

Inspection report for Bottisham/ Burwell/ Cheveley Children's Centre

Local authority	Cambridgeshire
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Reporting inspector	Daniel Grant

Centre leader	Mary Barnes
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

The inspection of this Sure Start children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

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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 additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, members of staff and partner professionals from other agencies. Discussions were held with parents and representatives from the local authority. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Bottisham Children's Centre is a phase two centre which opened in March 2008. It is managed by the local authority and based within a recently refurbished building which is a hub for the delivery of health and social care services. It provides services from the main site and from three satellite sites. The centre serves a population who live within the 80% least deprived areas in the country, with pockets of relative deprivation.

Bottisham is a village to the east of Cambridgeshire. The area is rural and includes the villages of Burwell and Cheveley. The proportion of children aged under four years who are living in households where no-one is working is low. The vast majority of families within the area served by the centre are of White British heritage.

The centre provides a wide range of supporting services, incorporating health clinics, crèche, outreach and home visiting, parenting courses, volunteering opportunities and workshops. The centre has an advisory board made up of representatives from the local community, professional agencies and parents. Most children enter early education with a range of skills higher than expected for their age.

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 improving outcomes for families

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

Overall effectiveness of the centre is satisfactory. Leaders have a thorough understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for improvement and are making sure the centre is well established in the community. The centre's performance is increasing steadily and outcomes for the majority of families are improving.

The centre has satisfactory capacity to improve because managers know what has to be done and are determined to make progress. The written plans used to help the centre develop and improve set out the centre's ambition and identify almost all of the improvements needed. The self-evaluation process is satisfactory and the centre has developed sufficient arrangements to gather the views of parents, staff and partners to help plan for improvements.

The number of families using the centre, including those from targeted groups is satisfactory and the centre recognises the need to increase registration and engagement so that more people can benefit from its services. Increasingly effective work with key partners such as health and social work teams has increased the number of families who attend the centre. However, too few families who live in the most isolated rural areas use the centre's services. Outreach provision is satisfactory and the centre has identified a need to increase its range and effectiveness.

Families attending the centre develop a satisfactory understanding of dangers and how to keep themselves and each other safe. Staff are experienced and have adequate skills and understanding of managing risks and safeguarding children, which they use effectively to provide a safe environment within the centre. Families benefit from the effective use of the Common Assessment Framework. However, on a very few occasions minutes of meetings held to discuss joint working to safeguard children are not circulated promptly enough.

Children make sufficient progress preparing for school, and families attending the centre enjoy the activities on offer. Parents who engage in courses such as healthy cooking, under-fives football and groups to help understand and support speech and language development make adequate progress. However, arrangements for the

provision of opportunities and support for parents seeking help to find work, undertake training or gain accredited qualifications are at a very early stage and only a few parents have benefited from this.

Leadership and management of the centre are satisfactory. There are clear lines of accountability and staff understand the priorities for the centre. The advisory board provides satisfactory support for the centre but is not yet fully involved in setting targets or providing challenge. The board is unclear about its purpose and role because the centre and local authority have not explained their expectations of the board well enough.

There are satisfactory arrangements with a broad range of partner organisations. The impact of this is clear and families are benefiting, such as health visitors and midwives encouraging more families to register with the centre and use its services. But not all of the services are fully integrated and good opportunities are missed for staff and other partners to work more effectively together to support families who attend the centre for routine health appointments. Partnership arrangements with education and training providers for adults do not yet lead to improved outcomes for a sufficient number of parents.

Arrangements to ensure equality of opportunity and the promotion of diversity are satisfactory. Families with the greatest needs are prioritised and the centre uses its resources adequately to ensure support is provided at an early stage. The gap between the lowest attaining children and others is widening and the centre has responded with increased support, specialised training and advice for staff, early years providers and child minders. Arrangements to engage targeted groups, such as children with disabilities, young parents, travellers and fathers are satisfactory and the centre has identified this as an area for improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase registration and user participation through better promotion of the centre's provision, improved integration with health services, more effective outreach work and by more precise identification and targeting of those most in need, including families who live in isolated areas.
- Ensure minutes of meetings held to discuss safeguarding of children are circulated promptly.
- Improve the level of service offered to adults, including better information, support, and opportunities for those interested in seeking paid work, training and education.
- Increase the effectiveness of the advisory board by clarifying its role and purpose and encouraging board members to provide appropriate challenge, set targets and review performance.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Outcomes for the children and parents who use the centre are satisfactory. Health outcomes are improving, with an increasing number of mothers commencing and continuing breastfeeding. Fifty eight per cent of mothers who choose to breastfeed continue after 6 weeks. They receive good support and encouragement from staff and health professionals. Obesity levels for children are slightly higher than the county average but improving. The centre promotes healthy eating and exercise adequately and provides satisfactory opportunities for families to play outdoor games and have fun.

Families in crisis receive very effective support from the centre staff and partner professionals. Mothers experiencing post-natal depression are provided with access to a specialised group which is well structured and effective. One parent told us 'Thanks to the group I feel more positive now and able to move forward.'

Families feel safe at the centre. Children using the centre are encouraged to explore and understand risks and dangers through play and experience. They develop a satisfactory understanding of dangers and how to keep themselves and each other safe. Parents have developed trust in the staff and know that they will receive effective help. Support for parents experiencing domestic violence is effective because the centre works well with partners to provide support. The centre and its partners work effectively to ensure adults remain safe and are protected, but staff have not received training for safeguarding vulnerable adults and the centre does not have a policy to support this work.

