

Inspection report for Bretton Children's Centre

Local authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	365760
Inspection dates	14–15 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Georgina Beasley

Centre governance	The local authority
Centre leader	Deborah Hunt
Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school if applicable	Watergall Primary School 131240
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Bretton Community Preschool 256743

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.

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 staff, community, health and social partners, a group of parents and carers, and representatives from the local authority.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Bretton is a phase one children's centre. It was designated in October 2006 and provides the full core offer. An estimated 937 children aged four and under live in the reach area. About 85% of families are from White British backgrounds and 15% from minority ethnic backgrounds. There has been a recent influx of families from Eastern European countries.

The social and economic position of families is low. The centre serves an urban community which is in one of the 30% most deprived wards in the country. An above-average proportion of people living in the area are unemployed and about 28% of children live in families that are dependent on workless benefit. The proportion of children known to be eligible for free school meals in the four primary schools is well above average. Levels of knowledge and skill on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are broadly in line with age-related expectations. The proportion of young mothers is above average and a below average proportion (10%) are in employment, education and training.

The centre provides a base for a wide range of health, educational and social services that take place on site, in the home and in other local venues. The local authority manages the centre. The centre coordinator is on a temporary appointment for one year. The local authority plans to outsource the centre's management next year.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

Bretton Children's Centre is satisfactory. The centre's welcoming atmosphere and positive relationships between staff and users have established a centre where users choose to come for routine health appointments and to enjoy a satisfactory range of groups offered. Outcomes for users' health are satisfactory. Users receive good support to enable them to get over episodes of depression, especially new mothers who have suffered from post-natal depression. The proportion of mothers who initiate and sustain breastfeeding is below expected levels and a greater proportion of mothers smoke during pregnancy than typically found. Children and adult users feel very safe. Parents and carers are clear about and follow safe practices. Due to the promotion of home-safety packs, many parents and carers feel confident to keep their families safe in the home.

Safeguarding arrangements are good. Adults whose family circumstances have made them vulnerable are confident to approach the centre for advice and support. Some continue to drop in for tea and a chat long after their children have started school.

The centre gives good support to ensure users have equal opportunities to access services and groups. A good proportion of users from minority ethnic groups attend regularly because of the positive relationships that exist. Families with children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are given good support to access services and groups. Children make good progress and many have the confidence they need for successful learning in pre-school. Parents and carers who attend centre services and activities enjoy learning with their children and develop a good understanding of their behaviour and development. A small number of adults take part in education and training which give them the skills and confidence to return to work. A significant proportion of adults who live in the reach area are not in work.

Leadership and management and the centre's capacity to improve are satisfactory. On her appointment last year, the centre coordinator improved the way the centre evaluates its own effectiveness. Data that were available were analysed to see what effect the centre has had on improving outcomes for users. She has also helped the staff to evaluate the success of their own activities in this way. Processes for

assessing users' progress have improved and are now satisfactory. An evaluation of users' needs has led to the implementation of a more varied range of activities this year. There have been some improvements in outcomes for users, including children's achievement and learning, and a reduction in obesity in young children. The number of users attending at least one centre activity has increased. A large number of potential users living in the reach area are not yet accessing services and groups. The centre is not yet clear enough where these people live or why they are not coming. The centre has not until recently had a wide enough range of data to inform it about its performance against outcomes for users. As a result, improvement targets do not always contain measures against which to evaluate the success of strategies. Evaluations of the effectiveness of the centre's groups and activities are not always helpful as many of them do not identify the learning that has occurred.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work with partners, providers and the advisory board to embed the collection and analysis of a range of data that measure the success of the centre's work against outcomes for users.
- Use the information to set measurable improvement targets and implement timed and effective actions that improve outcomes for users, especially in health and economic wellbeing.
- Analyse the needs of the wider community and devise strategies to attract a greater proportion of users who live in the reach area and who do not currently access the centre's services and groups.
- Ensure assessments focus on what children and adult users have learned in groups and use the information to set precise targets for improving individual outcomes.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

The good advice about healthy diets and feeding babies is making a positive impact on reducing the levels of obesity in young children. It has yet to make an impact on improving children's dental health. While improving, the proportion of mothers initiating and sustaining breastfeeding is below national and local levels. A higher proportion of pregnant mothers than average smoke during and after pregnancy. There are no figures for immunisation take-up rates, but feedback from health professional indicates that these are good. Adults suffering from depression learn to tackle issues independently because of the good support they receive.

