

Chuckery and Paddock Children's Centre

Pool Street, Chuckery, Walsall, WS1 2EN

Inspection date 4–5 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Good	2
The quality of practice and services		Good	2
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a good centre.

- The centre is reaching the large majority of local families, including those most in need of support, who benefit from its good quality services. The well-planned use of different community venues enhances the work of the centre. As a result, the centre is working successfully with its main target groups of vulnerable children, teenage and young parents, families living in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods and families from minority ethnic groups.
- Strong local knowledge and good use of other information ensure that the programme of activities meets families' needs well. It offers the right blend of group sessions, such as 'Let's Talk', as well as carefully planned home visits that support individual families, particularly in times of crisis. Parents say that the centre is extremely responsive to their views, such as varying the times of sessions or putting on additional activities. They say 'staff are wonderful' and 'the welcome is second to none'.
- Leaders keep a close eye on how well the centre is doing and strive for continuous improvement. The centre works closely with a range of professional groups to provide strong support. This ensures families are well protected and helps them to improve their lives.
- Governance is effective and well established. The local authority provides good support but also challenges the centre to improve by setting realistic targets to build on its already good impact on families.

It is not yet an outstanding centre because:

- Not enough fathers and lone parents are in regular contact with the centre and leaders recognise that the centre's top priority is to meet the needs of these groups more fully.
- Childhood obesity levels vary; despite the centre's otherwise good work to improve children's health and well-being, they are still higher than they should be.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children’s centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, senior leadership team, family support workers, officers from the local authority and partners from health, education, breastfeeding, community development, early help and early years. They also met parents, members of Palfrey Community Association, volunteers and representatives of the partnership board. They looked at the centre’s self-evaluation, action planning, a sample of case studies, safeguarding procedures and a range of other relevant documentation. Visits to activities were undertaken jointly with the centre’s senior leaders and the manager attended all meetings of the inspection team.

Inspection team

Christine Field, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Pippa Wainwright	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

The centre became operational in 2008 as a phase 3 stand-alone centre and delivers a range of services, including health, parent and toddler groups, family support and adult learning. It shares a resource base with Action for Children, which provides services for children with disabilities and is subject to a separate inspection. The centre is managed by Palfrey Community Association on behalf of the local authority under the terms of a service level agreement. The senior leadership team of a nearby phase 1 children's centre oversees work at this centre and staff deliver services across both centres' reach areas. The partnership board, comprising key partners and parents, provides governance. The centre does not make specific on-site childcare provision.

The centre's reach area includes 1,091 children under five years of age, many of whom are from minority ethnic families, predominantly Asian. The area is very mixed socially and economically with pockets of deprivation. For example, the St Matthew's and Highgate lower super output area is among the top 10% to 20% most deprived in the country and Chuckery West is in the top 30% most deprived. Data show that 9% of children live in workless households and 14% of families are eligible for the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. The main target groups assessed in need of centre services are vulnerable children, families living in the most disadvantaged areas, teenage and young parents, fathers, lone parents and families from ethnic minority backgrounds.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen its work with health partners and early years settings to reduce the level of obesity in young children living in the reach area so that the target is met or bettered by:
 - sharing information regularly and targeting resources more precisely
 - looking closely at existing services to see which is having the best impact on lifestyle and children's healthy weights
 - identifying precise and measurable targets in an action plan to help drive a brisk pace of improvement.
- Increase the engagement of lone parents and fathers by:
 - finding out why more of these groups are not accessing services
 - refining services as appropriate in the light of findings
 - setting out a clear plan of action
 - publicising more widely the benefits gained by those who already enjoy attending the centre.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The centre makes thorough use of all available information to match its services to local needs and keeps tabs on any emerging trends. Every family with a newborn baby receives a visit from the centre staff within two months. This helps to promote the very positive engagement of families, so that over 80% of children living in the most deprived neighbourhoods regularly access services.
- There is particularly good engagement, at over 70%, of vulnerable children, teenage and young parents, families living in the most disadvantaged areas and minority ethnic families, all of whom are high priority groups for the centre.
- Parents benefit from attending activities that help them give their children the best start and programmes that are specifically designed to improve their parenting skills and help them to manage their children's behaviour successfully. Information shows that 93% of eligible two-year-old children take up their free entitlement to early years education and are successfully helped to get

ready for school.

