

B6 Arlesdene Nursery School and Children's Centre

Arlesdene Nursery School, Blindmans Lane, Cheshunt, EN8 9DW

Inspection date	11–12 September 2013
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Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	2	2
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		2	2
The quality of practice and services		2	2
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		2	2

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a good centre.

- The centre has been highly successful at increasing the number of families who are registered and the very large majority of those who are most in need of support make use of the services the centre delivers.
- The centre offers a good range of high quality services which are tailored to meet the diverse needs of children and families.
- Outcomes for families are improving. Children make good progress and are well-prepared for school. Similarly, adults improve their parenting and academic skills, develop in confidence and are better able to protect and support their families.
- Good leadership, management and governance have resulted in improvement to services and good outcomes for families, particularly for those whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable.
- Strong partnerships with local schools, health and social care professionals have a very positive impact on children's learning, families' welfare and in reducing inequalities.
- Safeguarding is promoted well. Families identify that they feel safe at the centre where high standards of security are maintained and their knowledge of safety matters is developed well.
- Highly committed centre staff provide a good level of individual care, guidance and support to families both in the centre and through outreach work.

It is not outstanding because:

- The centre does not have an effective tracking system to follow-up how well those who are signposted to services relating to family, adult learning and employment meet their goals.
- The centre has not succeeded in improving health outcomes relating to obesity for children entering Reception.

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 senior leaders, members of staff and partner professionals from other agencies. Discussions were held with members of the governing body, volunteers, local headteachers, a representative from the local authority and parents. They also had a telephone conversation with the chair of the advisory board.

The inspectors visited a 'Stay and Play' session delivered at Millbrook Primary School. The Lead inspector visited a local primary school and jointly observed an activity with the centre leader.

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

Inspection team

Qaisra Shahraz, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Anthony Mundy

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

The Arlesdene Children's Centre is a stand alone, phase two centre which opened in 2008. It operates from a purpose-built site attached to and integrated with Arlesdene Nursery School last inspected in October 2009 (117066) and Rocking Horse Daycare (EY 471669) in the community of Arlesdene in Cheshunt, Hertfordshire. To meet its core purpose it offers a wide range of services such as family support, adult learning, health services and work with childminders. The centre's key target groups are families living in the most disadvantaged communities, lone parents, those living on low incomes or in workless homes, families accessing two-year-old funding, those on child protection plans and vulnerable children living in households with domestic violence.

The large majority of families living within the local area are White British, although the number of parents who do not speak English as their first language is growing. There are 882 children under five years of age living in the area, some parts of which are in the 30% most disadvantaged areas in the country. Unemployment is above the national average and 20% of families are dependent on workless benefits. Most children in the area enter early years education with skills typically below the level expected for their age.

The centre is managed by the governing body of Arlesdene Nursery School on behalf of Hertfordshire local authority. The linked daycare provision is subject to separate inspection arrangements and was part of the nursery school inspection.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Measure how well adults make progress during their engagement with centre-led activities and effectively keep track of how well they do when they take up other services or training elsewhere.
- Reduce obesity in children under the age of five years by continuing to work with partners in health, primary schools and early years settings.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

2

- There have been rapid improvements in the last two years in the number of families who have registered with the centre and who are benefiting from its services. At 83%, most families living in the reach area are engaged, including those whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable. Managers are highly ambitious and are going all out to achieve 100% contact and involvement with children and families.
- The centre is particularly successful in engaging with the very large majority of families from its targeted groups, especially families from the most deprived areas, workless households and those with eligible two-year-olds taking up free early places. This has resulted in good outcomes for families, including those with a range of high-level needs and those children who are subject to social care intervention.
- Good use of new birth data, highly effective partnerships with a range of professionals and effective outreach work have all played a key part in the centre's success. Through effective referrals and sharing of information, families needs are quickly identified and met.
- Families benefit from a good balance of targeted support and access to universal services being offered by the centre and its partners. Home visits are aimed at reducing inequalities for families and form part of the centre's highly effective outreach work. Committed staff provide good support,

care and guidance in the home to assist families who are most in need and finding accessing the centre difficult. This includes those parents who speak English as an additional language.

