

Inspection report for Quarry Bank Children's Centre

Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	366427
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2011
Reporting inspector	David Speakman AI

Centre governance	The local authority
Centre leader	Sandra Derham
Date of previous inspection	No previous inspection
Centre address	Quarry Bank Primary School
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Linked school if applicable	Quarry Bank Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Quarry Bank Nursery (EY379245)

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.

An inspection of the maintained nursery 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.

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre manager, the senior leadership team, the Chair and representatives of the governing body and members of the centre's steering group. They met with a number of representatives of services who work through the children's centre, including volunteer workers, health visitors, outreach workers and a family support worker. Inspectors spoke to groups of parents and carers. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Quarry Bank Children's Centre is a phase two children's centre. It was built and opened in 2008 as an extension to the maintained Nursery Unit at Quarry Bank Primary School. It serves the communities of Quarry Bank, Dudley Wood, Mushroom Green and Primrose Hill. In addition to the 70% core offer provision, the centre provides sessional childcare for children and babies, aged nought to three years, integrated into the school's maintained nursery. No more than eight children may attend at any one time. The centre offers: early education integrated with childcare, family support and outreach to parents, child and family health services. The centre opens 48 weeks each year on weekdays from 8.30am until 5pm.

The centre's accommodation is small and much of its work is through outreach. It operates in the centre at Quarry Bank Primary School, and from Dudley Wood Neighbourhood Learning Centre, Quarry Bank Community Centre, Quarry Bank Clinic, Dudley Wood Methodist and St John the Evangelist Churches. The building of a new

school is nearing completion, so Quarry Bank Children's Centre will expand into the current Nursery Unit when the school moves into its new buildings later this year.

The head of the centre is the centre manager. She works closely with the centre's deputy manager who is also the family support coordinator. The centre is funded by the local authority, which has responsibility for running the children's centre and for the centre's performance management. Accountability to the local authority for this centre is held by Quarry Bank Primary School's governing body. A new management committee has been set up which will be accountable to the governing body and will focus solely on governing Quarry Bank Children's Centre. The centre manager is a member of the school's senior leadership team and responsible for 0–3 provision and extended services 0–11.

The majority of the families registered with the centre are from a White British background. Small minorities from Pakistani, African and dual heritage backgrounds, as well as some from a Traveller background and a few asylum seekers, use the centre. Data for the reach area indicate a mixed user base in terms of deprivation. About 30% of the families that use the centre come from a background with high levels of deprivation while 70% live in advantaged areas. There are 765 children under five in the children's centre's reach area. Twenty one per cent of children and adults who use the centre come from homes which are dependent on benefits and where no-one is in work. The levels of skill shown by children when they start the nursery are below those typical for children of their age.

The range of activities offered by the centre includes local community baby clinics, child development checks and breastfeeding support, all of which make up a comprehensive ante- and post-natal programme. The centre has links with health visitors. It provides a wide range of adult education and courses and activities designed to support parents and carers back into employment.

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

1

Main findings

The overall effectiveness of Quarry Bank Children's Centre in meeting the needs and improving the lives of children and their families who use the centre is good. Within this overall judgement, there are outstanding elements in outcomes, provision and leadership and management.

Starting with a brand new centre in January 2008, the manager has worked tirelessly to build a team of professionals with an exceptionally high level of commitment to the improvement, care and welfare of the lives of children and their families in the community which it serves. High levels of satisfaction are clear from comments made by parents, demonstrating that they value what the sessions have to offer, for example: 'I have the chance to meet and chat to first-time mums.' 'My child shows more interest in the treasure basket than in his own toys at home. I'm going to make one.' 'Bundles of Joy gives me the chance to share my experiences and thoughts with other parents.' Parents and carers show high levels of confidence in what the centre is doing. The results of a parental satisfaction poll indicate that almost all of the parents and carers surveyed are happy with what the centre is doing for them, mostly in terms of giving them and their children the opportunity to socialise. Almost all said the centre has made a big difference to their lives and to those of their children. Because nursery staff plan activities that relate very well to children's preferences, children become fully engaged in learning. Their behaviour is excellent and because they are so well integrated into the nursery group, it is sometimes difficult to pick out the under threes. The centre's staff listen very carefully to their views, and parents and carers are given wholehearted support to make their own highly significant contribution to the development of the centre's services.

