

Inspection report for Brentry and Henbury Court Children's Centre

Local authority	City of Bristol
Inspection number	383640
Inspection dates	14-15 December 2011
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Centre leader	Lynne Newbury
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Brentry Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Little Rainbows at Henbury Court Children's Centre

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.

An inspection of the 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.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with parents, centre staff and managers, trustees and local authority officials and a wide range of staff from partner organisations, particularly health professionals.

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

Information about the centre

Brentry and Henbury Children's Centre is a phase 1 children's centre, registered in 2006 and occupying purpose-built premises in the grounds of Brentry Primary School. It also operates a satellite children's centre at Henbury Court Primary School. Both sites are located in an area with high levels of deprivation, although the Brentry centre borders pockets of affluence. There are 1,097 children aged from birth to five in the reach area. A small, but increasing, number of users speak English as an additional language. Of families in the area, 25% are on workless benefits and an estimated 16% are lone parent families. Children's level of achievement on entry to early years education has improved in the last three years and is now at or above the Bristol average.

The centre is run by a charity of the same name which has a service level agreement with Bristol City Council. The management team is accountable to a board of trustees. At the time of the inspection, six of the ten trustees were parent users of the centre.

The centre provides Early Years Foundation Stage education on both sites. The Brentry centre is open from 8.00am to 6.00pm for 51 weeks a year and is registered to care for a maximum of 89 children under five. Henbury Court is open from 8.00am to 5.00pm for 51 weeks of the year and is registered for a maximum of 56 children up to eight years of age although at the time of the inspection, all the children at Henbury Court were under three.

The Henbury Court nursery was inspected in October 2010 and Brentry nursery was inspected immediately before the children’s centre inspection. Provision at both nurseries was judged outstanding.

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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

The passion and commitment of all staff in successfully attracting over three quarters of the families in its reach area, coupled with strong and responsive leadership at all levels and excellent understanding of the area’s needs, contribute to making this an outstanding children’s centre.

An exceptional and widely-valued partnership with health services has underpinned the effectiveness of the centre’s work in early identification and intervention to support the most vulnerable children and families. This is particularly so for children with additional needs and for children living in families at risk of domestic abuse. One parent summed up the views of many when she said, ‘The help the centre staff gave me to recognise the situation I was in and the help they gave me to move out of it transformed my life.’ Measurable outcomes for children are securely improving at a faster than average rate with the exception of dental health. Despite considerable support, advice and guidance, many parents seeking education or employment opportunities face significant barriers.

Safeguarding arrangements are excellent, well understood and modelled by all staff and underpinned by appropriate policies, regular staff training and meticulous record keeping.

Routine, inclusive and challenging self-evaluation has led to numerous improvements in the work of the centre. This is most strongly demonstrated in the childcare provision, where challenging targets have contributed to a significant improvement in children’s communication, literacy and language skills. This is having a demonstrable impact on the levels of children’s achievement at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The centre uses its resources extremely well to support the most vulnerable users, and especially to react quickly in times of urgent need. It effectively reaches families in its target groups and provides excellent value for money.

The centre has excellent access to local intelligence which it uses effectively to plan services to meet local needs. Leaders and managers regularly evaluate the centre’s work which leads to regular improvements in outcomes. Given these strong elements and the centre’s secure financial position, the centre has excellent capacity to make further improvements.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Leaders and managers should build on the centre’s excellent joint work with health professionals to help parents take early action to secure good dental health for their children.
- Leaders and managers should work with local partners to improve access to, and the take-up of, employment opportunities in order to help more parents secure sustainable employment

How good are outcomes for families?

1

Outcomes are at least good and are improving rapidly for the good proportion of children and families who use this centre. Accurate and continually updated local information has resulted in over three quarters of the families in the reach area being registered in the centre. Children’s health is generally good or improving, for example the take up of childhood immunisation is among the highest in Bristol, except for the level of dental health which the centre recognises to be a concern.

Children are safe and well protected as a result of the excellent work all staff in the centre do to make parents aware of their responsibilities. The centre uses its excellent working relationship with local authority children’s services to ensure child protection cases are brought to their attention when necessary. Staff routinely model good safeguarding practice, such as ensuring access doors are closed after them, which is noticed and copied by parents. The excellent Forest School enables children as young as two to experiment and take risks in exploring a very well controlled and supervised outdoor environment, which they clearly enjoy.

Children and families enjoy coming to the centre and attendance at sessions is high. Children’s behaviour is very good and the children mix well with others from the growing diversity of cultural backgrounds. Children otherwise at risk of isolation readily make friends in the centre, and lone parents describe the opportunity to meet and share experiences with other parents as a lifeline. The growth in self-confidence as adults develop their parenting skills is evident and a source of pride. Educational standards are improving for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, albeit from a low level, and the gap is closing rapidly between the lowest achievers and the rest. This is supported by the outstanding quality of provision in the nursery, coupled with the excellent transition arrangements, which helps children to settle quickly when they transfer to primary school.

Parents’ views are routinely gathered, through their representatives on the board of trustees and the parents’ forum, as well as through the annual survey or more frequent ‘snapshot’ questionnaires. Parents are confident that they influence decision making. A good proportion of teenage parents still continue in education, employment or training, but many parents face barriers to employment as a result of the loss of traditional jobs in the area. Access to adult training and education opportunities through local colleges is well advertised in the centre, and managers have used their funds creatively to provide free or subsidised childcare for the most vulnerable. However, many parents still lack the skills needed to secure new types of employment as traditional jobs in the area decline.

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	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	1
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	1
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	2

How good is the provision?

