

Belle Vale & Hunts Cross Children's Centre

Our Lady of the Assumption, Hedgefield Road, Liverpool, Merseyside, L25 2RW

Inspection date 11–12 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.

- Leaders, managers and staff are highly committed and work well together to achieve good outcomes for families.
- The local authority and the centre's advisory board monitor its work closely to ensure that it continues to improve.
- Centre staff have good local knowledge and have registered most of the families in their area.
- The centre shares information and works well with a wide range of partners.
- Parents are very supportive of the centre and say that it has made a major difference to their lives.
- The centre provides good support for children with special educational needs, particularly those who need support with speech and language development.
- A high number of adults are involved in learning activities.

It is not outstanding because:

- The centre has not identified its target groups precisely, so it finds it difficult to show how it is helping each group.
- The centre coordinator does not always monitor activities to ensure that they are delivered to a high standard.
- The centre does not track the progress that individual children make in detail, so it cannot show how much they have improved.

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 three additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with representatives of the local authority, centre staff, members of the advisory board, parents and staff from partner agencies such as health and the police.

The inspectors visited both Belle Vale and Hunts Cross sites as well as St Gregory's Primary School, from which some activities are delivered.

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

Inspection team

Michael Glickman	Additional Inspector, Lead Inspector
Elaine Murray	Additional Inspector
Peter Stacey	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Belle Vale and Hunts Cross Children's Centre serves the Belle Vale, Allerton and Hunts Cross wards of Liverpool. It is a phase two centre and was formed from the merger of two centres in November 2012. As a result, it occupies two sites which are three and a half miles apart. It is directly managed by the local authority through an advisory board, which includes parent representatives, and provides the full core offer, including health and employment support. There is nursery provision at the Hunts Cross site but this is no longer managed by the local authority. This provision is inspected separately and the reports are available on our website: www.Ofsted.gov.uk.

Belle Vale contains some of the most deprived areas in the country. Hunts Cross is more prosperous but also includes pockets of high deprivation. Of the children in the reach area 32% live in households where no-one is working and 29% are in households in receipt of Family Tax Credit. In some parts the number of children living in poverty is three times the national average. Most of the residents of the area are of White British origin, but there are a few families from minority ethnic communities and there are a growing number of families of East European origin in Hunts Cross. Most children enter early years provision with skills below those expected for their age. The centre has identified as particular target groups fathers, teenage parents, families which include disabled people or those with mental health issues, members of minority ethnic communities and those living in the most deprived areas.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- The centre should identify its target groups more precisely in order to demonstrate the impact it is having on each group.
- Management should take a more rigorous approach to ensuring that services are delivered to a high standard, including observing delivery of sessions and home visits.
- The centre should track individual children in detail to enable it to effectively demonstrate the progress that they are making from their starting points.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The centre staff's good local knowledge enables them to identify areas of particular need and to concentrate resources there. They have registered most families in their target groups. However, they have defined these groups very widely, so there is considerable overlap and it is difficult for them to identify how many users belong to each group and where they may be less effective.
- The Belle Vale site is situated opposite a shopping centre and the Hunts Cross site is the only community facility in its area. As a result, the centre is well used. Parents say that they feel welcome and are happy to drop in when they are passing.
- Regular antenatal and baby clinics are held on the Belle Vale site. These introduce parents to the centre and enable staff to refer families between services. Centre staff have close relationships with their health colleagues and share information where appropriate.
- Staff make home visits to families with new babies in their target areas. These enable them to assess the level of support needed and identify any risks to the children, as well as promoting children's centre services. Where necessary, they involve other professionals in the visits or follow-up.
- Staff know their users well and accurately assess their requirements. They are quick to discuss any concerns with the appropriate services. They attempt to contact parents who stop attending the centre to ensure that they are well.
- In order to recruit parents the centre has designated 'Parent Champions'. These are existing users who win prizes for encouraging friends to attend. This has resulted in a significant number of new families attending activities.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The centre offers a range of services which attracts families and uses these to identify which families need further assistance. This enables staff to offer help where it is needed most. As a result, families in target groups are well supported and improve their lives.
- The centre offers a wide range of adult and family learning opportunities. Staff have gained teaching qualifications in order to deliver courses. Over 650 adults have attended courses in the last 18 months.
- The centre has identified the need for English courses for parents for whom English is not their first language. These are delivered on the Hunts Cross site. The courses help parents to integrate into the community and gain employment.
- The centre works closely with local schools and is piloting a school-readiness programme. Teachers feel confident to ask the centre for help. Schools report that children entering the Early Years Foundation Stage who have accessed the centre have improved communication skills and are better prepared for school, with the gap between the highest and lowest achievers decreasing from 33% to 26% over two years.
- The centre has recruited several volunteers who play a full part in centre activities. They say that they feel treated as professional colleagues. As a result of their experience, they have progressed to further education and employment.
- The centre works well with other agencies to support children with special educational needs. A particular strength is activities to develop speech and language where this has been identified as an issue by staff or health visitors. Parents and teachers say that these interventions have been effective.
- A good range of activities for babies and children are provided on both sites. The development of children is tracked through photographs and notes. However, these are insufficiently detailed to enable accurate recording of the progress of each child.
- The centre works with a local organisation to support breastfeeding and has trained a volunteer as a counsellor. It has arranged breastfeeding facilities in the local shopping centre. Breastfeeding initiation rates are above the city average, with a significant increase in Belle Vale.

- The centre supports local childcare providers with two-year-old assessments. There is an active childminder network and childminders see the centre as an invaluable resource.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The merger between the two centres has been successful and staff work well together. The centre coordinator has integrated the two teams effectively. The merger has enabled more efficient deployment of staff and resources.
- Centre staff are enthusiastic and committed. The centre management have a good understanding of the centre's strengths and weaknesses. They have prepared a realistic improvement plan and are monitoring its implementation.
- The local authority closely monitors the centre's activities and performance data. It recognises that provision is good and that the centre is reducing inequalities for children and families. It has established a clear performance management structure.
- The centre's advisory board includes parent representatives who have a strong say in decision making. Parents are invited to evaluate all events and a parent forum has been convened to allow them to put forward ideas. Parents from both sites are very positive about the centre and feel a strong sense of ownership.
- Staff have regular supervision meetings with the centre coordinator, who sets development targets and monitors progress. However, she does not routinely observe their delivery of activities or accompany them on visits. She is therefore unable to be certain that a consistently high-quality service is delivered.
- All safeguarding policies are in place and the required checks have been carried out on staff and volunteers. Staff have received appropriate training and will shortly attend enhanced child protection training. The centre supports all the children in its reach area who are looked after by the local authority or subject to child protection plans.
- The centre works well with other statutory and voluntary agencies such as health, housing, employment support and the police. This enables them to share information to identify and support children and families in greatest need. The Common Assessment Framework is used to assess families' needs and involve the appropriate agencies in supporting them.
- Centre activities celebrate diversity and other cultures. The staff team model respect for other groups. Parents comment that they have made friends with people whom they would otherwise not have met.

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	20261
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	421433
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1519
Centre leader	Debra Cannon
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0151 233 1705
Email address	bellevalecc@liverpool.gov.uk

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