Teamwork is exceptionally strong, and staff morale is at an outstanding level. Staff feel valued by the centre's leadership and users alike. They are committed to constantly improving their own professional skills and knowledge. They provide an exceptionally high level of care, guidance and support to children and their families, particularly in times of need or crisis. No problem is too great; staff are

knowledgeable on a wide range of issues and if they cannot provide the answers, it is highly likely that they know someone else who can through the centre's excellent partnerships with professional agencies and organisations. Staff go out of their way to help those in need, from both inside and outside the reach area. The welfare of the whole community, whatever individual or group needs are, is at the heart of the centre's work. The centre's staff members, working alongside highly skilled professionals, are extremely effective in helping individuals and their families through times of crisis. Safeguarding is good. Quarry Bank Children's Centre has taken on board all of the school governors' good-quality policies and procedures with regard to safeguarding children and child protection. Practitioners have strong knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities with regard to safeguarding children issues. Policies, procedures and practice are good, consistent, and enhance children's safety. All staff, partners and volunteers have been subjected to required checks. Thorough risk assessments are in place and appropriate to the centre's work. All records are kept fully up to date, and the centre has established honest and open relationships with partners with regard to safeguarding.

The staff use and analyse the information they have carefully to continuously improve services. Official data refer to families in the reach area and are, therefore, relevant to only about 70% of its users as over 300 additional users come from outside of its reach area. The staff also survey users and this adds usefully to their data bank. However, there is still more information which the centre's leaders do not yet have, particularly relating to community needs, which would be of great benefit to the centre in making sure it reaches out to all community members and fully meets their needs.

Through excellent support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and through being highly effective in including hard-to-reach families in its work, the centre demonstrates exceptional equality of opportunity and high levels of inclusion. Staff members persevere to reach out to a wide spectrum of the community. There is a successful and growing fathers' group, a key parent representative from the Traveller community supported the centre in raising awareness of Travellers' lives, members of minority ethnic groups are fully included and those adults who need basic skills training are provided for. High inclusion is reflected in the Mencap Me2 Award for the inclusion of disabled people. This means it has the quality assurance of being accessible and inclusive to all users. Nine children with disabilities are supported at present. The centre's staff are justifiably proud.

Development of the centre's services has been rapid. In a short time and starting with a 'blank canvas', the centre's staff have brought it to a point where all aspects of its work are at least good and some outstanding. Outcomes show a similar picture. Linked with outstanding leadership and management, the centre has an excellent capacity to sustain further improvement. The centre provides excellent value for money. It has its own quality assurance processes through considering the views of leaders and managers at different levels and its users. It provides a very warm, welcoming and totally safe environment. Staff are exceptionally well deployed

and respond willingly to changing circumstances. Even though the centre has a limited budget, services are arranged in such a way as to be sustainable and services have a significant impact on the lives of users.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Make sure that the information the centre has about community needs fully reflects all of its users by:
 - refining the systems by which the centre's leaders, managers and staff gather information about the needs of the full range of users
 - using these views and data to assess the impact of services, further fine-tune services and plan an even wider range of support activities which benefit the centre's users.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

The centre is successful in its moves to promote healthy lifestyles among the children and families using the services provided. Courses are very well integrated, and strong links exist with local health services. The centre delivers a comprehensive programme to promote healthy lifestyles among babies, children and adults, which includes both antenatal and postnatal programmes. Mothers gain valuable knowledge through routine visits made with families before birth and between birth and 12 weeks to raise awareness of issues relating to bonding between mother and baby, on feeding and on keeping their babies emotionally and physically fit and healthy. The family support coordinator identifies any need for early intervention such as postnatal depression, and any other additional needs including hard-to-reach families and teenage parents. Parents benefit from information relating to a wide range of health issues such as home safety, fire safety checks and smoking cessation, all delivered by staff with secure knowledge and understanding. Parents gain useful and valued knowledge relating to providing a healthy diet for their children and families through 'Get Cooking' sessions. Within the nursery, children's good health is promoted as stringent procedures are in place to prevent the spread of infection and promote hygiene. Children are actively encouraged to develop good hygiene habits at snack times and when using toilet facilities. Free-flow access to the outside play area provides children with ample opportunities for fresh air and exercise.

Staff at the centre put a high value on the emotional well-being of its users. The children's centre is making a significant difference to children and their families. Testimonials from users demonstrate that they value the high levels of support from practitioners, and the good-quality services. Case studies, relating to postnatal depression, domestic violence, struggling lone parents and parents from overseas with language issues show how early intervention has had a positive impact upon the lives of families, and how multi-agency work has been effectively coordinated to promote outcomes. The input of the children's centre has increased the confidence

and self-esteem of users, and has enabled them to engage with further services and groups.

