

# Inspection report for EH2 Beane Valley Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	383436
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 March 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Georgina Beasley

<b>Centre leader</b>	Lif Bishop
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Centre address</b>	Watton at Stone Primary and Nursery school Rectory Lane Hertfordshire SG14 3SG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01920 831053
<b>Fax number</b>	01920 830582
<b>Email address</b>	beanevalley@wattonatstone.herts.sch.uk

<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Watton at Stone Primary and Nursery School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Watton at Stone Playschool

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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Piccadilly Gate  
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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.

An inspection of the co-located registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

An inspection of the co-located/partner primary school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with staff, parents, carers, representatives from the governance committee, partnership board and the local authority, and with community, health, education and social partners. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Beane Valley Children's Centre is a phase two children's centre. It fulfils full core purpose by providing services for education, health and family support that take place on site, in local venues and in the home. The centre serves a rural area covering some 43 square miles. Most families are from White British backgrounds with the rest from a number of different minority ethnic groups. An estimated 545 children aged four and under live in the reach area. The social and economic position of families is mixed. About 10% of children under five live in families that are dependent on workless benefits. Approximately 5% live with a single parent. The proportion of disabled children and those with special educational needs, or children who live with disabled parents, is low. The proportion of teenage mothers and pregnant teenagers living in the reach area is very low. Childcare is provided through childminders and private pre-schools one of which shares the same site. Children's

skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are within age-related expectations.

The local authority has delegated the management of the centre to the governing body of the adjoining primary school. A governance committee includes representatives from local schools, parents, carers and local health and county council members. A partnership board comprising staff, parents, carers, and health and community partners feeds into the committee.

## 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**

<b>2</b>
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### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

<b>2</b>
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## Main findings

Beane Valley is a good children’s centre. The centre manager has high expectations and leads improvement in a positive and purposeful manner. The centre’s good capacity to improve is underpinned by accurate self-evaluation and targeted staff training to improve expertise and skills. Performance is managed extremely well. The way the centre uses the data it has to evaluate its performance and to set measurable and challenging improvement targets is outstanding. Outcomes are good and improving strongly. Registrations have risen significantly and the proportion of users accessing centre services has doubled over the last two years. The centre is in the process of using Estart data to find out why approximately 20% of users across the reach area are still not registering and using its services.

Parents understand the importance of a healthy diet for both themselves and their children. Nevertheless, the proportion of children classified as overweight and/or obese at the end of the Reception Year is average. Excellent support and guidance from staff have resulted in a significant rise over the last two years in the proportion of mothers who breastfeed their babies. Children make good progress in their learning and nearly all reach the levels expected for their age by the end of the Reception Year. Children and their parents or carers enjoy learning together, and everyone joins in with games and activities. One parent said, ‘I get as much out of groups as my child does,’ when asked about the benefits of centre activities.

Parents confirm that they are more confident in understanding their children's learning and behaviour as a result of attending one of the many courses run by the centre. The centre, local pre-schools and schools follow the same procedures for assessing and recording the children's learning. However, the same good quality procedures are not used to assess, record and celebrate the achievements of adult learners.

The welfare of children and their families is central to the centre's vision and underpins the excellent care, guidance and support provided at groups and as outreach. Parents have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves and their children safe. Comprehensive safeguarding procedures ensure children and users are safe while attending centre activities. Families experiencing change, challenge and difficulties in their lives receive excellent support to help them move forward independently. Relationships are extremely positive. Children behave exceptionally well and quickly learn to share and take turns. Parents are able to make an excellent contribution to the centre's decision making formally through the governance committee, partnership meetings and the parents' forum and informally by chatting to staff about any concerns.

Governance is good. The availability of more up-to-date data has resulted in members of the governance committee asking the centre challenging questions about its performance and effectiveness. Training has skilled staff to deliver advice and groups to avoid the more costly commissioning of services. Data from the health authority are not always shared in a timely manner to support the centre in its drive for improving health outcomes for the families in its reach.

## **What does the centre need to do to improve further?**

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Work closely with health to ensure services are consistently effective in reducing the number of children in Reception who are classified as overweight.
- Analyse registration and attendance data to identify the 20% of users choosing not to engage with the centre's activities and the reasons why.
- Embed the use of learning journeys for adults to enable them to track progress and log achievements.