Families value the support they receive and make good use of the sessions because they recognise the benefits. This improves their children's learning and promotes parenting skills. One parent commented 'We received a great deal of support and good advice just when we needed it.' Children's personal and social development is satisfactory. Parents, including those from target groups, make a satisfactory contribution to decision-making and governance of the centre. Parent representatives are highly motivated and work effectively with the advisory board but the process for gathering other parents' views is not formalised.

Close and effective working with health professionals and social workers is effective in ensuring children subject to child protection plans are prioritised to receive support. Tracking of individual progress in centre activities is at an early stage but where this works effectively it demonstrates how contact with the centre has helped to improve children's development and to have a better start to school life. Children's behaviour in the centre is appropriate.

Families are encouraged to contribute positively to their community and the life of the centre. Parents who attend sessions to improve parenting skills benefit because this helps to strengthen bonds with their children. Some parents who recognised they had little confidence and low self-esteem have developed greater self-assurance and improved their personal well-being. These parents are encouraged to use their experience to offer support to other parents.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

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

How good is the provision?

3

The quality of provision is satisfactory overall. The centre has an adequate understanding of the needs of the community but the pace to increase the number of families registered and to target those most in need of support is slow. Provision is increasing and improving and staff work increasingly effectively to provide early intervention and support for families referred to them, such as those with a new baby. Families who are brought to the attention of the family support workers receive effective support because staff use their knowledge and influence well.

Families using the centre receive satisfactory care, guidance and support. Assessment is generally used appropriately to plan individual support for families, although tracking progress is not yet fully established. The staff and the centre's partners are becoming steadily more effective at supporting those who use its services. Support and guidance for families facing challenges and those using health related provision is satisfactory and improving. However, support and guidance arrangements for those seeking to improve their education and find paid work remain under-developed.

One parent told the inspectors, 'This is the one place I can come to and take the mask off.' Parents have fun at the centre and engage in exciting activities, whilst building their confidence, relationships and parenting skills. Parents are actively engaged with a broad range of activities to help improve outcomes for their families, such as healthy eating, breastfeeding support and programmes to help deal with the effects of domestic violence. An increasing number of families from targeted groups are the focus of prioritised support and their needs are adequately met.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	3

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The centre leaders are focused on improvement and this is leading to a steady increase in the quality of the provision and the number of families using the centre. Arrangements for governance and accountability of the centre are satisfactory. Staff are well motivated and recognise the strengths of the centre. The centre has made satisfactory progress towards reaching the targets set by the local authority.

The local authority provides the centre with good data and information about the population of the area it serves, which the centre uses satisfactorily to establish local targets. However, the centre has been slow to develop a more accurate understanding of the needs of the community. The centre has also been slow to identify target groups and increase the number of families registering with the centre.

The centre has an active and supportive advisory board. The centre provides satisfactory value for money because it uses its resources appropriately to meet the needs of families who use its provision.

The centre promotes equality satisfactorily in its activities, some of which involves the celebration of different cultures and beliefs. Discrimination, where it occurs, is dealt with promptly and effectively. The centre is committed to inclusion and removing barriers, including those faced by users with the greatest needs.

The centre leader has introduced effective arrangements to ensure safeguarding requirements are met. Staff receive appropriate training, have adequate levels of awareness and know what to do if action needs to be taken. Integrated working ensures staff have ready access to expert advice on safeguarding and protecting children. Arrangements for staff vetting comply with requirements.

Satisfactory partnerships are in place with a range of key organisations including health, social care, child-minders and voluntary and private sector organisations. However, partnerships with organisations that provide adult education, training and employment advice remain under-developed.

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 effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	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	3
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	3
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area 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

N/A

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Bottisham/ Burwell/ Cheveley Children's Centre on 28–29 February 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

The centre is a safe place for you and your children. It is a bright and attractive place that is welcoming. Staff have lots of experience and skills to make sure your time there is well spent. The children we saw enjoyed what they were doing.

The centre is a pleasant place for families to meet with staff and those from other organisations and to get more support and guidance. There is an interesting variety of sessions and activities which are well attended and increasingly popular.

We found the staff to be committed and keen to support your children's learning and development and to help some of you become more confident and effective parents.

The staff are effective at providing support for individuals. Some of you told us that the support of the centre is very important when you are having problems.

The staff are determined to become even better at supporting families with the greatest needs. They want more families to join the centre so that they can benefit too. We have asked the centre leader to tell more people about what the centre offers and to encourage more people to use it.

The staff have established partnerships with other professionals and organisations to ensure you have access to a full range of support and guidance. They are providing satisfactory guidance on how to keep families healthy and safe, and have placed great efforts on increasing children's development through many of the interesting and exciting activities.

A few of the professionals who work in partnership with the centre do not always receive important information quickly enough so we have asked the centre manager to make sure this is done more quickly.

We found that under the guidance of the centre's leadership team, the staff work well to provide satisfactory levels of care, guidance and support. However, we think the centre does not provide enough services for adults who want help to find work, undertake training or increase their education.

The centre has an active and supportive advisory board and we asked the centre and the advisory board to work more effectively to make sure the centre gets even better.

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