- Highly effective joint working with a range of professionals have enabled the centre to provide good packages of individualised support and services for families, thereby successfully improving their health, social, academic and economic welfare. For example, close links with the early years special needs team mean that children with complex needs benefit from expert early help.

The quality of practice and services

2

- The quality, range and relevance of services and activities offered by the centre are good and as a result of this the take-up of services by those most in need is high.
- Two-year-old children enter the centre with skills significantly below those expected for their age. However, the centre's tracking shows that children are confident, independent and developing good language and social skills by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and the rest is narrowing well. The transition workshops for parents 'Getting ready for big school' have helped to nurture children so they are very well prepared for school.
- Parents and children play together in enjoyable well-planned quality sessions such as 'Stay and Play' which enable children to make good progress in their social and language development. Programmes such as 'Family links parenting puzzle' have enhanced parents' confidence in parenting skills. The monthly 'Fudge' sessions on Saturday's offering fun activities for fathers, uncles and grandparents also help to deepen family relationships. Satisfaction surveys completed by parents show how enjoyable and beneficial all these activities are.
- Health promotion services such as 'Eat Better and Start Better' and 'Nutrition workshop' help to promote families' awareness of healthy eating. The rate for breastfeeding is improving and a higher proportion of mothers than before are sustaining breastfeeding. However, the centre has not succeeded in improving health outcomes relating to obesity for children entering Reception. Leaders recognise that there is a greater need to continue to work with its partners to promote and encourage families to lead healthy lifestyles.
- Parents enjoy a wide range of opportunities to extend their skills and knowledge, including in childcare. Adults seeking training with a strong focus on functional skills and employment have undertaken family learning, literacy and numeracy courses at all levels, resulting in good completion rates and gaining of formal qualifications. Some have gained paid employment in the centre. Parents benefit from the availability of a crèche for all their adult learning courses.
- Assessment and tracking of children's starting points and the progress they make whilst accessing centre services is rigorous. Data and 'learning journals' show that when children start school a very large majority have made good progress from their often low starting points. However, managers recognise that the centre does not have robust tracking systems in place to see whether all parents it signposts to courses elsewhere successfully complete them, or if they go on to further training or employment.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

2

- The head of centre, governors and local authority have high ambitions to make the centre the best it can be. They are passionate about helping vulnerable families to overcome challenges and

barriers to accessing its services. They have the full support of the highly committed staff who feel valued and share the centre leader's vision. Communications with users, amongst staff and partners are excellent and morale is high.

- The local authority effectively checks the centre's performance through its contractual arrangements with the governing body that manages the centre and through the annual meetings with centre staff. The advisory body is strengthening its role of providing support and challenge through observation and evaluation of centre activities with 'linked' centre staff.
- The dynamic leadership team knows the centre's strengths and where improvement is required. Procedures for evaluating its performance, including through the setting and monitoring of measurable targets in the centre's action planning to drive improvement are rigorous. Parents' views gathered through 'Annual parent satisfaction surveys' and evaluations following activities also help managers to shape centre services.
- The centre's commitment to reducing inequalities and its inclusive approach is instrumental in fostering good community relationships. This includes widening access to services for those who are at an early stage of learning to speak English. Parents value the active celebration of diversity through the use of multicultural resources and positive images of people from around the world on its wall displays and focus on international festivals and languages of the world.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are rigorous and are a strength at the centre. Strong multi-agency partnerships and good use of Common Assessment Framework (CAF) procedures make sure that children at risk including those subject to a child protection plan or who are identified as being in need are well-protected. Case records for families at risk are carefully maintained and demonstrate well the centre's very positive impact on families' lives.
- Resources both indoors and outdoors are good and used efficiently to meet the needs of children and families in the area. This includes children benefiting from the 'Toy library'.

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

Unique reference number	20162
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	427448
Managed by	The governing body of Arlesdene Children's Centre on behalf of the local authority.

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	882
Centre leader	Catherine Croft
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01992 626879
Email address	head@arlesdene.herts.sch.uk

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