

Inspection report for Tame Valley children's centre

Local authority	Birmingham
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Linked school if applicable	n/a
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	n/a

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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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, senior management team, representatives of the advisory board, a range of agencies and parents and other users of the centre. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Tame Valley children's centre is situated in the residential area of Bromford, north east of Birmingham city centre. It is on the same site as Tame Valley Primary School. Bromford is among the highest 20% most deprived areas in the country. The majority of families surrounding Tame Valley are White British. The remainder are from other ethnic minorities including Pakistani and Somali. The area is characterised by high rise housing, high unemployment and social deprivation. Most children enter child care and early education with skills that are much lower than those expected for their age. The centre provides the full core offer although there is no full time day care offered due to the close proximity of other local childcare services. The centre has its own advisory board which is made up of representatives from the local community, Birmingham local authority, parents, the Primary Care Trust and centre staff. Tame Valley has evolved from a Sure Start centre. It opened as a children's centre in 2007. The large majority of staff who work at the centre are employed by Spurgeons.

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

3

improving outcomes for users and the wider community

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

3

Main findings

Tame Valley Children's Centre offers satisfactory support for children and families. The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users is good. Parents and other users appreciate the warm and friendly welcome they receive when they visit the centre. For example, one parent typically commented, 'You could not wish for a better bunch of staff.' Case study evidence indicates that families regularly turn to the centre for help in times of crisis. This good quality care and support however, benefits only a small proportion of families within the centre's reach area. The centre has plans to increase the proportion of centre users but these have not been acted upon with sufficient rigour.

The centre manager and all staff ensure the building is a safe and secure environment for all users. The centre has good procedures in place for ensuring the safeguarding and welfare of everyone who uses the centre. Parents too report that they appreciate the high priority the centre gives to the safety and well-being of all users. Being healthy outcomes for centre users and their families are good. Individual feedback, case studies and data provided by the centre indicate that families are well supported in making healthy choices for themselves and their families. As a result, national indicators show that the birth weight of babies is improving year on year within the centre's reach area. Children who attend the Early Years Foundation Stage playgroup and crèche facilities make satisfactory gains in their learning and some make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. However, the centre does not currently assess children's attainment when they join the centre or have sufficiently robust arrangements to measure their progress over time.

The centre's self evaluation is sound but generous. This is because procedures for monitoring, evaluation and the collection of data, particularly relating to national indicators, are not sufficiently rigorous. Senior leaders and the advisory board have a broadly accurate view of the strengths and areas for development across the centre, but this is not clearly reflected in the centre's improvement plans. The centre is currently working from a number of different development plans and this has not been helpful in enabling senior leaders to prioritise the most important areas for development. The centre meets its statutory responsibilities for the promotion of equality and diversity. It has been successful in engaging specific groups of ethnic minority parents. For example, providing English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) courses for parents who are in the early stages of learning English. Satisfactory provision and outcomes, coupled with generally sound self-evaluation demonstrates the centres satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Take concerted action to rapidly increase the proportion of centre users from all the major groups represented in the reach area.
- Formulate a single action plan for improvement that includes measurable outcomes, clear milestones and is fully evaluated through rigorous success criteria and takes into account users' views.
- Improve outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - improving staff knowledge and expertise in assessment procedures
 - tracking children's progress regularly from their individual starting points
- Ensure that at centre and strategic levels, progress towards all the appropriate national indicators are effectively monitored and evaluated.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

Strengths

- The majority of users are developing a secure understanding of how to keep themselves and their families healthy through regular support and advice from the centre. This includes free access to fresh fruit and water in the centre, food hygiene courses, breastfeeding support, access to contraception and the 'Yummy Mummies' course which offers free gym membership for three months.
- The safety and welfare of all the centre's users, including those who are most vulnerable, is a high priority for senior leaders. As a result, emergency hospital admissions are lower in the centre's reach area than across the local authority.
- All families registered with the centre receive a free home safety pack and are invited to 'Free Friday' sessions where families are given advice on stranger danger, road safety and how to use public transport safely.
- The centre knows the families it works with very well. Consequently, early identification and prevention play a key role in the work of the centre to reduce harm to children. All the centre staff are trained in common assessment framework processes.
- Children and their parents enjoy attending a satisfactory range of sessions on offer and make sound progress.
- Users make a satisfactory contribution to the decision making processes in the centre.
- Parents have access to positive parenting courses and this is having a positive impact on improving children's behaviour.
- Parents have satisfactory opportunities to improve their economic stability. Jobcentre Plus and local authority services run regular sessions to support parents into employment. Individual case studies indicate that a few parents have achieved accredited qualifications, particularly in English. ESOL courses are particularly popular and their success has led to a small number of parents accessing further training to improve their employment opportunities.

Areas for improvement

- Inspection observations indicate that children who attend the playgroup or crèche sessions are making satisfactory progress in relation to their individual starting points. The centre has very limited information regarding the starting points or progress made by these groups of children. Staff are trialling some helpful procedures to support their observational assessments but these are at an early stage of development.
- The centre has limited collated or coordinated evidence to clearly demonstrate how it is making a difference for all users across the five Every Child Matters areas, particularly in relation to national indicators data.
- Although the advisory board has nine places allocated for parent users, there are currently four vacancies, this limits the contribution parents are able to make to the decision-making and governance of the centre.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all users 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 users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	3
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	3

How good is the provision?

