

# Buttercup Children's Centre

Carnforth Drive, Worcester, WR4 9HG

<b>Inspection date</b>	16–17 July 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.

- A very large majority of families living within the area the centre serves, and many families who live in other parts of the city, use the services offered by this popular and well-regarded centre.
- Very good relationships with midwives, health visitors and paediatricians ensure that the staff of the children's centre are kept informed about families who could benefit from the centre's services.
- The centre's location on a campus offering a range of other services, drop-in sessions which are open to all, and the welcoming atmosphere attract families to access the centre's services.
- The services offered by the centre and its partners are of good quality and contribute well to improvements in health for parents and children and the adoption of safe practices in the home.
- The centre's activities are well resourced, have a positive impact on the development of young children, and help parents to learn how to engage in meaningful play activities with their children.
- Children who access the centre's services are better prepared for school than those who do not.
- The centre works well with other agencies to ensure that children are protected and those in the most vulnerable situations are given the support and care which they need. The centre has rigorous policies to ensure the safety of children and families.
- The centre is managed well by the centre manager, who leads a team of dedicated and caring professionals who provide high-quality care for families who attend the centre.
- The local authority and local advisory board are effective in overseeing the work of the centre, holding the centre manager to account and ensuring that the centre continues to improve.

### It is not outstanding because:

- Although the centre knows which services families use, it does not analyse its information carefully enough to ensure that families are accessing the services which are most appropriate to their needs.
- The centre has not done enough work to find out why those living in the areas of greatest deprivation access the centre less frequently than others or to plan innovative ways to attract them.
- The centre does not systematically check the progress of those who have been referred to other organisations, such as adult learning services, to evaluate how effective they are.
- The numbers participating in specialist parenting courses is low, and the centre does not do enough to identify other families who would benefit from them or to encourage them to attend.

## 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: representatives from the local authority and the local advisory board; the centre manager and the cluster manager; leaders of other organisations which share the same campus; the staff of the children's centre; various groups of parents and other users of the centre; representatives of organisations who work in partnership with the centre.

The inspectors visited: activities taking place at the centre; a multi-agency review meeting; and adult learning activities taking place on the campus.

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

## Inspection team

Graham Sims, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Peter Towner

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Buttercup Children's Centre is one of six children's centres which serve Worcester City and is governed by the local authority. There is one local advisory board for all six centres. The centre manager is also responsible for running the nearby Lavender Children's Centre, with which the centre shares its senior family support worker. The centre has four family support workers, two activity workers, and an administrative assistant, majority of whom work part-time.

It was designated as a phase one centre in October 2004. It is located on a campus which it shares with Fairfield Primary School (URN 134707), a community centre, a public library, Fairfield Day Nursery (URN EY455060) and a doctor's surgery. The primary school and the nursery were both judged to be good when they were inspected in October 2012 and May 2013 respectively. Their reports can be found on [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The centre fulfils its core purpose by offering a wide range of services for families living in the area, by sharing services with other children's centres in the city, by commissioning services from a range of partners, and by working in partnership with health visitors, midwives, paediatricians and other professionals. The centre refers children to other providers for nursery education, but provides crèche facilities to enable parents to attend courses.

Almost 1,000 children live within the centre's reach area, 80% of which is in the 30% most deprived areas in the country. Most of the families in the area are White British. Levels of unemployment and the proportion of families dependent on benefits are above the national average. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years provision are below those expected nationally for their age.

The centre has identified its key target groups as: lone parent families; children living in workless households; pregnant teenagers and teenage parents; those from minority ethnic backgrounds; and children living in the most deprived areas.

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

- Improve the way the centre evaluates its own performance and identifies priorities for future action by:
  - analysing the information which it already gathers about its users to ensure that parents and children are accessing the services which are most appropriate to their needs
  - identifying those families who would benefit from specialist parenting courses and encouraging them to attend
  - checking on the progress made by those who have been referred to other services or who attend adult learning courses to assess the impact and effectiveness of these services and to gauge what other help these people might require
  - finding out why some groups, such as those living in workless households or in the areas of greatest disadvantage, use the centre less frequently than others, and looking for innovative ways to encourage them to engage in the centre's activities.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

**Good**

- Buttercup Children's Centre is an extremely popular and well-attended centre. Most families with children under the age of five living within the catchment area are registered with the centre, and almost 80% of the families accessed one or more of the centre's services last year.
- Very good relationships with a range of partner organisations help the centre to identify those families who are in most need of help. Regular referrals from midwives, health visitors and paediatricians are followed up by the centre's family support workers, who ensure that families have access to the services and help which they need.
- Relationships with midwives and health visitors are particularly strong. Antenatal clinics run throughout the day on three days a week and a weekly baby health clinic ensure that almost all parents-to-be and new parents visit the centre, access relevant services and become familiar with the other activities which the centre offers. This positive engagement leads to improvements in health for parents and their children.
- The centre's location on a campus which has a primary school and offers a wide range of other facilities is another important factor which encourages families to access the centre and to use its services.
- The centre helps families through the process of acquiring places for their children to attend registered early years provision or nursery school. As a result, most parents who are eligible to receive funding for their two-year-old children take up the free early education. The centre is, therefore, instrumental in reducing inequalities in pre-school provision.
- The centre provides a good range of services, such as 'Bumps to Babies', 'Crawlers and Explorers' and 'Stay and Play', which can be accessed by any family with a child of the appropriate age. These sessions are highly effective in helping staff to identify needs and families to develop the confidence to use other more specialised services.
- The centre's detailed information on who has accessed its services shows particularly high engagement of lone-parent families, pregnant teenagers and teenage parents. However, the information is not analysed in sufficient detail to determine whether those families who may require greater levels of early help are accessing those services which are likely to have the biggest impact on improving their lives. Not enough work has been done to find out why children living in workless households or in the areas of greatest deprivation access the centre less frequently than others.