The centre is particularly effective in child protection. The care and protection process is embedded in the practice of the family support provision. Children are referred to Quarry Bank Children's Centre's parenting strategy through the family support referral system. The centre's staff and partner agencies have full involvement in all care orders for children within the reach area and from adjacent regions. Child protection and safeguarding in individual cases subject to the Common Assessment Framework processes are awarded the highest priority and are of high quality.

Children in the Nursery make good progress and their learning is of a good quality. They are involved in purposeful learning within nursery provision. There is a very strong commitment to responding to the interests of the children. This is particularly evident in the nursery, where routines are flexible and children happily pursue their own interests. Practitioners are dedicated to finding out about, and building upon, children's existing skills. This information is gleaned through the initial home visit, along with details about personal care routines.

Training courses are decided in conjunction with users, and skilfully meet the needs of the local community. There are many opportunities for adults to further their qualifications through accredited courses, such as in childcare or improving their basic literacy and numeracy skills. These are usually held at the nearby Dudley Wood Neighbourhood Learning Centre. Additionally, there are numerous groups and courses which are effective in improving the parenting skills of both mothers and fathers. All sessions are effectively reviewed and evaluated by practitioners; users routinely complete evaluation forms, and this feedback informs future sessions and plans.

The centre's staff respond positively to comments and feedback made by adult users. This enables parents and carers to make a significant contribution to ensuring that the centre's provision meets their needs well. A gap in service was identified by a group of mothers who met through the babies' group at Quarry Bank Children's Centre. They wanted to form a group to access once a baby leaves at 12 months. They felt that the 'Stay and Play' session was too busy for their small children and with the support of Quarry Bank Children's Centre they set up their own committee and group called 'Quarry Bees'.

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	2

their personal and social development	
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	1
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	2

How good is the provision?

2

The centre has been purposefully developed to reflect a positive learning community and encourage users to reach their potential by embedding aspiration. In developing services from a blank canvas when the centre first opened, a local audit of the area was required to assess needs. This information was used to develop a varied menu of activities in response to a needs analysis. As there was very little on offer for children under five, 'Stay and Play' sessions were set up as a gateway into children's centre services that helped staff to assess and identify community needs first-hand and to decide upon appropriate next steps. The assessment of community needs grew from this point and centre workers are now much more aware of what they need to provide. The range of services, activities and opportunities now meet the needs of users and the wider community well.

To ensure that the centre's services are having the right impact on users, staff are further developing ways to measure outcomes. At present, Quarry Bank Children's Centre is in the process of piloting a commercial impact measuring tool alongside data monitoring and unit costing for each service. Outreach workers from Brierley Hill and Dudley Wood Neighbourhood Learning Centres visit Quarry Bank Children's Centre groups to carry out 'task-focused interviews' with potential learners. The volunteer recruitment programme also involves assessing the needs of the volunteer through an initial interview then subsequent supervision. Any training needs are assessed through this process.

The centre's staff are refining processes to track the development of two-year-olds in Quarry Bank Nursery. The intention is to identify areas of need in child development and tailor early intervention support workshops to these areas. However, practitioners within the Early Years Foundation Stage provision are very knowledgeable about the children in their care and highly intuitive of their individual needs. Practitioners are constantly building a strong knowledge of children's individual learning and development needs, which helps to focus provision to ensure progress is on-going. Children are involved in purposeful learning within nursery provision. Achievements are recognised consistently through children's 'Learning Journeys'.

The level of care, guidance and support shown by the centre's staff and their partners for children and their families is outstanding. Respite childcare places are

facilitated for families in crisis, linked to family support. One place is kept available at any given time to allow the family support team to allocate a place in times of need. The support provided for families in difficult situations and the way in which cases of child protection are dealt with are particularly strong. Three members of staff are trained as 'Information Champions' and offer information to families regarding a range of services. Three staff members are trained in smoking cessation and offer one-to-one support, with some recorded success.

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?

1

Leadership and management are outstanding and are key factors in the rapid pace at which the centre has developed since its opening. The governors, who are responsible for both Quarry Bank Primary School and Quarry Bank Children's Centre, have planned for even greater levels of challenge and support to take the centre into its next developmental phase. To achieve this, they have recently constituted a new management committee to govern Quarry Bank Children's Centre and to be directly accountable to them. Membership will consist of staff and partners with extensive working knowledge of the centre and the community's needs. They will work in partnership with the steering group, which has also been instrumental in past development. This move reflects the outstanding ambitions and the high expectations that the centre's leaders have of themselves, of the work of the centre and of the improvement on users' lives.

