

# ABC Children's Centre

C/O Chapel St Nursery School, Russell St, Luton, LU1 5EA

<b>Inspection date</b>	18–19 June 2013		
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>	
The quality of practice and services	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>	
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>	

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This is a good centre.

- ABC Children's Centre offers good-quality services. Families can join many interesting sessions during the week. For instance, there are 'Stay and Play' sessions with music where children learn to sing nursery rhymes and songs that encourage them to count.
- Access to services is good and the large majority of families use the centre regularly. Families from all backgrounds mix successfully, especially those from targeted groups.
- Staff work well with families and offer good-quality care and guidance on a wide range of topics, including weaning a baby and getting a job.
- During sessions, staff establish good practice such as demonstrating the best ways to breastfeed a baby because training is used thoughtfully and sessions are carefully planned.
- Families are very satisfied with the centre, and the large majority said it helps their children to learn and do new things. One said, 'My child really picks up vocabulary at the centre.'
- Children who attend the centre are well prepared for school and they make good progress so that their skills are broadly average by the time they leave the Reception Year.
- Leadership, including governance, is good and the centre is well managed. This means that the centre is improving effectively and so practice and services are developed thoughtfully. For example, the toy and book library, which were set up this year, are assisting many parents to successfully support their children's development.

### It is not outstanding because:

- Children's writing skills are a little lower than expected by the end of the Reception Year and staff do not always explain effectively to parents how their children can develop these skills.
- Large numbers of parents are not gaining literacy qualifications.
- The local authority and the centre have not gathered information which enables them to protect nearly all children through the use of inoculations.
- Staff do not collect evidence effectively about their personal targets and so they are not totally clear whether they have met them.

## 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.

This inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, two deputy centre managers, the Chair of the Governing Body, one governor, who is the headteacher of Chapel Street Nursery School and two are advisory board members representing Park Town Community and Children's Centre and The Mall Children's Centre, parents and carers, centre staff, health specialists, children and two representatives from Luton Borough Council.

The inspectors visited sessions held at Chapel Street Nursery School, the Children's Centre at The Mall, St Margaret's Primary School, Park Town Community and Children's Centre, and Whipperley Children's Centre. Three joint observations were carried out with senior centre staff.

The inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation. Evaluations of satisfaction from 273 families were taken into account. Most questionnaires were completed by families who used the centre but some were completed by those who do not.

## Inspection team

Jackie Cousins, lead inspector	Additional inspector
Robert Miller	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

ABC Children's Centre is situated in a mixed neighbourhood which includes some areas with very significant levels of disadvantage. It attracts a diverse range of families to the centre. The majority of the families who live in the surrounding area are from White British backgrounds but a significant proportion are from minority ethnic groups. A considerable number of families are from Asian and African or from Western and Eastern European groups. A few families are at the early stages of learning to speak English. Some areas around the centre have considerable levels of unemployment, families in receipt of benefits and workless households. A significant percentage of adults have no formal qualifications.

The centre opened in April 2012 following a restructure of children's centres in Luton. The hub of the children's centre operates from two rooms on the site of Chapel Street Nursery School. There are four other sites where services are delivered. In partnership with other providers, the centre provides early education, childcare and health services, family support and adult learning courses. Most children enter early education with skills that are lower than those expected for their age. Chapel Street Nursery School is subject to separate inspection arrangements. There are seven children's centres in the area.

The centre is managed by the governing body of Chapel Street Nursery School on behalf of Luton Borough Council. The advisory board includes local people, headteachers, parents and staff from the centre. The centre is not part of the payment by results trial and is not receiving extra funding from the government.

### What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Develop parents' and children's writing skills by making sure:
  - large numbers of parents gain literacy qualifications
  - staff explain more specifically how parents can help children to control pens and make marks.
  
- Develop the effectiveness of centre leadership by ensuring:
  - staff regularly assist leaders to collect evidence that they have met their personal targets for improvement
  - the local authority helps leaders to collect data about the proportion of children under the age of five years who are not fully inoculated.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families Good

- Families have good access to services and the large majority, especially those from targeted groups, attend regularly. They enjoy sessions such as baby massage where parents learn about ways to relax their babies and reduce digestive problems for young children. This is because staff are well trained in the best techniques to use when massaging a baby.
  
- The centre has analysed the needs of the area carefully and so, for instance, it offers baby feeding drop-in sessions. These allow parents to access valuable support if they have any concerns about breastfeeding. As a result, the very large majority of mothers who use the centre breastfeed their babies from birth to six weeks of age.
  
- The staff encourage a wide range of families to attend and so, for instance, the very large majority of teenage mothers in the area make good use of health clinics as well as 'Stay and Play' sessions.

The majority of lone parents take part in sessions such as 'Messy Stay and Play'. Families who might find it difficult to go out into the community attend sessions because staff visit them at home before they join a group and welcome everyone warmly when they arrive at the centre.