### The quality of practice and services

**Good**

- The services offered by the centre and its partners are of good quality. A measure of the centre's quality is the fact that almost as many families living outside the centre's area access its services as do families living within the area the centre serves. The centre's services are beneficial to these families and support the work of other children's centres in the area.
- Parents' views show that the centre has a very positive impact on the lives of families. Parents commented that the staff have helped them, for example, to improve their children's behaviour, to cope with postnatal depression, to deal with sleep problems and to provide their families with more healthy diets. Typical of the comments of many, one parent said, 'It has improved my confidence and helped me and my child make friends.'

- The centre works well with other agencies to ensure that the needs of the area's most vulnerable families are carefully assessed and appropriate plans are drawn up to meet those needs. Case studies and discussions with parents show that they greatly appreciate the supportive way that the centre and its partners deal with them. In almost all cases, the centre's involvement helps families to improve the quality of their lives and to reduce inequalities.
- The centre's activities are well resourced and carefully planned. Activities for children take due consideration of the Early Years Foundation Stage guidance. Group sessions help parents to discover educational activities which they can undertake with their children at home. Informative leaflets, help sheets and a good range of literature are available for them to take away.
- The centre has a positive impact on the development of young children. The level of development of four and five-year-old children in the area is below nationally expected levels. However, information from partner primary schools show conclusively that children who access services at the children's centre make better progress and reach higher levels of attainment by the end of their Reception Year than those who do not.
- Good partnerships with the neighbouring adult learning centre and with Jobcentre Plus provide opportunities for adults to increase their confidence and gain new skills through vocational learning courses, such as hairdressing. Several have gained employment as a result. However, the centre does not systematically track the achievement of learners once they have been referred to other providers and does not, therefore, have a mechanism for evaluating the full impact of these services.
- A small group of passionate volunteers makes a positive contribution to a number of the centre's key activities. Volunteers have been particularly helpful in providing support for teenage mothers. The centre provides good training and supervision for volunteers who, in turn, develop their own confidence and increase their personal and employability skills. The centre has yet to investigate how greater use of volunteers could help it cope with the large number of families attending from outside the catchment area.
- Parents speak very highly of the centre's specialist courses which are designed to help mothers and fathers to improve their skills as parents. The courses are often run in conjunction with other centres. The number of families participating in such courses, however, is low. Although the centre encourages some parents to attend, it has not done enough to identify other families who would benefit from such courses or to encourage them to attend.

### **The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management**

**Good**

- The centre manager provides good leadership for a team of dedicated, caring professionals who are passionate about doing what they can to improve the lives of families, particularly those whose needs are greater. Under her leadership, the centre is constantly seeking to improve the quality of its services. Arrangements for reviewing the performance of staff and their effectiveness in dealing with their linked families are good.
- The local authority has good arrangements for overseeing the centre and holding the centre manager to account for the targets it has set. The centre met nearly all of its targets in the previous year and exceeded some of them by a considerable margin. Good support from the cluster manager and cooperation with other children's centres in the city strengthen and complement the work of Buttercup Children's Centre and ensure that resources are used efficiently and effectively.

- Since becoming one board which oversees the work of all six children's centres in the city, the local advisory board has been much more successful in bringing together a wide range of partners and professionals to provide advice and guidance for the centre. The advisory board meetings provide a good forum for sharing ideas, enhancing existing work, avoiding duplication of services within the city, and listening to parents' views.
- The centre's policies and practices to safeguard children and parents are thorough. All those working at the centre are checked to ensure they are suitable to work with children. Any cases referred to the centre where the safety of children is at risk are taken seriously and dealt with quickly. Children who are subject to a child protection plan or children identified as in need are given high priority and families who are subject to Common Assessment Framework processes receive good quality and timely early help.
- The centre's evaluation of its own performance and plans for future development are detailed, give due recognition to the wide range of work undertaken by the centre, and show determination to improve further. The centre already has a significant impact on improving the lives of those with greatest need, but its self-evaluation does not focus sufficiently on the impact it has on all groups of users. While the centre sets itself targets, development plans have not identified innovative ways to engage those families living in the most deprived areas who do not access any of the services of this children's centre or other neighbouring centres.

**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>	20524
<b>Local authority</b>	Worcestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	423068
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority
<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	994
<b>Centre manager</b>	Dawn Knight
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01905 758411
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