

Buckland Sure Start Children's Centre

Berryscroft Road, Staines, TW18 1NB

Inspection date 26–27 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Inadequate	4
The quality of practice and services		Inadequate	4
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a centre that is inadequate.. It is not good because:

- The centre is in contact with only a minority of the families and individuals in its target groups, including lone parents, workless families, young parents and families from minority ethnic backgrounds. Leaders do not take enough account of the low contact data when deciding the actions it will take to bring about improvement.
- There is no development plan at either centre or local authority levels which states clearly enough the necessary priorities and actions to secure improvement and how success will be monitored and measured.
- Although the local authority provides useful information about the centre's contact with target groups in the reach as a whole, it does not show how well the centre engages families from different neighbourhoods within the reach area. This lack of clarity hinders leaders' ability to check how many families from target groups in the areas of most deprivation are involved with the centre. It also makes it difficult for the centre to see how successfully it is increasing families' participation in services.
- Governors and members of the advisory group are unclear about what is required to improve the situation, particularly for those most in need. They do not check carefully enough how well the centre is doing.

This children's centre has the following strengths:

- For the minority of families that are in contact with the centre, the quality of much of the support they receive is generally good and sometimes outstanding. The centre's work clearly makes a positive difference to their lives.

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 the centre manager, administrative staff, outreach workers, visiting professionals who run courses and provide other services for families, family members, a volunteer, a health visitor, the home-school link worker, the headteacher of the on-site primary school and the school's business manager, childminders, the chair of governors and member of the advisory board. Inspectors also spoke to staff working with families in their homes and representatives of other partner agencies and institutions.

The inspectors visited the wide range of activities taking place at the centre.

Regular meetings were held throughout the inspection. Representatives of the local authority attended during the inspection. The local authority representatives also attended almost all of the final team meeting.

Inspection team

Paul Armitage	Additional Inspector, Lead Inspector
Gail Robertson	Additional Inspector
Jameel Hassan	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

The centre opened in 2009 as a Phase 2 stand alone centre in purpose-built accommodation in the grounds of Buckland Primary School. It delivers a range of services to meet its core purpose. The local authority prioritises children's centres by location in areas of greatest need and so 27 centres receive higher levels of funding; Buckland Children's Centre is not one of the 27, therefore it has lower funding and fewer staff than the rest. Local authority staff refer to it as a 'part-time' centre. It is open on Mondays and Fridays from 9.00am to noon; Tuesdays and Wednesdays 9.00am to 3.00pm; and Thursdays 12pm to 3pm. There is a Saturday Family Club once a month. On the school site, there is also a private nursery, 'Sallywags', which was inspected in a separate Ofsted inspection at the same time as the children's centre inspection. There are two outreach locations at the extremity of the centre's reach area where a small number of activities are provided for families who find it hard to reach the centre.

The centre is managed by the governors of Buckland Primary School who act on behalf of the local authority. There is also an advisory board, comprising key partners who assist with governance. There is a 'Friends of Buckland' group which has recently been set up to replace the parents' forum. The aim of the friends group is to convey to management the views of families using the centre.

There are 1,280 children under five years living in the centre's mainly suburban area. The area is very mixed with pockets of considerable affluence, average income, and deprivation. The most deprived areas are those immediately around the centre, the Royal Estate, and parts of Laleham. Data for the centre's reach area as a whole show that 13% of children live in households claiming out-of-work benefits but this rises to 35% in the most deprived areas. Some 20% of families are claiming the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. Most families living in the reach area are White British but there are significant numbers of Indian or Polish heritage as well as smaller numbers of other ethnic groups. Children's levels on entry to early years education are below those expected for their age

The centre has four target groups on which it seeks to focus its resources: lone parents; young parents; workless families; and black and minority ethnic families.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Work with the local authority and move swiftly to improve the centre's effectiveness and eradicate inadequacies by:
 - producing a clear, detailed and realistic improvement plan setting out what actions will be taken to ensure that the centre's reach to its target groups will be improved to at least a good level
 - including in the plan realistic but challenging targets and showing how the success of the actions taken will be checked
 - putting in place robust procedures for governors and the local authority to hold the centre to account.
- Ensure that the local authority improves the timeliness, quality and relevance of the data it provides so that the centre can clearly see how well it is involving families from each of its target groups in different parts of the reach area.
- Liaise with the local authority to provide training for centre staff and governors so that they are able to monitor the effectiveness of the centre more accurately.
- Strengthen the understanding of the role and remit of both the advisory board and the Friends of Buckland so that they can support the centre more effectively to meet the targets that will be set in the new improvement plan and hold it to account more rigorously.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Inadequate