The work of the centre is strongly supported by staff members who have evolved meaningful roles and expertise to meet their commitments effectively. Family support workers started with a generic role that lends itself to a key-worker system. This means that staff members are deployed according to their expertise, experience and new skills developed through their emerging interests and professional development. This has provided strong leadership and management at all levels.

The equality of opportunity promoted by the centre is excellent. Within the nursery, children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language learn and develop well because their needs are

identified and consistently provided for. Individual education plans are routinely drawn up in conjunction with the special needs coordinator. Children with additional needs are fully supported through alternative and augmentative forms of communication such as signs and symbols.

Diversity is celebrated through a programme of activities in line with the faith calendar and health events. Black history is celebrated and a 'Men's Health' event was put on to celebrate Father's Day. Practitioners value linguistic diversity, and the nursery actively promotes bilingualism as a strength. Practitioners skilfully promote a culture of equality of opportunity, which contributes very positively towards all children's learning and development.

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	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	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	2
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

The Early Years Inspections at Quarry Bank Nursery (23 March 2009) and the aligned Section 5 Inspection at Quarry Bank Primary School were used to help inform the outcomes of this inspection. The Early Years inspection found the nursery to be good and had some outstanding features. Outcomes of the primary school inspection for safeguarding, achievement in the nursery and governance were used to guide inspection outcomes for Quarry Bank Children's Centre.

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 Quarry Bank Children's Centre on 8–9 February 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We are very grateful to all of the parents, carers and representatives from the centre's professional partners who gave us some time to tell us about the work of the centre. You gave us an extremely positive picture of the centre, and what you had to say was very useful indeed in making our final judgements.

Quarry Bank Children's Centre has a very short, but impressive history. Just over two years ago, staff gathered in the centre for the first time to discuss and decide how best to serve its local community. Not knowing what the community needs were, they set about looking at what was already provided. They identified a gap in an important area; there was very little on offer for children under five. 'Stay and Play' sessions were formed and it all grew from there.

Quarry Bank Children's Centre has many strong features, but central to its rapid development are the vision and passion of the centre's leader, which she has passed on to the rest of her team. She has created a culture of exceptionally strong teamwork among the centre's staff and in its relationships with professional partners. The workers at the centre communicate exceptionally well with each other, and their commitment to meeting the community's needs forms a strong basis on which the centre works. Quarry Bank Children's Centre's staff members are self-critical and constantly review their own performance against the success of the initiatives and services provided. To guide them on the next stage of their journey, the governing body has created a new tier of accountability. A new management committee, consisting of people who know the centre and community well, will govern the centre's work. They will work with the current steering group and be accountable to the governing body. The centre's managers see this as a move to continue and, hopefully, accelerate the development of the centre.

A key strength of the centre's work is the excellent equality of opportunity it represents in its work. Staff members readily embrace any opportunity to be fully inclusive and to provide support and guidance to anyone in need. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who speak English as an additional language are fully included in the work of the Nursery. The centre achieved Mencap's Me2 award. This means it has the quality assurance of being accessible and inclusive to all users. Nine children with disabilities are supported at present.

Outcomes reflect the good-quality provision and outstanding care. You and your families are well supported in adopting healthy lifestyles. As users, you gain valuable knowledge and understanding of how to care for your children and keep them clean and healthy. You learn about safety in the home and how to provide healthy diets for your families. Emotional health is high on the centre's agenda, and it is particularly good at supporting your families in times of difficulty or when in crisis. The centre

takes safeguarding and child protection very seriously and has significant recorded success in this area of its work.

The centre's managers welcome your new ideas and are always ready to encourage you to be proactive in helping the centre develop. Typical of this is their encouragement of a group of mothers whose very young children became too old for the babies group but not ready for the busy 'Stay and Play' group. With the encouragement and support of the centre's staff and its partner agencies, they set up the 'Quarry Bees' group, with a constitution and funding to support their work. Similarly, staff members always respond to your requests and queries positively. If they don't know the answers, it is very likely they know someone who does and they will work hard and help anyone with a concern.

The centre is effective in promoting useful learning to both adults and children alike. Young children who attend the nursery progress well from their starting points. Many of you find rewarding learning opportunities, such as improving literacy and numeracy skills or following childcare courses. The accreditations these carry are helping some of you to move back into employment. Other opportunities assist your families to improve lifestyles and to ensure emotional well-being. In a recent parent satisfaction survey, the vast majority of you who were surveyed responded that the centre has made a significant difference to your lives, to your children's lives and to those of your families.

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

