

Rossmore and Branksome Children's Centre Group

Branksome Children's Centre, 350 Poole Road, Branksome, Poole BH12 1AW

Inspection date

24–25 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
	Previous inspection:		
Access to services by young children and families		Inadequate	4
The quality of practice and services		Requires improvement	3
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for children and families

This children's centre group is inadequate. It is not good because:

- Not enough families make regular use of the group's services and activities, particularly from Princess Road, Ashley Road and Bourne Valley areas. The centre manager has too little information to help plan activities and services to meet the needs of families not currently accessing both centres.
- Family outreach workers' assessments of families' needs vary too much in quality, and too often lack detail, sufficient planning or action to support positive improvement.
- The group needs to increase the number of mothers breastfeeding their babies.
- Staff do not monitor whether the parents they signpost to parenting courses, education, training or employment organisations are successfully taking these up or helping them gain qualifications or jobs.
- The centre manager, local authority and advisory board do not collate enough information to enable them to track the long-term impact of all the group's services and activities or how successfully they meet targets, not all of which are sufficiently measurable.

This children's centre group has the following strengths:

- Parents have good involvement in organising and running activities, events and groups. Staff consult with them regularly and take their views seriously when considering improvements.
- A significant number of adults benefit from volunteering, personal effectiveness training and support groups which, for many, has transformed their lives.
- The group has very productive partnerships which enable them to offer specialist health advice alongside play sessions and have increased the health and well-being of those families that attend.
- Staff give good attention to safeguarding families and take appropriate steps to keep them safe.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children's centre group was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. The centres that form part of this children's centre group are Rossmore Children's Centre and Branksome Children's Centre.

This inspection was carried out by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, a senior leader from the local authority, health partners, a private training provider, advice and guidance partners, early years partners, parents, family outreach workers, other centre staff, volunteers and the chair of the advisory board.

The inspectors visited a range of activities across the two centres including one activity that was undertaken jointly with the qualified teacher.

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

Inspection team

Janet Rodgers	Her Majesty's Inspector, Lead Inspector
Jane Burchall	Her Majesty's Inspector
Christine Davies	Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about the group

Rossmore and Branksome Children's Centre Group has two centres: Rossmore, a phase two children's centre, and Branksome, a phase three children's centre. Both centres are located in the East of Poole and are close to the neighbouring town of Bournemouth. The group is run by the local authority and share an advisory board. The centre manager oversees both centres. There is a team of family outreach workers, children's centre workers and business support staff alongside a qualified teacher and children's centre services co-ordinator (volunteers) who are shared with other children's centres in Poole. The group offers a range of services to meet its core purpose.

Rossmore Children's Centre is on the same site as St Aldhelm's Academy, Rossmore Community Library and Learning Centre, Rossmore Leisure Centre and Cuddles Day Nursery, which is privately owned. The centre serves the Alderney ward including the Bourne Valley area, which is the most deprived ward in the Borough of Poole, and comprises pockets of relative affluence alongside families dependent on housing benefit living in low rise estates. Unemployment is relatively high in Rossmore when compared with the Borough of Poole. The area also has the Yarrow Close Gypsy and Traveller site, which has a number of settled families.

Branksome Children's Centre serves the communities of Branksome East and Branksome West, which are densely populated, residential areas. The centre opened approximately two years ago. Branksome is a mixed socio-economic area, comprising low to middle-income families, elderly active people and young professionals. Although unemployment is similar to the Borough of Poole, it is higher in Branksome West, which has more households that are dependent on workless benefits. Branksome's main areas of deprivation are in Princess Road and Ashley Road.

There are 1,693 children under five years living in the group's reach area. The population is mainly White British but with increasing numbers of families from Black and minority ethnic groups. The proportion of children who speak English as an additional language is higher in the Alderney ward than the the Borough of Poole average. Children's skills vary when they start in early years provision but in Branksome are typically in line with the Borough of Poole average, but are lower in Rossmore, with weaker aspects in communication and speaking.

Schools and registered early years providers are subject to separate inspection arrangements. Reports can be found at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Identify, with the local authority, the data needed by the advisory board and centre manager to give them more accurate and useful mechanisms for tracking families' access, the effectiveness of services and activities and achievement of improvement targets.
- Re-visit the targets included in the annual improvement plan to ensure they all have a measurable outcome and timescale for achievement with clearly identified responsibility for monitoring success.
- Review the activities and services offered by the group to ensure they attract a larger proportion of families from priority areas, including Princess Road, Ashley Road and Bourne Valley, and from any newly identified target groups.
- Work with partners, particularly health professionals, to increase the number of families registering with the group to provide the centre manager and staff with reliable information about all the families within the reach area.
- Share the best practice from family outreach workers' assessment of families' needs across the team and check they all complete the relevant paperwork and action plans to a high standard.
- Continue to improve breastfeeding rates in the area by giving staff and volunteers more effective training so they promote initiatives confidently and competently.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Inadequate