## **How good are outcomes for families?**

<b>2</b>
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There has been a significant increase in the proportion of new mothers breastfeeding their babies at six to eight weeks. The proportion of children classified as overweight or obese at the end of Reception is average but fluctuations reflect some inconsistency in the impact of services to promote healthy lifestyles. The proportion of adults who smoke is extremely low. Take up of immunisations is good. Excellent support for mothers experiencing post-natal depression results in high engagement

in activities and groups for her and her baby. No information is available from health about children's dental health.

Families who attend the centre fully understand how to keep themselves safe and say they feel safe in the home and when out and about. Accidental injuries and the local crime rate are low. A small number of children are subject to a 'child in need' plan but excellent care, support and guidance results in no child protection plans. The small number of families with children identified as disabled and with special educational needs receive excellent support to enable them to access services and help the children to make good progress in their learning and development.

Since the centre opened, the proportion of children achieving 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile with at least six in personal social and emotional development and in communication, language and literacy at the end of the Reception Year has increased and was above average last year. The gap between the lowest 20% and the rest is closing faster than the national rate. Boys' achievement has improved particularly strongly. Schools acknowledge the boys' greater involvement in planning and the confidence to talk about their learning.

The centre holds groups across the reach area and has established itself in many of the village communities. Parents, carers and children have a strong voice in the kind of activities that take place. For example, changes are made to 'stay and play' activities to sustain attendance by introducing focused activities, such as music and storytelling and messy play sessions. Relationships are extremely positive. Families new to groups receive a warm welcome from staff and others attending, telling them about the range of services offered by the centre and other events held in their respective villages. One mother expressed how the centre 'provided a lifeline' when she first arrived in the village.

Nearly all teenagers and young mothers attend some kind of education or training. A good number of parents, carers, childminders and education partners have attended first aid training and parenting courses held at the centre. Information from the Jobcentre is displayed in the entrance and users can use the computer to look for job vacancies. Approximately 120 adults registered for courses at the local college last year. Data are not formally available to the centre about accredited courses and how many adults subsequently completed the courses, including lone parents.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>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</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How good is the provision?**

<b>2</b>
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Groups, activities and outreach services respond well to users' needs and promote good learning and development for children and adults. Childminders, parents and carers value the range of toys available to borrow from the toy library to supplement what they have at home or just to find out if a child likes it before buying it. The centre, pre-school settings and schools have followed the same procedures over the last two years for assessing and recording the children's progress in learning journeys that go with them to their next setting. The information is used well to plan learning that helps them to settle quickly and make good progress as soon as they arrive. Currently, adults do not have their own learning journeys to contribute to or to monitor their progress and record and celebrate achievements.

'Storytime and music' groups promote children's speech and language well. Speech therapists drop into 'stay and play' groups regularly to give advice to parents about how they can support their child's speech and language development at home. Pamper sessions for mums to be and 'bumps and baby' groups enable staff to meet with mums to give timely advice about feeding their babies. First aid courses help childminders, carers, education partners and parents to update their qualifications. Activities and groups help families to make friends. One parent expressed how groups are 'brilliant for meeting others' and another that 'my child also has a circle of friends he will go to school with.' This helps to smooth the transition to nursery.

Staff are discrete in giving excellent advice during groups and to those who receive outreach services. Parents value how they 'always take on board what you say' and that 'they show such sympathy and are never shocked, no matter what you tell them.' Parenting courses have supported parents extremely well in understanding and managing their children's behaviour. Parents say they have been particularly beneficial to those who have boys. Excellent support for new mothers has resulted in a significant increase in the proportion who sustain breastfeeding to and beyond six to eight weeks. There are currently no children undergoing an assessment under the Common Assessment Framework but staff are fully trained and skilled to undertake this task.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>1</b>

## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

<b>2</b>
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The centre has an accurate view of what is going well and has clearly focused actions to secure further improvement. All staff, partners and parents who attend groups are involved in the self-evaluation process through regularly held meetings. The centre manager's excellent use of an increasing range of accurate and timely data is ensuring the centre is targeting the needs of users across the reach area extremely well. Rapid and significant increases in those aspects targeted are the result. All staff are fully committed and skilled to ensure the quality of services continues to improve. All are clear about their roles and responsibilities due to detailed and focused service level agreements.