- The centre is failing to engage well enough with a substantial number of target families; only a minority benefit from its services.
- Staff at the centre work hard to try and increase the number of families reached. They receive referrals from other professionals; for example, health workers give cards to new mothers advertising the centre. Outreach visits are made and have some impact but the number of referral visits to families is low and this limits the centre's ability to gather information about community needs.
- There have been campaigns to market activities across the reach area with leaflet drops and boxes where local people can propose activities. However, the impact of these actions is very limited and they fail to engage the large majority of families who most need the centre's services.
- Staff are unclear about how best to involve greater numbers of families from the centre's target groups. They do not have enough support from the local authority to help them go about this.
- One of the main factors responsible for the centre's limited contact with families in greatest need is that it does not work closely enough in partnership with other agencies, such as health and work-related organisations. There are weaknesses in the way information is shared between various agencies and with the children's centre. The centre's staff commented that not all professionals in health and other services are fully aware of what the centre does and so do not consistently direct families to its services.
- The families that do attend the centre are generally supported well. The range of problems dealt with by staff is very wide but they always find a way to deal with them, either in the centre or by directing people to other services. The centre also offers excellent help to families to access entitlements such as funding for two-year-old children.
- For the families who use the centre, there are effective systems for monitoring their access to the right services and their attendance and participation in activities. If families fail to attend or other problems arise, this is dealt with quickly and effectively. As a result, there is very little drop-out from activities.

The quality of practice and services

Inadequate

- The large majority of families in greatest need have no contact with the centre and are therefore unable to benefit from its services. Only a minority of families are helped to become better parents or to develop the confidence and skills necessary to help them return to work. Weak monitoring of the centre's performance in relation to target families in its area hinders the development of effective services that fully meet families' needs, especially those from the four target groups.
- Although sessions which provide opportunities for children to play constructively are effective because many aspects of children's learning are developed well, they are too informal. There is insufficient use of the Early Years Foundation Stage guidance in 'Development Matters', in particular, in assessing children's development and using this information to plan activities that are most relevant to the children. As a result, the children are not as well prepared for school as they could be.
- The range of services is appropriate for the small number of families from target groups who use them. These include all aspects of how to bring up children as well as relationships between adult family members. Activities such as 'Active Tots', the adult running club, the young parents' group and the detailed and careful support for parents of hyperactive children are very much appreciated. So too are crèche facilities for parents attending sessions at the centre.
- For families that do attend the centre, sessions and activities are generally very well planned and the progress that families make is closely tracked, both during the period of participation and often after it has ended. The effective tracking and recording in case files ensures that what is provided is constantly being adjusted to meet the needs of the families or individuals.
- Parents are always very pleased with what they achieve and the centre's celebration of this. They

say very strongly how the help they have been given has significantly changed their lives. Some go on to become volunteers or childminders and many remain in contact and support one another after their formal contact with the centre. Others are helped into work through contacts with Jobcentre Plus and the centre has good links with local further education colleges.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Inadequate

- The quality of self-evaluation has some good elements but overall it is inadequate. There is too little emphasis on the low participation rates and how to improve the centre's contact with families in most need in order to reduce inequalities. The self-evaluation document gives a clear picture of what the centre offers families and its effectiveness for those that attend.
- The local authority provides the centre with an annual service delivery plan. It clearly identifies target groups for the centre but does not define clearly enough what the centre is expected to achieve with its target groups. There are no success measures; nor is there any identification of how any ultimate target is to be achieved.
- The local authority provides a range of information and the centre itself also generates data about families. All is potentially valuable but it is not used effectively. This results in a wasted opportunity to help more families, particularly those from the most deprived areas.
- The governing body is effective in many aspects of its management of the centre but it has not reviewed the performance of the centre or the use of resources with sufficient rigour. It has not addressed the issue of how well resources are allocated between services for all families and those aimed at target groups.
- The irregular attendance of some members of the advisory board reduces its usefulness. It produces a range of useful ideas but it does not yet understand the key issue facing the centre and what role it should play in addressing this.
- Attendance at the parents' forum has also been very variable and there is no indication yet that the replacement Friends of Buckland will be any more effective. However, the families at the centre do have a voice. They complete evaluations of courses and are generally quick to communicate any thoughts to centre staff who are always eager to listen.
- The centre's procedures for ensuring the safety of children and families meet most requirements, including those for recruiting and vetting staff. Two omissions were identified which were dealt with promptly during the inspection. The centre works with its partners to reduce the risk of harm to children, including those subject to child protection plans and the Common Assessment Framework. However, the effectiveness of this work is limited by the low levels of involvement with target groups.

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	20489
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	20489
Managed by	The governing body of Buckland Primary School on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,280
Centre leader	Christine Lancaster
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01784 227977
Email address	manager@bucklandchildrencentre.com

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