- Access to services is inadequate because not enough children and families from key target groups use the group's activities and services. The centre manager does not have sufficient information about families who have not registered to enable effective planning of activities and services to meet their needs. The centre manager has identified appropriate key target groups for each centre through discussions with staff, partners and parents and by analysing local authority area data.
- The majority of families who register with the group make good use of its services and activities, particularly at Rossmore, by teenage parents and families living with domestic abuse. This is less successful in Branksome, where only a minority of those attending, are from the identified key target groups in Princess Road, Ashley Road and Bourne Valley areas.
- Parents involve themselves enthusiastically in identifying and facilitating new activities, such as groups for parents with twins and children with Downs syndrome. They organise well-attended and fun community events to raise the group's profile, deliver leaflets to families not using the centres and act as 'Children's Centre Champions' to introduce new families.
- A significant number of parents participate in parenting and lifeskills courses and volunteering. Others are signposted to colleges or adult learning providers. The group has insufficient information about parents' skills level and employment rates to ensure it offers, or refers adults to, the most appropriate courses or partners.
- Families who require individual targeted support, including through the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), receive this quickly through a swift allocation process that gives them contact with a named worker in a short time-scale. Family outreach workers' use of the 'outcome star' method of assessment, which the group recently introduced, is weak, infrequent and too often lacks detail. As a result, the staff have insufficient information on which to plan improvement and track families' progress.
- Almost all two, three and four year-old children in the area take up their free entitlement to early education but not all attend for the full 15 hours. The centre manager, staff and partners do not know the reasons why families choose not to take up their full entitlement.
- The group increased the timeliness of children having two-year-old assessments and regular health checks by running 'let's play' sessions alongside health visitor and baby weighing clinics. Staff work closely with health visitors during these sessions and this is starting to increase the number of families registering with the centre.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The quality of practice and services requires improvement because the centre manager and staff demonstrate how their work has improved the lives of individual parents and families who access services through case studies and 'about me' books. They do not always collate this to track the long-term impact of all services, such as when they refer parents and families to external organisations.
- Children benefiting from the group's services and activities make good progress that prepares them suitably for school and learning. Those with English as an additional language receive good teaching from the qualified teacher which helps develop their language skills. This is helping raise the attainment of children by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, and reducing the gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and the rest.
- The group strengthened its support for early years and childcare settings through the 'starting out' initiative. Staff work well with schools to ensure children needing additional support receive this. School and pre-school partners report an increased take up of places from 'hard to reach' families as a result of the group's work with them.
- During activities, staff model good behaviour, language and communication and use this to good effect. They help parents to understand children's development through giving them good quality guidance and support. Staff make thorough, well-recorded observations of children's progress during activities such as 'lets play together'.
- The group's activities contribute to improving individual families' well-being and healthy lifestyles in areas such as smoking cessation, low birth rates and contacts to social care related to domestic violence. Although the group provides breastfeeding support groups, such as 'bosom buddies', it still needs to improve the proportion of mothers who breastfeed.
- A significant number of parents develop skills in facilitating activities, organising events, administration, cleaning and planning meetings through a very well-managed volunteering programme. They receive good quality training and opportunities for progression are promoted well. Many volunteers are now employed, self-employed, have returned to education or joined the Borough of Poole's recently introduced children's centre apprenticeship.
- Many families benefit from individual targeted support to develop their confidence and self-esteem. They attend courses where they gain strategies to alleviate stress, set goals, manage anger more effectively and recognise when relationships are controlling and seek appropriate help. However, some of these families access services only when they reach crisis point, having not had previous contact with the centres.
- Family outreach workers are suitably trained in the use of the (CAF). Where they use this well, it results in comprehensive case records supporting the protection of the family.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management requires improvement because the centre manager has ambitious plans for improvement and has taken very effective action to develop the group since Branksome opened two years ago. The centre manager is at an early stage in accessing and using management information to analyse all the group's activities and services.
- The centre manager and staff are successfully increasing the numbers registering and engaging with the group, from a low starting point, and a subgroup of the advisory board has been tasked to continue raising families' engagement. Staff and health partners collaborate well, running joint activities and the recently introduced 'red book' scheme which has increased the number of priority families registering with the group.
- The group's priorities and annual improvement plan targets link well with those in the Borough of Poole's strategic plan. The centre manager, local authority and advisory board prioritise and monitor how well the group is achieving most targets. Not all actions set in the annual improvement plan have measurable targets or timescales and those for tackling poverty and worklessness are unclear,

which makes it difficult to check progress.

- The local authority and advisory board offer useful advice and expertise but do not challenge the group's impact sufficiently. They have not questioned whether the information and data presented to them gives a reliable picture of performance. The advisory board recognises it needs to improve the level of challenge and has arranged training to improve this.
- The centre manager manages staff performance thoroughly, placing a clear focus on service objectives and improving outcomes for families. Staff receive a wide range of training and development. They have regular supervision meetings, but the notes from these are not always held within the family's case file.
- The qualified teacher observes staff carrying out activities and provides them with good support and guidance. Staff receive verbal feedback to help them improve which is discussed during one-to-one sessions with the centre manager, but this is not sufficiently recorded or linked into appraisals.
- Parents take a significant role in running the centre, are part of the advisory board and instrumental in organising events. They feel they are valued members of the children's centre community, which for many has been life-changing. Staff listen to their views, take them seriously and made improvements to resources, activities and locations where activities are held.
- The group gives good attention to the safeguarding of children and their families and trains staff well in relevant aspects such as child protection and how to support families who may be subject to domestic violence. As a result, they are well-equipped when they have concerns about children and their families to take appropriate steps to keep them safe. Staff refer concerns to social care swiftly and make good links with agencies who support families experiencing domestic violence.
- Resources are well-managed with both centres offering welcoming premises with good quality outdoor play areas and equipment, including a toy library. Families who use the centres express high levels of satisfaction and speak positively about their achievements. However, too few families from some key target groups use the centres regularly.

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.

Select details

Unique reference number	80048
Local authority	Borough of Poole
Inspection number	424487
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,693
Centre leader	Karen Loftus
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01202 261540
Email address	branksomechildrenscentre@poole.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- 22554 Rossmore Children's Centre
- 20402 Branksome Children's Centre

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

(Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