Children show they feel safe in the centre in the confident way that they approach adults for help, and the positive way that they respond when adults join in with their play. They are familiar with the centre's surroundings, are developing good levels of independence and enjoy choosing from the varied range of resources and toys available. There are currently nine children living in the reach area with child protection plans, most of which come with the children when they move into the

reach area. Improvement in the setting of targets and the planning of timed actions has resulted in a greater number being removed from the child protection register this year. Take-up of home-safety packs is good. The number of accidents has reduced each year since the centre opened.

Adult users who access the centre’s services and groups say that they value and enjoy them greatly. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are targeted well for outreach support from portage, although there remains a short waiting list. Speech and language support has improved the levels of children’s communication when they start pre-school. The proportion of children reaching six points at the end of the Reception Year in personal, social and emotional development and in their communication, language and literacy is improving. It is above levels in reach areas similar to Bretton but remains below nationally expected levels. The gap between the lowest 20% and the rest is closing faster than the national and local authority rates.

Positive relationships ensure people from all walks of life get along well together. Parents are able to give feedback about groups and services through formal evaluation sheets, by ‘throwing a fish wish’ into the net in reception, and completing post-it responses to questions about services. The newly formed parents’ forum includes an enthusiastic group of parents and carers who make a positive contribution to the centre’s work. As one member said, ‘We want to see the centre as the hub of the community.’ Users currently make little formal contribution to the centre’s advisory board and governance.

The numbers of adults engaging in education and training are satisfactory, although literacy, numeracy and English as a second language courses have stopped this year. English as a second language courses have helped users new to the country to improve their English and helped some into work or volunteering. Few teenage and young mothers engage in some sort of employment, education or training. Good advice from Jobcentre Plus is ensuring workless families receive the benefits to which they are entitled and are signposted to relevant skills’ training for helping them back to work.

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	3
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	3
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and	3

parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	
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How good is the provision?

3

Assessment procedures are satisfactory. Group planning is based on evaluations of what went well and next-step goals, but the quality of these is variable. The best evaluations include comments about individual children's and adults' learning, which help staff plan well-matched activities to meet the specific needs of users. Some evaluations are merely lists of activities that did or did not go well. The lack of detail does not guide planning sufficiently to ensure the specific learning needs of individuals are being met effectively. Assessments for families who receive outreach family support have improved this year and are good. A detailed running record includes all contacts made, and the agreed targets for each week and eight-week package of support. These are evaluated at each visit to ensure families are on track to reach the targets set.

The small number of adults who attended adult education classes completed self-assessments that enabled them to track their achievement and progress towards reaching accreditation. Adult education classes have ceased this year.

A number of groups and activities which have been introduced this year are starting to make a positive difference to outcomes for the users who attend them. 'Baby PEEP', 'Little Explorers' and 'Movers and Shakers' groups enable parents and carers to enjoy playing and learning with their children and to build an understanding of their behaviour and emotional development. First-aid training and advice on promoting successful learning have resulted in improved practice.

Buggy walks and 'Lets Dance' have made a positive contribution to users' healthy lifestyles, specifically weight loss, giving up smoking and feeling physically fitter. 'Sticky Fingers' sessions give good opportunities to those who attend to make healthy menus with their children. Everyone enjoyed making healthy fruit trifles and drinking fruit smoothies during the inspection. A good number of fathers participate in the group which runs every other Saturday, and the number joining the group is growing. A high number of Eastern European families attended family fun day this month. However, a majority of users who live in the reach area do not attend centre activities.

The quality of day care provided by pre-schools and childminders is good. Childminders meet regularly at the centre to talk about their work and to share experiences. Health clinics are very well attended and so parents and carers receive good-quality care, support and guidance about their babies' development and needs. Workless families are given clear guidance about benefits, training and work at monthly meetings and drop-in facilities by Jobcentre Plus. Good support and guidance are given to those families where domestic violence is known about through family services. Families in times of crisis are supported well in partnership

with local charities to get back on their feet.

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

After a period of instability, the centre coordinator has successfully refocused staff on measuring the impact of their work against outcomes for users. Targets for which the centre has data include measures of success that reflect a percentage increase on previous figures. Data show that there are still some aspects of the centre's work that require improvement. To date, actions have had limited success because measures have not been included in all targets. There has been an increase in the numbers of people using the centre because groups are run at other venues in the reach and the range of groups offered is wider than before. There are still too many people living in the reach area who choose not to use the centre's services. The centre has started to assess the needs of the wider reach through surveys and to plot where users live so that it can target areas, groups and the needs of the wider community more effectively.