- The centre leases space in a well-located building in the heart of its community but it is not open in the evenings or in school holidays. To overcome this, services are delivered from various venues across the reach area and, as a result, there is always something for families to do right on their doorstep.
- Very well targeted support for families in their own homes ensures that help is on hand when they most need it. Parents say that they love to visit the centre and always go home with new ideas to support their child's learning at home.
- 'Dads Club' runs monthly and is much enjoyed by those who attend and get involved in a range of exciting activities, such as making blueberry scones with their children. Although steadily rising, at 25% the proportion of fathers regularly attending services is the minority. About a third of lone parents are in touch with the centre and leaders have rightly highlighted that the further engagement of both groups is their number one priority.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The quality, range and appropriateness of services offered by the centre are typically good. For example, baby clinics held at the centre are extremely well attended by teenage and young parents because they offer the chance to socialise as well as receive expert guidance and advice. The impact of families' regular attendance and the good care and support they receive is reflected in their improved well-being, such as sustained breastfeeding rates, which are much higher than the local authority and national averages.
- High quality early learning experiences, with a strong focus on communication and language development, are integral to the 'Parent and Toddler' groups which run three times a week. Close checks show most target children making good progress. Easy to read 'learning journeys' enable parents to see their child's achievements and allow health visitors to gather information for their development checks.
- At 72%, the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is better than seen locally or nationally. This is one indicator, among many, of the high impact that services have on reducing inequalities. Parents say that the 'Booster group' that takes place every summer is one of the main reasons why their children's start at school is smooth and trouble-free.
- Good communication and mutually respectful relationships among partners are key features of their carefully integrated approach to delivering services. This helps to promote good relationships within the local community. Families from different walks of life and cultural backgrounds enjoy being together and really appreciate that the centre staff, between them, speak all home languages and readily help them to overcome any barriers. Families in most need are often supported in their own home by staff who give timely help to overcome a range of challenges, including domestic abuse, drugs misuse or a breakdown in relationships.
- Parents from target groups are well supported to access a wide range of further education and employability opportunities. English as additional language learning and adults' basic skills courses show especially high retention rates and a much celebrated 92% pass rate.
- Various initiatives, such as fruit at snack time, 'Let's get cooking' courses and sessions on food labelling and portion control help families to extend their understanding about why a healthy diet is important. The limited impact they are having on reducing childhood obesity is rightly of concern to centre leaders who recognise that a more sharply focused approach is required. Results over time have fluctuated and, at 9.6%, are currently below their 11% peak in 2010 but way off the target of 6%.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Team spirit is high and staff are well motivated; they feel valued and well supported in their roles

and share a strong commitment to do their best for the community. Supervision ties in well with staff training, and a new system of appraisal, drawing on best practice, is usefully being developed for senior leaders. The innovative use and sharing of resources with a neighbouring centre enable highly efficient use of available funds.

- Governance arrangements are effective. The partnership board has a firm grasp of what is happening in the centre and knows how effectively the centre is reducing inequalities between different groups in the area. It is in the process of renewing its terms of reference and reviewing its composition to keep up with ongoing changes such as making sure new partners and parents replace those who have recently moved on. The local authority sets high expectations for the centre and makes regular checks on its performance. It uses the information gained to set challenging but realistic targets to support the centre's journey of improvement.
- Effective use is made of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) by different agencies that pool their resources to ensure families' needs are assessed accurately. Early help results in effective protection for the families who have the greatest need, including children subject to a child protection plan and looked after children. Safeguarding is given high priority and good arrangements including robust plans and co-working with key professionals, ensure that families are well looked after when they come to the centre.
- Relationships among centre users and with staff are extremely positive. The centre's ethos promotes inclusion well, and, as a result, parents from different social and cultural backgrounds feel welcomed and involved in centre life. Survey responses and the regular feedback following sessions, such as that captured on 'graffiti boards', provide compelling evidence of the high level of satisfaction centre users have.
- The centre has established a strong track record, as reflected in the good access and high quality services, which, together with good leadership, management and governance, clearly demonstrate good capacity to continue to build for further success. However, action planning is not as thorough as it could be. For example, the Early Years action plan is driving strong improvement, but the absence of specific plans to increase the engagement of specific groups or to reduce obesity rates is a missed opportunity to ensure the centre's work has even better impact on improving the outcomes for families.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Practice consistently reflects the highest aspirations for children and their families and as a result inequalities are reducing rapidly and gaps are closing.
Grade 2	Good	Practice enables most children and their families to access good quality services that improve children's wellbeing and achieve the stated outcomes for families.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	Performance is not as good as it might reasonably be expected to be in one or more key areas.
Grade 4	Inadequate	The needs of children and families in its area are not being met and/or the leaders and managers are not providing sufficient challenge to bring about improvement to the quality of services.

Children's Centre details

Unique reference number	20724
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	421452
Managed by	Palfrey Community Association

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1091
Centre leader	Mick Davies
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01922 644005
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