

Boxgrove Children's Centre

Boxgrove Primary School, Boxgrove Lane, Merrow, Guildford, GU1 2TD

Inspection date 4–5 July 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.

- Too few families who are in greatest need are registered with the centre and attend services, particularly those identified as living in low income households.
- The local authority does not review the centre's performance regularly enough. As a result, the centre has not been adequately challenged and those responsible for governance do not have a realistic view of its strengths and what it needs to do to improve.
- The local authority does not provide the centre with all the information that it requires, or support it well enough to identify local needs, set clear priorities or demonstrate the difference that it makes. As a result, plans for improvement are not sufficiently focused on improving families' lives. Targets are not always clear or understood by all those responsible for delivering services.
- The centre does not adequately track the impact of its services. For example, information about children's attainment in the reach area shows that the gap between the lowest attaining children and their peers widened significantly between 2011 and 2012.
- Arrangements for reducing the risk of harm to families are not rigorous enough. Concerns about families in need are not always followed up quickly by professionals and the recording of child protection incidents is inconsistent. Partnerships with children's social care teams are not strong enough. As a result, the centre does not always know the whereabouts of children in need, those subject to child protection plans or looked after children.

This children's centre has the following strengths:

- The support, information, advice and guidance from professional and volunteer groups for some very vulnerable families is good, particularly for mothers with mental health issues, including post-natal depression. Parents who use the centre are extremely positive about the support they receive. One parent told inspectors, 'The staff go out of their way to help you.'

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 leader; senior staff from the local authority, the headteacher of the co-located primary school, the chair of the advisory board and a representative from an adult learning service. They also met with the assistant manager of Guildford Children's Centre, with which the centre works closely, a representative of a voluntary sector organisation, a childminder and a health visitor. They listened to the views of parents.

The inspectors visited a wide range of activities, including: a crèche, swimming, and baby massage at Boxgrove. They also undertook a joint observation with the centre leader of 'BiRCH' at Ripley Village Hall. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation. They looked in detail at a number of case files of children and families requiring additional support, including those subject to Common Assessment Framework processes.

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Inspection team

Michael Blakey	Additional Inspector, Lead Inspector
Crystal Gail Robertson	Additional Inspector
Pippa Wainwright	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre/group

Boxgrove Children's Centre is managed by the local authority and covers a large geographical area to the east and north-east of Guildford town centre. Of the areas the centre serves, Bushy Hill and Ripley have the highest levels of social deprivation.

Services are delivered from Ripley Village Hall, Bushy Hill Community Centre, and the main site, which is shared with Boxgrove Primary School (URN: 125033). The school is subject to a separate inspection and the report can be found on the Ofsted website (www.ofsted.gov.uk). The centre delivers the full core offer of children's centre services. There are approximately 1,420 children aged from birth to four years living in the area served by the centre.

The centre is designated as a stand-alone centre; however, it works collaboratively with the following centres in the Guildford locality: Guildford; The Spinney; St Paul's; and Tongham and Ash. An advisory board is in place and the centre is managed by Boxgrove Primary School on behalf of the local authority. The centre has a full-time manager and three part-time staff, including two outreach workers and a newly appointed information, advice and guidance officer.

The centre identified groups of families to which it wants to provide additional support. These are low income families, parents suffering from post-natal depression and those with relationship issues.

There is a high uptake (20.4%) of formal childcare linked to Working Tax Credit and low numbers of children living in workless households overall (10%). However, in the three most deprived areas, approximately one quarter of children live in workless households. A large majority of families living in the reach area are of White British origin. Children's skill levels on entry to early years provision are broadly in line with those expected for their age.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the large majority of children and families living in the reach are registered and are attending the centre regularly, particularly those children living in low income households.
- Strengthen governance of the centre by:
 - ensuring that the local authority undertakes regular reviews of performance
 - ensuring that the centre has all the information it requires to target families, including live birth data
 - setting a limited number of clear priorities and ensuring that targets are clearly set to improve the well-being of children, and in particular to reduce the gap in attainment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - tracking the impact of services fully to show the difference they are making and to help leaders plan for further improvement.
- Ensure that all children are properly protected from harm by:
 - accurately recording all child protection incidents
 - following up quickly when families in most need do not attend activities
 - ensuring that centre staff are made aware of children who are subject to child protection plans or deemed to be children in need, and looked after children
 - checking that case files and records are maintained to a high standard and are fit for purpose.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Inadequate