1

Centre staff are very good at assessing the needs of children and their families and providing tailored, individual support that fully meets the needs of the most vulnerable families in the reach area. This is underpinned by good quality data which is thoroughly understood by the centre, and by routine evaluations of all their

activities.

The centre's work with health professionals is highly valued by staff and users. Collaborative working has enabled the centre to offer speech and language development, therapeutic support for both children and parents, counselling, routine baby health checks and advice and guidance to encourage more of the good number of mothers who start breastfeeding to continue. There is a high level of mutual trust and respect between centre staff and the health professionals they work with. This has resulted in outreach staff from the centre increasingly taking on routine health visits because of the level of trust they have built up with particular families who are otherwise very reluctant to engage with services.

One of the most highly valued programmes run by the centre is the Freedoms Programme, and a pre-cursor Step into Freedom devised by the centre itself. These programmes cater for the significant number of parents who experience domestic violence or abuse in their lives. The success of these programmes is such that parents who have recognised and moved out of abusive relationships are eager to share their experiences to encourage and support others who may be similarly at risk. For many of these parents, protecting their children has been the motive for engaging with the programme.

The centre is particularly good at responding rapidly to families who experience a crisis. As well as maintaining spare capacity in the nursery so that it can provide emergency places, the centre is able to draw on its charitable donations to provide equipment and materials at very short notice. The care and support that all staff routinely offer to parents are life changing for some. One mother described this support thus, 'Until the centre opened I felt completely isolated with no-one to turn to when my child needed help; I have been coming here ever since then and it has been my lifeline. I now have the confidence to seek out help and the knowledge that every single member of staff gives the same wonderful support.'

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	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

The centre is very well managed. It has been very successful in attracting professionals from a variety of backgrounds to the board of trustees, as well as parent users. Trustees provide clear direction and appropriate scrutiny which ensure

they know the work of the centre well. Managers at all levels regularly evaluate their work and regularly report to the senior management team. A particular feature of the centre's quality improvement process is the evaluation of the subsequent impact of staff training on their work.

A key feature of the centre is its responsiveness and flexibility which ensures that it rapidly assesses the needs of new users, including newly-arrived families in the area, and uses well-chosen approaches to meet these needs. Developments have included a project to evaluate soft outcomes and the introduction of support for children and their families who have English as an additional language, with volunteers who speak the language of the new families. The centre is continually busy, well used and welcoming. It uses its resources well to ensure maximum value for money.

Safeguarding arrangements are extremely secure. The centre's policy includes useful guidance, as well as staff restrictions, on the use of social media sites and mobile phones with cameras that is shared with parents. Staff and volunteer recruitment checks are appropriate and recorded in a single central record together with confirmation of similar checks for partner organisations' staff. Child protection records are meticulous. Important sensitive information about children is shared appropriately with staff. A significant number of the staff have regular multi-agency safeguarding training alongside the designated person. Many staff are trained to initiate Common Assessment Framework (CAF) records. Good preventative work is supported by the excellent relationship with the health services; referrals to and from each partner are frequent and this helps to identify concerns at the earliest stage.

Although the centre reach area has traditionally had few members with an ethnic minority heritage, this is changing quickly. The centre has been successful at attracting newly-arrived families and creating a welcoming and harmonious environment. One newly arrived parent said, 'I came here with some understanding of English, but the centre has been so helpful in putting me in touch with other parents and with English classes. My child has made so many friends and learned so much.' The centre provides excellent support to the one in ten children who have additional needs, making good use of funds from all available sources to provide resources to enable them to integrate completely in sessions. Transition arrangements to mainstream or special schools are particularly caring, and sensitive to the needs and concerns of the parents as well as the children.

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	1
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1

The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
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	1
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	1

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

The childcare provision at Henbury Court was inspected in October 2010, while the provision in Brentry was inspected immediately prior to this inspection. The inspection of this children's centre was informed by the findings and judgements of both inspections.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Brentry and Henbury Court Children's Centre on 14 and 15 December 2011. We judged the centre to be outstanding.

Children and families are very effectively supported as a result of the work of the centre. This is particularly obvious in the growth in confidence shown by so many of you as parents and the recognisable development seen in your children. The centre, working closely with its partners particularly from health services, is very good at assessing your needs and those of your children, and in finding the best ways to meet those needs. This means that you readily trust the staff and recognise how much they do to help you. The support the centre provides for children with additional needs is particularly good, as is the support to parents and children who experience domestic abuse. The opportunities for you to meet other parents and share experiences, while receiving advice and guidance from professionals, are clearly having a very positive impact. Many of you consider it to be a lifeline, and most of you want to help the centre by volunteering or raising funds.

The centre is welcoming and friendly, and many families are in contact with it. You and your children feel very safe because of the high profile the centre gives to

safeguarding and child protection, clearly and regularly demonstrated by staff and readily copied by parents. For example, staff carefully assess the risks involved in encouraging very young children to take part in the Forest School. As a result, children greatly enjoy this opportunity to take risks in a carefully controlled way, particularly those with little other experience of playing outdoors.

The centre is particularly good at using your views to judge what works well and what they wish to see improved. This means that services are regularly adapting and evolving to meet the changing needs of the area.

Staff work hard to support you to improve your children's health. Their efforts have had the biggest impact on the numbers of you who arrange to have your children immunised. Staff have found it harder to help you to take care of your children's teeth, so that a lot of children have lost teeth or had fillings by the time they start school. We have asked the centre to work with the dental services to show you how you can help to improve this situation.

We would like to thank all of you who spared the time to meet us and tell us about your experiences of working with the centre, particularly those of you who came in specially to do so. We wish you and your children the best for the future.

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