The centre promotes equal opportunities and the reach area's cultural diversity well. Children with disabilities receive well-targeted outreach services and their needs are met effectively once they start pre-school. There has been a strong focus on welcoming all new families to the reach area through numerous events including World Food Day and the 'World Around Us' project which brought together families from ten different countries to share cooking, dancing, crafts and music. The centre plans to attend the Bretton festival this year to raise its profile in the wider community. Crèche facilities enable users with children to attend courses held at the centre. Translation services are available to enable users who speak English as an additional language to communicate with the centre.

There is a strong partnership between centre staff, childminders, on-site pre-school staff and health professionals. They are able to talk regularly with each other because they are frequently at the centre. This enables immediate discussion of concerns, and changes to services and support. This has prevented the need for some families to be referred to social services. While partnership with Jobcentre Plus is effective, partnerships with family information services, Axiom Housing and the

local primary schools are at an early stage of development.

The advisory board had not been operating for some time before it was reinstated last year. Attendance at meetings remains low and so the centre coordinator has instigated weekly meetings with staff and significant partners to ensure services are matched to need. These and regular meetings with the local authority have improved governance of the centre and ensured there is now a secure oversight of service provision and budget. The centre gives satisfactory value for money.

Safeguarding arrangements are good. Suitability checks for all staff, partners and providers are carried out rigorously, and visitors have their identities checked before they are allowed into the building. Daily checks of all indoor rooms, the outdoor area and of satellite venues ensure the accommodation is safe. Regular emergency evacuations take place although, because the centre shares the site, the adjoining school dictates the day and timing of checks. Emergency evacuations this year have tended to take place at the same time of day and so the centre organised additional checks during school holiday times. Families whose circumstances have made them vulnerable receive good care, support and guidance, especially those suffering from domestic violence or depression. Recent domestic violence figures have just become available and have alerted the centre to the need to be more proactive in addressing this aspect of safety. Multi-agency support ensures families in times of crisis receive the support they need to either overcome the difficulties or to make a fresh start.

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	2
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	3

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

The inspections of childminders and pre-schools in the last two years and the inspection of the Early Years Foundation Stage at Watergall Primary School, which was judged satisfactory, contributed to the children's centre's inspection and 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. 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 Bretton Children's Centre on 14–15 June 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you for telling us about your own and your children's experiences at the centre. It is clear that relationships are positive and that you have fun with your children and enjoy learning and playing with them. The centre makes you feel welcome and so those of you who come grow in confidence at every visit. Your children make good progress and, when old enough, are confident to attend pre-school.

There are good partnerships between the midwives, health visitors and centre staff. Health clinics are very well attended and many of you stay for groups that run afterwards. The centre gives good care to your personal safety and wellbeing. Good-quality support and guidance are resulting in some improvements in your families' health. Nevertheless fewer mothers breastfeed and more people smoke during and after pregnancy than in many other parts of the country. You receive good advice about work and benefits which has given many of you the confidence to apply for work and to improve your families' economic circumstances. You and the centre make sure that your children are safe when you attend groups and activities. You are able to make a positive contribution to the centre's work through 'making a fish wish' or just talking to staff about what you like and what could be better. Members of the parents' forum are enthusiastic and keen to develop your role in influencing the centre's work even more by getting more of you involved in it and the centre's advisory board. The vision is for the centre to be 'the hub of the community'.

The centre has clearly improved the services it offers to you and your children and those of you who attend have benefited from the increased range of activities. It was

good to see how much you enjoyed the recent World Food Day. Families who have particular challenges value the good support they receive. There are still many people who live in the reach area who are not using the varied range of services and groups on offer. The centre has only just started to collect data about outcomes to help it to target resources and to ensure it is meeting every user's needs. The lack of data inhibits the centre's ability to evaluate the effectiveness of its work, and to plan for the long-term improvement of the centre's services and activities.

We have, therefore, asked the centre to work with you, its partners and the organisations that provide services to collect and use a range of data to plan in detail how it will improve the centre's services and, consequently, the outcomes for you and your families. We have asked that, when staff evaluate groups and activities, they think carefully about not only what you and your children have done but also what you have learned so that they can plan even more relevant activities for you to take part in. We have also asked them to find out why some people are still not using the centre and to take steps to encourage them to do so.

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