encourage and support parents to lead in groups, and increase their employability through accessing training and supporting them in gaining college places. More volunteers are currently being recruited. However, the centre has recognised that it needs more regular consultation with adults about their learning needs and that parents need more help and support to access further education and increase their employability.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Governance arrangements are strong. The local authority priorities are carried through well to the centre's targets. There are rigorous and robust systems to check the performance of 4Children and their staff. The local authority uses the annual self-evaluation particularly well to identify gaps in service. However, whilst recognising how well the centre is meeting the needs of families, data are not sufficiently detailed to fully capture the impact the centre is having, particularly around target groups and defining meaningful interventions.
- The local authority values the expertise and experience that 4Children staff bring to the centre to benefit families. The manager has high aspirations for the centre and her leadership drives improvement dynamically. Staff work flexibly across other 4Children centres, so that skills and

expertise are shared. The centre's accommodation is used very well, with good resources, to successfully meet the needs of all families, particularly those in most need.

- There is a range of very effective and creative techniques to collect feedback from parents. For example, a 'question of the month' and the 'listening ear' prompt parents to write comments. Regular structured feedback sessions are held during sessions that parents and children attend. The centre acts upon this feedback and families feel that the centre listens and responds well to them. However, data from some other types of consultation about the centres strengths and areas for improvement are not used effectively to inform self-evaluation target-setting.
- Staff are supported and supervised very well. Good use is made of meetings with staff from other 4Children centres to exchange good practice and ideas. This has resulted in better ways of engaging with the small number of minority ethnic community group families.
- All the required policies and procedures are in place to ensure effective safeguarding practice across all of the centre's work. Staff are trained well in safeguarding, including lone working. As part of the 'Baby Massage' group, all parents receive a safety in the home talk and safety pack and as result purchase equipment to make their home safer. The CAF procedures ensure a good multi-agency approach and that children are kept safe from harm.
- The advisory board brings together partners and parents, and services have been shaped by their contribution. The advisory board effectively challenges the centre and raises issues that may not have been identified as yet in the community. This effectively enables the centre to implement strategies to further explore these areas.

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	20185
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	430214
Managed by	4Children on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,625
Centre leader	Sarah Thompson
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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