- Access to early childhood services by families, including those expecting children, is inadequate because only a minority of families are currently registered with the children's centre. The situation is improving in the most deprived area, Bushy Hill, where the majority of children are now registered. However, once registered, too few families, particularly those most in need, routinely attend activities or use services.
- The centre has identified children living in low income households as the largest group that requires more support from the centre. However, data that the centre collects show that too few of these families routinely engage in activities or services. Between January and July 2013, only four children from workless households attended any activity and this information clearly indicates that the centre is not reaching many of the most vulnerable families.
- The centre is finding it more difficult to engage families from the second most deprived area, Ripley, where registration rates remain lower and where the highest proportions of children living in workless households live. Although the centre has varied the activities in this area, it has had limited impact so far.
- The centre's strategies for encouraging families to participate in relevant services, including those who may be less likely to do so, are having an impact on improving registration rates, albeit slowly. Collaborative marketing of services by all the children's centres in Guildford has increased the number of children registered with the centre between spring and summer 2013 from 591 to 613. Information on new births has not yet been shared with the children's centre so staff are not able to contact all new parents to encourage them to attend the centre.

The quality of practice and services

Inadequate

- Some of the most vulnerable children living in the reach area are not known to the children's centre because information about where these children live is not shared between local authority social care services and children's centre staff. These children include those who are subject to children protection plans, those deemed to be children in need and looked after children. As a result, the centre is not able to contribute to improving their well-being.
- The centre does not fully ensure that it is protecting all children and securing their well-being. Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes are used by centre staff to assess the needs of children and families, but the action plans are not always followed up rigorously enough to ensure that families attend activities regularly. In addition, some families that would benefit from the CAF process do not always receive the support they need quickly enough. Case files and records are not maintained to a high standard.
- Activities and services that are provided by the centre for all families, such as swimming at Boxgrove and 'Play and Learn' at Ripley, are appreciated by parents. Some activities, such as 'BiRCH', that are provided for families in most need are much less well-attended, particularly by children living in low income or workless households in the Ripley area.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Inadequate

- The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management is inadequate because safeguarding processes are not robust and the local authority does not provide sufficient challenge to drive improvements fast enough.
- The local authority has not effectively monitored the centre's performance. The last full review of the centre, which took place in 2011, judged the centre to be good. However, the information

available to the centre to support these judgements is not sufficiently comprehensive and, as a result, the local authority has been over-generous in assessing the centre's performance. The local authority has recognised that it can do more to prepare centres by helping with the analysis of data and improving the way partner organisations share information to help identify families.

- The headteacher at Boxgrove Primary School and the centre manager are committed to developing an integrated approach to delivering services. The governing body is supportive and is beginning to ask some challenging questions of the centre manager. However, the governing body does not make full use of the information available to manage the centre's performance. As a result, the centre is not improving fast enough. The advisory board, which meets regularly, is well-attended but does not have enough impact on driving improvement.
- Safeguarding arrangements are not robust because staff do not always take prompt action when very vulnerable families do not turn up to planned activities or services. As a result, the centre cannot be sure that these families are safe and protected from harm. Neither does the centre always record the actions that it takes as a result of possible child protection concerns. All safe recruitment checks are undertaken and staff are appropriately trained.
- Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes are used by the centre to help families to access the early help that they need from a range of different services. However, the centre does not use these processes as early as it could. Consequently, some families do not receive effective support quickly enough. The overall number of assessments initiated by the centre is low.
- Partnership working with children's social care is not well-developed. Therefore, the centre is not routinely made aware of children who are subject to child protection plans, children in need and looked after children. As a result, many of those families in most need do not attend the children's centre.
- Centre leaders and managers do not rigorously monitor the quality of case records for individual children and families. As a result, record keeping and the contents of individual family files are variable in quality and usefulness.
- The centre uses its resources appropriately to deliver services to meet young children's and families' needs at a range of venues across the large reach area. However, the centre has found it more difficult to engage families in the Ripley area and is not having enough impact on improving their lives. Due to the very low take-up rates, resources are not consistently deployed appropriately to target and support the most vulnerable 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	20380
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	421439
Managed by	Boxgrove Primary School on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1421
Centre leader	Liz Drain
Date of previous inspection	Not Applicable
Telephone number	01483 540818
Email address	ldrain@boxgrove.surrey.sch.uk

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