

Beacon Children's Centre

Maurice Street, Nelson, Lancashire, BB9 7HS

Inspection dates	30 June–1 July 2015
Previous inspection date	8–9 July 2010

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Good	2
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:

- Good partnerships, particularly with health professionals, ensure that all new births are known to the centre. Information about the centre's services is given to families at the earliest opportunity. As a result, a large majority of families identified as most in need of support are accessing the extremely welcoming centre.
- Good attention is paid to the provision of very parent-friendly information displays and flyers, which effectively provide users with a wealth of useful advice. This enables them to make informed healthy life choices. Consequently, parental satisfaction is high.
- The centre staff know their culturally diverse communities' needs exceptionally well and are sensitive to the many difficulties that these families face. The effective work of multilingual staff, who have built trusting relationships with families, helps to break down barriers to their access to services. Staff deliver high-quality support in families' homes or good-quality activities at easily accessible venues.
- Good relationships with all key partners and strong collaborative working ensure that families whose circumstances make them very vulnerable are provided with swift, effective support to keep their children safe and improve their life chances. Children with additional needs are particularly well supported.
- Adults access a range of good-quality courses to support their development and progression into employment. Most adults who attend family learning opportunities, or adult education courses, complete them and go on to further training. An increasing number of parents actively work as volunteers at the centre, or out in the community.
- Strong leadership, management and governance arrangements are in place. Leaders know their strengths and where further work is required. Robust action plans are in place to tackle all priority issues and effectively drive the centre's continual improvement.

It is not outstanding because:

- There are insufficient places for two-year-olds to access free nursery education places.
- Methods in place to check the quality of the services delivered by the centre staff are developing but not embedded. The good monitoring of children's learning and development is restricted to those who access the centre's crèche facilities. In addition, some family case files record the progress and well-being of adults more effectively than that of children.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Work with schools and childcare providers to increase the amount of funded nursery places available for two-year-olds.
- Embed quality assurance procedures to ensure that:
 - the established good tracking of children's progress used in crèche facilities is extended to other centre group activities
 - all family case files detail more precisely staff's observations of children's progress and well-being when they are present on home visits.

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 children's centre manager; extended services manager; the manager of the domestic violence initiative; the manager of Beacon Day Nursery; and representatives from the local authority. They also met the centre staff team, volunteers and representatives from early help, social care, health professionals, Jobcentre Plus, and headteachers from primary schools. In addition, the inspectors had meetings or telephone conversations with a representative from the library service, adult learning and further education providers, parents, and members of the advisory board.

One inspector visited the 'Stay and Play' at Hodge House Community Centre. All inspectors observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centre's policies, activity programme of events, self-evaluation, action plans, data and a selection of case files. They conducted a joint observation of the 'Love to Learn' group with a senior early years worker.

Inspection team

Sue Pepper, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Joan Cawdron	Additional inspector
Parm Sansoyer	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Beacon Children's Centre is a single centre which covers the wards of Bradley and Whitefield in the Pendle district of East Lancashire. The centre delivers family support, health and some child and adult learning services from the centre and outreach venues across the community.

The centre shares a building with the chapel of St Mary's and Beacon Day Nursery. The childcare provision is subject to separate inspection arrangements and this information is available on the Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/ofsted.

The majority of families are of Asian heritage with an increasing number of Eastern Europeans moving into the area. There are approximately 1,055 children under five-years-of-age living in the community. The majority of children enter the early years provision with skills and knowledge well below those typical for their age.

Most families live in areas ranked among the 10% most deprived nationally, with a small minority living in areas ranked as the 2% most deprived nationally. Data show that the number of children living in workless households is high and 39% are dependent on state benefits. The centre has identified children living in the most disadvantaged areas, families of Eastern European origin, disabled children and younger parents as most in need of its support.

The centre is managed by Lancashire local authority, supported by an advisory board. A children's centre manager and extended services manager are responsible for the day-to-day running and development of the centre's services.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The 'Bump to Birth and Beyond' programme is well established and promoting equality of opportunity. Many antenatal appointments are held at the centre clinic with midwives so that mothers are familiar with the vibrant and welcoming environment of the centre when they are pregnant. Midwives complete an early notification form on the first booking appointment of a pregnancy and this is having a positive impact on the percentage using the centre services who might be less likely to do so.
- Close partnership work with health professionals helps the centre staff to support almost all new parents at an early stage and to identify younger parents who may need additional care. The vast majority of disabled children are identified early and they are very well supported by the centre, key partners and multi-agencies.
- Staff and their partners understand extremely well the sensitive cultural needs of the large majority of Pakistani families living in the community. They have worked hard to break down real and perceived barriers to access and built very trusting relationships with these families. A large majority attend centre services, such as 'Tatty Bumpkins', or the good range of jointly run adult-learning opportunities available in schools.
- The centre staff use a van to transport their resources and services out into the community. Centre staff deliver 'Stay and Play', 'Baby Massage' and 'Who Lets the Dads Out?' activities at a range of community venues where those living in the most disadvantaged areas can easily access them. As a result the number of families using the centre's services has dramatically increased.
- A growing number of Eastern European families have moved into the area. A specific group was set up to attract and welcome them, increase their engagement and tackle any discrimination. A range of activities is open to all families to help promote young children's good development, especially their social, communication, language and physical skills. Consequently, a large majority of children with language delay access and benefit from the centre's services.

