

Inspection report for Carlisle South Petteril Bank SureStart Children's Centre

Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	362415
Inspection dates	5 – 6 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Christine Potter

Centre governance	Barnardo's
Centre leader	Sheraton Shaw
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Petteril Bank Campus, Burnett Road, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA1 3BX
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Linked school if applicable	Petteril Bank Community Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Little Luvs Childcare EY362246

The inspection of this SureStart 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.

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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with centre leaders, staff, a wide range of partners, representatives of the local authority linked to the centre and users.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including those relating to the centre's self-evaluation, improvement planning and policies and procedures for safeguarding.

Information about the centre

Carlisle South Petteril Bank SureStart Children's Centre was designated as a phase one centre in January 2005. The centre is directly managed by Barnardo's under contract to the local authority. It is located on the site of Petteril Bank Community Primary School, which benefited from a major new build under the SureStart and Extended Schools Cumbria County Council pilot programme. This building incorporates the school, community café, Little Luvs Childcare, community centre and the children's centre where administrative, health and extended services staff are based.

The centre offers a full range of integrated services on site and at other accessible community buildings across the area including the Barnardo's Community House, where some administrative staff and services are based. The centre is part of a cluster of six centres in the Carlisle area and many services are delivered on a cluster-wide basis.

The area contains a predominance of social housing and unemployment is higher than in other parts of Carlisle. There are low levels of numeracy and literacy with adults and high levels of crime relating to anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse, substance abuse and poverty. The percentage of children under sixteen living in poverty is 10% higher than that for England as a whole. Most children entering the

registered provision in the nursery have skills and levels of development considerably below those expected for their age. Most families are of White British heritage although there are a small number of economic migrants, mostly from Poland.

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 users and the wider community

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Petteril Bank Children’s Centre is well established within the community and outcomes for children and their families are good. It is led well and provides a friendly welcome to all users. However, the use of data to set targets for all groups of users is still developing. Outstanding care, guidance and support empower parents and carers to overcome a wide range of difficulties in their lives. The centre provides very good information, advice and guidance for users based on accurate assessments of their individual needs. Overall regular self-evaluation, professional support and development and a relentless drive towards improving families’ lives means that the centre has a good capacity to improve.

‘I would have cracked up by now if I didn’t have them’ is a comment that typifies those expressed by parents and carers and helps to explain why this is a good centre overall. The centre manager and senior leaders lead by example and work as a highly effective team. They receive excellent support from colleagues and partners to provide well integrated cohesive provision which has led to it having a positive impact on the lives of users. The centre is becoming increasingly popular with the local community. Parents comment that staff ‘...always go out of their way to help’. Early assessment of users’ needs and the steps taken to quickly address concerns are improving many lives. Parents and carers frequently describe how their confidence and self-esteem has grown since first accessing the centre’s services. Many of them now feel able to develop their own skills and to take part in activities to help others within the community.

Senior leaders have a clear vision for the centre and there are well-established procedures for monitoring and evaluating provision. Users’ views are given serious consideration and activities are adapted to meet changing need. The centre knows

its strengths and weaknesses well overall and priorities for improvement are generally clear. However, there is sometimes insufficient accurate first-hand data available from the local authority and others limiting the opportunity to set specific targets and ensure all groups of users are benefiting fully from the centre's services. Collaborative working across the cluster of children's centres enables staff to share expertise and good practice and ensures that resources are used effectively. However, the role of the advisory board is currently focussed too much on the general needs of the area, rather than those of the centre. This limits the impact of its work.

The centre is a very safe environment with extremely rigorous safeguarding policies and procedures which ensure that families are protected well. Prompt actions by staff and multi-agency referrals ensure that risks to children are minimised. As a result, safeguarding is outstanding. Children and adults respond well to the high quality learning and development opportunities provided by the centre. These activities are often particularly innovative and effective. For example, the crèche activities mirror literacy and numeracy courses being undertaken by parents and carers, and children's progress is carefully and accurately monitored.

Equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination are good and central to the work of the centre. Staff provide a fully inclusive environment where everyone is valued and everyone has a voice. This is particularly well reflected in the provision made available to fathers and adaptations made to equipment and premises to meet the needs of users with additional needs.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the use of data and other information, in partnership with the local authority, to set specific, challenging and measurable targets for the centre's development.

- Improve the role of the advisory board to ensure that its work is more specifically targeted to provide support to the centre and guide its improvement planning.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Outcomes for parents and carers and their children are good. This is confirmed by the wealth of often quite moving personal testimony and case study evidence. The centre's success is achieved by the way in which all staff, leaders and managers are single-minded in their focus on improving the life chances of all users. However, data relating to specific outcomes for groups of users sometimes lacks clarity and is less well used by the centre to measure the success of its work.

A range of activities is helping families to live healthier lifestyles, such as 'Cook for Life' courses and a community allotment project where families are encouraged to grow and use their own produce. Discussions with key partners demonstrate the highly successful links that have had a positive impact on family health and well-being. The extremely popular baby massage and soft play sessions for both mothers and fathers are well attended. Parents appreciate 'Stay and Play' activities where the centre's play workers provide many opportunities for children to engage in experiences not readily available at home, such as messy play. Parents speak excitedly about the wide range of skills learned through fun activities with their children and how they enjoy trying these at home, often using resources prepared by the centre staff.

The on-site café provides a focal point within the centre providing healthy food at affordable prices and is popular with users and members of the local community. It is a pleasant environment to sit in and relax. Children attending activities in the centre enjoy tasty, nutritional snacks.

The regular drop-in health clinic provided by the health visitors is very popular and well attended, particularly by young mothers. Ante and postnatal support and advice is provided, including access to a breastfeeding support worker who provides information and visits mothers after birth in hospital. Breastfeeding rates are increasing and immunisation rates are high. Early registering of expectant mothers at the children's centre by community midwives enables the centre to become involved at an early stage.

Parents and carers say they feel safe and secure in the centre and are confident to leave their children in the hands of staff. They very much appreciate having somewhere to come where they feel neither judged nor mistrusted. 'Nobody criticises or looks down on you' and 'We are all on the same level here' are just a couple of many telling parental comments. Observations showed that children demonstrate positive behaviour and relationships when using the centre. Good role modelling by staff promotes consistent behaviour management and awareness of keeping children safe, in addition to specific courses and home safety checks provided in partnership with the local Riverside Housing Association.

A high percentage of families have circumstances which make them particularly vulnerable. Children are well protected by a very effective multi-agency approach to identification and assessment of need, through referrals to the Supporting Families Panel and joint planning for appropriate service delivery. The centre is very well focussed on meeting their individual needs and there is good evidence of improved outcomes for children on child protection plans, due to effective outreach work. Early intervention frequently prevents the escalation of concerns and the tight circle of support, guidance and protection provided through Family Support and Family Intervention Programmes help parents and carers cope with difficult situations, reducing risks to children. The 'Houseproud' programme, the 'Pow Wow' group and 'My Life' courses have had a demonstrable impact on parents' self-confidence and skills. As one parent commented, 'It's helped us open out and fetched us out of our

shell'. `Best Buddies' sessions help children develop confidence and skills to rebuild relationships. Targeted sessions, such as music and swimming, coordinated by a Barnardo's project worker, are very effective in helping children with special educational needs make good progress.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are improving well, particularly in acquisition of language and writing skills, through the intensive family support and focussed activities for children provided by the centre and outreach workers, such as Portage. Adult learning is given a high priority by the centre. Courses in life and parenting skills are particularly appreciated by users, and they describe how their confidence and aspirations have improved. Many parents and carers move on to register as volunteers and several have since gained employment at the centre. Good links exist with Jobcentre Plus, which support parents in accessing courses and seeking and sustaining employment. Computer drop-in sessions are much valued by parents and children who regularly make use of the facilities provided.