- Antenatal services help to prepare families for the birth of their babies. For example, health experts offer parents advice about recyclable nappies and developing good sleep routines for babies. Courses develop the skills of a considerable number of parents in how to manage children and their challenging behaviour because all the sites are used well to deliver services.
- All children aged three and four in the area take up their nursery places because staff explain successfully to parents what the benefits are for their children. Significant numbers of two-year-old children gain places at pre-schools or nurseries because the centre has supported parents to access early education well.
- Parents' access to classes which develop their numeracy and speaking skills is good. In recent years, considerable numbers were awarded qualifications which helped them gain employment. Although some parents have achieved literacy qualifications, the numbers are not great. This means that the centre does not successfully assist adults to develop their writing skills and so they cannot use these skills when they apply for work or support their children's learning fully.

### **The quality of practice and services**

Good

- Families receive good-quality services and so, for example, parents and children learn through a wide range of practical activities in centre sessions. Children's language and communication skills are promoted well because staff have high expectations and encourage parents to talk to children and work with them at their level. Sign and singing sessions allow parents to learn valuable ways to communicate with their children and improve their well-being.
- Children, including those from minority ethnic groups, make good progress and so their knowledge is broadly average by the end of their Reception Year. The gap between children who would be eligible for free school meals and the rest is reducing. This is because staff have an effective understanding of how young children learn. Children's achievement is monitored carefully and targets are set for them to work towards. This is because good leadership ensures staff assess children's key skills regularly.
- Parents and children develop healthy lifestyles successfully. They learn about the need for exercise and a balanced diet because of good partnerships with a health specialist. Cookery sessions allow families to expand the types of food they eat. In recent years, the proportion of children under the age of five who are obese or overweight has been reduced significantly and is now below the national average.
- Families are cared for well because the centre places a high priority on making sure they are safe at all times. This year, significant numbers of homes have been assessed to see how safe they are, and many families have received valuable advice and equipment to reduce risks to children. This is because the centre uses resources thoughtfully.
- Children's writing skills are a little lower than expected by the time they finish their Reception Year. Staff do not always offer parents detailed advice about how to develop these skills such as the best way to hold a pen and what sort of marks they could encourage their children to make. This means that parents do not know effectively how to support their children when they learn to make marks which will become the skills they will use to form letters.

## The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The centre manager, deputy managers and staff have created a strong team. Senior leaders think carefully and use local information well so that they have analysed what are the best ways to support families. They are clear about how they want to improve the centre's provision and services. An effective development plan records the three key areas it wishes to improve.
- Training is used wisely and so, for example, this year all staff learnt about ways to work with parents. This is because the course thoughtfully developed their skills in communicating, achieving small goals and assessing child development. All staff who work directly with families have good qualifications in early years or childcare.
- The centre works well to support other early years providers. For example, weekly drop-in sessions for childminders help them to develop their skills such as planning activities and assessing a child's stage of development.
- Staff are observed thoughtfully every three months. Targets for improvement are effectively agreed because of good staff expertise. However, staff are not expected to bring evidence that they have met their targets to senior leaders before the next observation occurs. This means that they do not have a deep understanding of how successfully they are meeting their personal targets.
- Parents are really satisfied with all the centre offers. They are particularly positive about the staff and the high-quality guidance they give them. One parent summed up others' comments when they said, 'Staff are lovely and friendly and very approachable.' The large majority of parents who completed the questionnaire really appreciate the opportunities to socialise and make friends at the centre. Some parents who attend the centre have successfully encouraged others to join courses or sessions.
- Leaders place a high priority on keeping families safe. All the necessary checks are carried out on staff and a clear record is kept of these checks. Child protection training for all staff is undertaken appropriately. Many staff have qualifications in first aid and food hygiene. Confidential information is kept safely and staff carefully record the support given to families at risk. This year the proportion of children who live with domestic violence has been reduced considerably. This is because the centre and other agencies work productively together.
- The borough council challenges the centre effectively and so between them local priorities are worked on productively. These include reducing inequalities by increasing the results of children and parents in the most deprived local areas. Over recent years, the results for children at the end of the Reception Year have increased by 15%.
- Immunisation rates in Luton for children under five-years-old are average. The borough council has not helped the centre to collect data or information about immunisation rates in the local area and so they have not been able to ensure that virtually all children are protected by inoculations.
- The governing body knows the strengths of the centre well and it asks leaders challenging questions about the use of money and the services provided. It knows how good the centre is because it productively monitors the quality of provision. This ensures that a broad range of services is available to local families and that resources are used successfully. The governing body is fully involved in appointing new staff and knows how their performance is supported and watched over. It uses data effectively to reduce inequalities for local families because it understands the needs of the local community.

**What inspection judgements mean**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
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**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	20626
<b>Local authority</b>	Luton
<b>Inspection number</b>	421447
<b>Managed by</b>	the governing body of Chapel Street Nursery School on behalf of Luton Borough Council

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	2500
<b>Centre leader</b>	Michael Howe
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01582 413552
<b>Email address</b>	info@abcchildrenscentre.co.uk

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