3

Strengths

- All parents who spoke to inspectors were positive about the centre and the impact different services have had on their families. They were particularly complimentary about the care, support and guidance they received from all staff. For example, the centre hosts sessions run by Relate counsellors and a clinical psychologist supports the centre in delivering a recognised parenting programme. Work with vulnerable adults is good. Parents typically report that, 'The staff go out of their way to support families.'
- The centre promotes purposeful learning for the small proportion of users who access the satisfactory range of courses on offer. Individual case studies for a few users indicate good levels of success.
- Partnerships between professionals, agencies and outreach organisations are sound and securely support the most vulnerable families.
- The centre is beginning to expand its engagement with more groups of users from the wider community. For example, the centre is promoting a Saturday morning group to engage fathers and working parents.

Areas for improvement

- Although the services offered by the centre are well received by parents, take up rates are limited. The centre has plans to increase participation rates and target a wider range of users across the reach area. These plans have not yet brought about a noticeable increase in centre users.
- All groups within the reach area are satisfactorily served by the courses and services on offer, however the centre does not provide a particularly wide range of opportunities for parents to improve their basic literacy and numeracy skills.

- Assessment procedures are at an early stage of development. The centre knows some individual families well and is providing appropriate services to meet their needs. However, the centre does not have robust systems and procedures in place that will support staff in measuring outcomes for all users.
- Opportunities are sometimes missed to promote further learning and development for children and adults who attend the centre. For example, during a playgroup session children who did not speak English as their first language were not given regular opportunities to develop either their spoken or written understanding of the English language. Opportunities were also missed to model good behaviour management strategies with children when the parents were in attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	3
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Strengths

- Dedicated and sensitive leadership is provided by the centre manager and as a result, staff are enthusiastic and relationships are strong. The centre runs smoothly on a day to day basis and the well-being of all users is a tangible priority.
- There are clear lines of accountability in place alongside secure performance management systems.
- The centre's child protection policy and guidelines are robust and all staff have been fully trained at the appropriate level in child protection procedures. Protocols and practices for referrals are well known and a high priority across the work of the centre. There is a common purpose among all staff who work at the centre and key partners to improve outcomes for children.
- The centre meets all the requirements regarding the safe recruitment of staff and records are well maintained. All staff employed by Spurgeons and the local authority have been subject to an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. The centre diligently records CRB and List 99 checks undertaken by partner agencies for staff working at the centre.
- Members of the advisory board are fully committed to improving outcomes for children and families. The board is relatively new and although working relationships are positive, a number of vacancies remain. As a result, the impact of the board's work on outcomes for families is satisfactory.
- The centre is on the site of Tame Valley Primary School. It occupies a discrete part of the school building with a separate entrance. The accommodation comprises a small newly built administration block alongside refurbished classrooms and hall area. The accommodation is bright, clean, welcoming and safe. The accommodation for the Early Years Foundation Stage is generous in size and includes a secure outdoor area.
- Resources are satisfactory and this supports satisfactory outcomes for users. The centre provides satisfactory value for money.
- Staff are committed to promoting the inclusion of all families within the reach area. The centre is gathering information pertinent to different user groups and is in the process of evaluating their engagement. The centre has been

particularly successful in supporting women from ethnic minority backgrounds in finding routes into employment.

Areas for improvement

- The advisory board is beginning to develop a clear view of the impact and effectiveness of the centre's work, but this is at an early stage of development. Not all board members are clear about the effectiveness of the centre's work, particularly with regard to its performance against national indicators.
- The senior leadership team, alongside the local authority and advisory board, is in the early stages of developing a single centre action plan that will give a clear focus to its work.
- The centre works effectively with the small proportion of families, including those who have children with disabilities, who use their services. However, these proportions do not fully reflect the size of the centre's reach area.
- The centre is beginning to collate the views of all centre users on a more regular basis. However, outcomes from questionnaires and feedback forms are not routinely evaluated or monitored.

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 extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	3
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	3
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	3
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	3
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community 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

None

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Tame Valley children's centre on 9-10 June 2010. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

The strengths of the centre are:

- The quality of care, guidance and support received by parents and children is good.
- Parents report that they always receive a warm welcome and a smile when they attend the centre.
- The centre is safe and secure and the staff take all aspects of safety very seriously.
- All staff who work at the centre have been checked to make sure they are suitable to work with children.
- The centre encourages parents and children to stay healthy and lead healthy lifestyles.
- Children who attend the playgroups or crèche make satisfactory progress in their learning.
- The senior staff know how well the centre is doing and what it needs to do to improve.

We have asked the centre to improve the following:

- Make sure more parents and children from the local area use their services.
- Create a clear action plan that will help them identify what the centre does well and what it needs to improve.

- Ensure that the children who attend the crèche and playgroups make at least good progress in their learning.
- Make sure the senior staff and the advisory board know how well the centre is doing compared with other areas across the country.

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