Parents and carers are confident that they are listened to. They are given many opportunities to express their views, knowing that these will be taken on board, and, if appropriate to need, will be acted upon. The Parent and Carer Advisory Group plays an active role in community development, such as in their successful bid for play equipment in a local park. Citizenship courses provided by the centre have helped them understand how to be constructively involved and given them the confidence to promote the work of the centre through presentations such as `What would life be like without SureStart?' across a wide geographical area. Parents and carers are represented on the advisory board and take part in recruitment and selection of centre staff. They talk readily about the progress which they have made since accessing the centre's services and specific training which they are now using to deliver courses, such as `Speakeasy', to other parents. They are clearly appreciative of the centre's ethos of empowering parents and carers to take control of their lives. A striking example was provided by a father who is developing a pack of information and support for new fathers to mirror that provided routinely for new mothers.

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	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2

The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	2
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How good is the provision?

2

The centre has well-established procedures for assessing the needs of children, parents, carers and families. The staff consider carefully what is needed through different types of assessments, the multi-agency Supporting Families Panel and by evaluations of all aspects of the provision. They listen well to parents and carers and are responsive to their requests. The centre puts into operation a wide range of supportive processes and procedures from its own and other services' resources, which contribute to the good outcomes for families and children.

Through an extremely well-developed multi-agency approach, the centre provides a wide range of activities and outreach services to match the needs of its many users, although data relating to specific groups in the reach area is underdeveloped. The centre successfully works to increase user engagement and participation in centre activities, including those from minority ethnic groups. The centre's work is tailored very effectively to meet the needs of individual children and their families, through personal support packages which ensure improvements to family health, well-being, learning and development. Participation rates are improving and there are now lower drop out rates from activities and services. Quality childcare is offered on site and is used effectively as a springboard to other services.

Learning and development opportunities are driven by high aspirations for, and expectations of, the centre's users who have access to a good range of free adult training. Where feedback shows that this is not effective, training is modified accordingly. For example the 'My Life' course now provides sessions particularly tailored to develop confidence and self-belief, before more formal application to job seeking procedures. Crèche sessions run alongside adult learning at different venues and this is reassuring for parents and carers, particularly when they can see the benefits for their children. Parents commented, 'I'm amazed at the progress my child has made' and 'She gets to meet so many other children'. The centre regularly trains volunteers and uses their skills effectively within the provision, frequently providing non-threatening individual support for families in their homes, for example, through the use of 'Community Parents'.

The quality of care, guidance and support provided by the centre is outstanding. 'My family support worker is an absolute star' is a typical comment which demonstrates how appreciative parents are of the care and support they receive. Parents and carers know that they can turn to the centre at any time and someone will be there to help them. Excellent emotional and physical support is provided in times of crisis and more day-to-day practical assistance is given, such as managing finances, organising household routines or helping with childcare. All staff know the centre

users very well and are passionate about the work they do to improve the lives of children and their families. Parents' reflective, honest and straight-speaking accounts demonstrate how they unanimously appreciate the efforts of staff who are '...always there at the end of the phone' and who '...go out of their way to help'. Their support means that parents and carers feel empowered to take the lead and the necessary steps to improve their own and their family's outcomes.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	2
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The centre is led and managed well. All senior leaders have high expectations and are passionate about improving outcomes for families. Clear procedures for evaluation, planning and prioritisation are in place through the devolved leadership structure and shared decision making of the Planning Group. This is very effective in ensuring that all staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities, whilst having a very good knowledge of how services dovetail with one another. However, the role of the advisory board is insufficiently developed or tailored to the precise needs of this centre, and data available from the local authority lacks the detail required to enable the centre to evaluate the impact of its work over time and to make local and national comparisons of outcomes.

There is clear evidence that centre leaders and staff are ambitious about providing the very best service possible to its users. Self-evaluation, both at the level of service provision and at a more strategic level, is generally well embedded. All activities are monitored to ensure that they continue to meet need. Considerable emphasis is placed on responding to the feedback of users and adapting activities as and when required, for example, by moving the day or time of a session and making sure that the venues are appropriate and accessible. Monitoring of the centre's work and the management of its resources is carried out through a regular cycle of review and planning which includes the local authority. Current action plans focus well on improving particular services and activities but do not identify specific measurable targets to ensure that outcomes are improving for all groups, including those that are hard to reach. The centre resources are managed well and shared working across the cluster helps to ensure that the centre provides good value for money.