- Most three- and four-year-olds take up their free nursery education places. Due to a concerted drive, and sharing the benefits of early education in the mosque, the number of eligible two-year-olds accessing their free entitlement has greatly increased. However, progress is hampered due to insufficient places being available for two-year-olds and a long waiting list is in place for the linked childcare provider.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The centre regularly shares important health messages with families. The up-take of immunisation and the percentage of mothers choosing to breastfeed are both high. A clear drive is in place to promote healthy eating because the percentage of children entering school who are obese, is above the national average.
- Displays in the centre, such as 'Drinks under the sink' help parents to understand the risks that household cleaning products pose to young children. Concerns regarding road safety and poor oral health are tackled by a range of good initiatives that includes puppet shows.
- Due to high infant mortality rates, vital messages such as 'Safer Sleeping' are well promoted. For example, messages on the dangers of co-sleeping are displayed at Burnley football ground to ensure that more males are aware of this. In addition, specialist support and advice on genetic conditions are sensitively provided for families, to help them make more informed life choices.
- A screening assessment toolkit for children at the age of two is helping to identify speech and language development issues at an early stage. Parents are encouraged to read to children by using the library, story sacks and a range of good quality, stimulating, fun learning sessions such as 'Love to Learn'. These all help parents to develop their children's early communication skills.
- The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development on entry to Year 1 is low. However, an improving picture is evident, particularly for children of Pakistani origin. Monitoring of children's progress in the high-quality crèche shows that children make good progress from low starting points. However, staff do not track the progress of all children who regularly attend group activities. This reduces their ability to identify potential difficulties or particularly fast progress, and to reduce inequalities.
- 'Talk English' is effectively used as a stepping stone when adults are not ready to attend more advanced courses to improve their English. The 'Nurturing Programme' helps parents to reflect on their own experiences so that they better understand practical ways to guide their child's learning and behaviour, and how to handle emotions positively to improve their home life and well-being.
- Monitoring and tracking of adult learning is good. Closer working with schools has resulted in more adults participating in learning opportunities to help improve their ability to speak English, parenting skills and employability. Adults can also access a good range of accredited courses, which lead to qualifications, and some enjoy working as volunteers.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The local authority is undergoing transformation but governance, leadership and management arrangements remain clear. The new senior leadership team is organised and efficient, they know the quality of their practice of services and use data well to drive improvement. Well-established performance management arrangements are in place and staff and volunteers report that they are very well supported.
- A strong advisory board and the local authority effectively challenge the centre to continually improve. A few parents are members of the advisory board and they have the opportunity to be involved in decision-making at a more formal level. Wider parental views are sought after centre activities and a 'You Said, We Did' board keeps parents well informed as to what has happened as a result of their suggestions.
- Experienced staff are passionate about reducing inequalities for families and they have clear roles dependent on their professional backgrounds. They work hard to close the gap for children and families, reducing inequalities. Parents typically described staff as 'enthusiastic and brilliant'.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and has improved following recommendations made at the time of the

previous inspection. Data is analysed well to plan for the future. The centre priorities and the progress made are displayed for parents in a very parent-friendly manner.

- The new early years senior worker has only had time to conduct quality checks of a few of the centre's services. Most of the family case files scrutinised showed the good support provided for families coping with extremely difficult circumstances. However, a few records were more informative about adults', rather than children's, well-being and progress. This means that the records do not follow best practice.
- The children's centre is seen as a 'safe place'. Staff have a good understanding of the safeguarding procedures. The needs of looked after children, and those subject to a child protection plan, are effectively met. Staff are confident lead professionals as they coordinate early support and prevent the escalation of some difficult situations through the Common Assessment Framework.
- The centre has established good relationships with all its key partners. The centre building is co-located with Beacon Day Nursery and the chapel of St Mary's with whom staff work very collaboratively. Users are drawn to the attractive and well-resourced, child-friendly exterior of the centre into the spacious interior where adult artwork is highly valued.
- Reduced financial resources are managed effectively by joint working and the sharing of staff resources. Additional funds have been successfully secured to develop resources to enhance the stimulating summer activities programme and to offer exciting trips out.

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	20223
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	464707
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,055
Centre leader	Helen Bottomley
Date of previous inspection	8 July 2010
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