The centre gives good value for money. Effective staff training has ensured that it is able to deliver the same level of services despite recent cuts to its budget. Network partnerships provide resource boxes to support children's good learning in small pre-schools and playgroups. Family support partnerships are effective in providing excellent support for families with children up to the age of 19. Education and health partners, including some parents, attend regular partnership meetings. Reports are included in the centre manager's report to the full governance committee that meets every term. Jobcentre sends a weekly newsletter to keep users informed about job vacancies and training opportunities. Partnership with the health service is not resulting in improved outcomes for family health to the same level as other aspects. Data are not always shared in the same timely manner.

The centre promotes equal opportunities well. Disabled children and those with special educational needs receive excellent support to attend groups and access pre-school. Transport is provided if required to ensure attendance at speech and language therapy appointments. Effective collaborative working with local pre-school settings and schools has helped boys across the reach area to make good progress in their personal development and communication, language and literacy skills to achieve age-related levels by the end of the Reception Year. Discrimination is not tolerated. Everyone is made welcome. 'I like it because it's for everyone, it's very inclusive,' one parent said. Families are supported so that a lack of funds does not prohibit their attendance at groups.

Staff check that the accommodation is safe prior to the start of all groups. All session plans include high quality risk assessments for resources and equipment and for individuals who are disabled or with special educational needs. The centre ensures that all groups take part in a practice evacuation every term including during school holidays so that they know what to do in case of an emergency. Evaluations check that these are as efficient as they can be. The centre has comprehensive procedures to check the suitability of all staff, volunteers and partners, including those working in the linked pre-school and school. It consistently gives the highest priority to safeguarding all children.

Courses and training opportunities run by the centre are held at times convenient to users and are always fully booked. A crèche always runs alongside courses to enable all users who wish to attend. Fathers value the 'dad's club' that runs every month on a Saturday and a good number attend. Due to concerted efforts from centre staff, which includes collecting 'permission to contact' cards from the local maternity unit and running groups in villages where registrations are lower, engagement with centre services has increased significantly. The centre manager and staff continue to look for reasons why some users still choose not to register and engage with its groups and activities.

These are the grades for leadership and management

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>

## **Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection**

The inspection of Watton at Stone Primary School and Watton at Stone Playschool, which were judged good, contributed to the children's centre report.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaining about inspections*, which is available from our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## Summary for centre users

We inspected the EH2 Beane Valley Children's Centre on 21–22 March 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you for telling us about your own and your children's experiences at the centre. It is clear that you and your children feel welcome and that you enjoy the good range of activities on offer. Most of you told us that you benefit from groups as much as your children do. There is an excellent opportunity for you and your children to give your ideas and views about what you like and the sort of groups you would like the centre to hold. Outcomes are good, and the excellent use of data to inform challenging targets and subsequent well-planned actions are resulting in rapidly improving outcomes for you and your families.

The centre manager gives positive and decisive leadership. She is supported well by a skilled staff team who offer excellent advice and guidance to help you and your families improve your lives. This is especially so for those of you who experience challenges in your lives from time to time. You all feel extremely safe when attending groups at the centre and at local venues. You all follow procedures for signing yourself and your children in and out of groups because of the high expectations for you and your children's safety. Those of you who attend the excellent parenting courses run by the centre told us how much they are helping you to understand and support your child's behaviour and learning. A good number of fathers enjoy having fun with their children at the monthly Saturday 'dads' club'. Advice about feeding and weaning is ensuring that all babies and children who access the centre are at or are working towards a healthy weight. An average proportion of mothers breastfeed their babies which is a significant improvement over the last two years. Nevertheless, obesity levels in young children give some cause for concern. We have, therefore, asked the centre to work closely with health partners to provide services that reduce the number of children in Reception who are classified as overweight and/or obese.

Records indicate that 'stay and play' groups including 'chatterbox' and 'story time and music' and the collaborative partnership working of all pre-schools and schools are helping your children to settle quickly into school and to make good progress from the moment they start. Nearly all children are reaching the levels expected for their age and the boys are starting to close the gap with the girls. You told us how much you enjoy and value making the learning journeys for your children. We have asked the centre to embed this practice and to invite all of the adults who attend

groups and courses run by the centre and the local college to keep personal learning journeys to enable them to track their personal achievements too.

The centre has established itself at the heart of many village communities by holding events and activities in local village halls and schools. The number of users has increased significantly. The centre is still not absolutely sure why some people living in the area are choosing not to register and attend activities. We have, therefore, asked it to analyse registration and attendance data to help find the answer and to ensure its good provision is meeting the needs of everyone who lives in the reach.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)