Safeguarding procedures are exemplary. Rigorous policies and procedures are in

place to protect children and ensure the health, safety and well-being of the centre's users. There are very robust recruitment and vetting procedures and those directly involved in appointing staff are trained in Safer Recruitment. All staff and volunteers receive regular and up-to-date safeguarding training, particularly in child protection, at an appropriate level to ensure that they are well informed. Staff are very vigilant at all times and alert to early warning signs. Procedures for identification of concern and referral are robust and lead to a team that understands its responsibilities very well. The centre ensures that there is carefully planned provision to cover from where one system of support ends and the next begins, for example, in the range of support available for parents and children experiencing domestic violence.

The centre promotes the inclusion of all children and their families well. Regardless of background, aptitudes or other differences, they have full access to the range of services and activities on offer, and several parents and carers report how well the centre has supported their children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Information displayed within the centre promotes equality and diversity and the centre and other venues are fully accessible for disabled people. The centre is trying hard to extend its services to other groups within the community, for example, by producing publicity material in other languages and forging links with minority ethnic groups. The centre took an active part in the recent 'Equality and Diversity' day within the city.

Outstanding partnership working is pivotal to the centre's success. Excellent communication and relationships mean that staff know their communities very well. Staff have developed mutually supportive relationships with professionals working within health, employment, social care, education, housing and inclusion. Links between professionals and volunteers in children's and community services and the families are highly effective. Local knowledge is frequently the starting point for initiating or developing aspects of the centre's provision. Parents and carers recognise the strength of the team, who they trust implicitly, and who they depend on a great deal for advice and guidance and for practical and emotional support.

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	2
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key	1

agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	1
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	2

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

None

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. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the Petteril Bank Children's Centre on the 5 – 6 May 2011. As part of the inspection we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's documentation, and talked with a range of people including parents and carers, staff and partnership workers. We judged the centre as good overall, with some outstanding features.

It was a pleasure to have the opportunity to talk with so many of you and to hear how much you value and rely on the work of the centre staff, and how you feel that they are always there for you. You told us how friendly, helpful and welcoming they are and how they are never judgemental. You expressed your views clearly and honestly and they were very helpful to us. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your contribution to the inspection.

The centre does some things particularly well, such as the way everybody works together to make things better for you when you need help and support and the way you are encouraged to keep safe. It is clear that the staff work very hard and want the very best for you and your families.

Many of you told us how the staff listen to your views and to your ideas about how some activities could be better, and that you are able to take part in making decisions about how the centre runs. You are proud of your centre and how it has helped you to take control of your lives, and often to learn ways in which you can help others who are going through the same sort of things that you have been through. You also told us that you always feel very safe in the centre and the other venues because the buildings are secure, clean and well looked after and you trust the staff that work with you.

We were pleased to hear how you feel your children have made good progress in their learning and we saw how much they were enjoying activities, such as their music and soft play sessions. You told us that you have been helped to understand about play and how children learn by talking to the staff, watching how they do things and sharing ideas about how you can support your children's learning at home.

Many of you told us about the ways the centre has helped you to live healthier lives and cook healthier meals for your families. You told us how outreach and family support workers have helped you get advice and support for many areas of your lives, such as managing your finances and organising things at home. We know that many of you use the health clinics which have been useful in helping you get advice on all aspects of caring for your children.

Attending courses has helped you develop your confidence and self-esteem and taught you new skills. Some of you have trained to be volunteers and have been successful in completing courses which have led to employment. We enjoyed listening as you told us about your personal 'journeys' since you first became involved with the centre.

We have suggested that the centre further improves their systems to measure the differences and benefits that the services are making. The local authority will be able to help with this by providing more detailed information. By doing this, staff will be in a stronger position to show how well they are doing, to identify where there are any gaps and set themselves targets for further improvement. We have also asked the centre to review the work of the advisory board so that it really does focus its efforts on helping the centre improve the lives of children and families in your local area.

Thank you once again for your welcome and your willingness to talk to us. We can see why the staff love working with you and wish you and your children every success in the future.

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