

Cherry Hinton Children's Centre

Bewick Bridge Community Primary School, Fulbourn Old Drift, Cambridge, CB1 9ND

Inspection date

8–9 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:		
Access to services by young children and families		Good	2
The quality of practice and services		Good	2
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a good centre.

- Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the local community and ensure that the large majority of children and families most in need of support register with the centre and have easy access to the high quality services the centre provides.
- The centre has a wide range of good quality universal and targeted services that successfully attracts families and makes a good contribution to their personal development.
- Disabled children and those with special educational needs are provided with access to good quality activities and individual support which ensure they make progress and enjoy the same opportunities as other children.
- Keeping children and families safe is a high priority at the centre. Parents are quick to raise any concerns they may have about children's safety. This allows professionals to respond in a timely manner.
- Parents are keen to be involved with the decision-making and running of the centre. Some parents become members of the parent's forum, a few join the advisory board, while others volunteer to run groups such as the 'Clothes swap'. Parents, quite rightly, feel they are listened to and their views count.
- Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of what the centre does well and what needs to be improved further. They are committed to delivering high quality services to meet the needs of families, especially the most disadvantaged, and as a result the centre is improving.
- There is good supervision, appraisal and staff development for staff who provide excellent role models.

It is not outstanding because:

- Information provided by the local authority, based on information from the centre, does not tell managers in sufficient detail who is using centre services.
- Children's progress is recorded through learning journeys in most activities, however staff do not formally check how well adults do during the time they are with the centre.
- The advisory board does not provide sufficient challenge to managers about the centre's performance.

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 parents, centre staff, members of the advisory board, volunteers, representatives from professional partnerships including health, Jobcentre Plus, early years and education, as well as officers from the local authority. Inspectors observed two activities jointly with centre staff.

Inspectors took into account parents' views as expressed directly to them during the inspection, as well as through parents' recorded evaluations of the centre's work.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation such as the centre's checks on its performance, development plans and data, information related to safeguarding and a selection of case files.

Inspection team

Mary Dudley Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Karen Cooper	Additional inspector
Anthony Mundy	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre.

Cherry Hinton Children's Centre is located in the village of Cherry Hinton, south-east of Cambridge. It serves the local population as well as the villages of Fulbourn, Teversham, Great Wilbraham and Little Wilbraham. Activities are run from the community wing of Bewick Bridge Community Primary school (URN: 110746), and other venues in the area. The school and Little Cherries playgroup (URN: 221863), which is also on the school site, are subject to separate inspection arrangements. The children's centre is managed by the local authority, and is supported by an advisory board and a parents' forum. The centre is part of the Cambridge South locality team which includes four other children's centres. The centre was designated in 2008. It meets the core purpose by providing early education, health services, family support and adult learning courses in partnership with other providers and through commissioned services.

The large majority of the families who live in the surrounding area are from White British backgrounds. Over 28% of primary pupils in the area have English as an additional language and families registered with the centre speak 39 different languages. There are 1218 children under five years of age living in the area. It is socially diverse with pockets of relative affluence, but some neighbourhoods are in the 20% most deprived in the County. The area has high numbers of people with no qualifications, or qualifications below level two. Most children in the area start early years provision with skills broadly in line with what is typical for their age.

The centre has identified families with English as an additional language, families with children under 12 months old, families from workless households, children with disabilities and teenage parents as those groups in most need of its support.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and governance by working with the local authority to.
 - improve the way in which data is reported, so that managers can better analyse information about the participation of target groups in activities, to assess impact and guide further developments.
 - ensure the advisory board effectively challenges the centre's leaders and managers
- Extend current arrangements for tracking children's learning and development and implement a formal system for tracking adult progression.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- Centre staff work well with a range of other professionals to identify families most in need of help in the area. Targeted families who need additional support are encouraged to use the services the centre offers and join in centre activities. This has successfully led to the large majority of families in the area using the centre.
- The staff have established and maintained contact with many children and families from target groups. For example most children known to have disabilities regularly attend centre activities. In addition through services it delivers directly and those it commissions the centre is successfully working with the vast majority of teenage parents.

- Those children and families whose circumstances make them vulnerable often receive home visits from staff that help them improve their circumstances and encourages them to engage in centre activities. Skilled staff take the time to talk to parents to find out what they would like to do, so activities such as parenting courses and first aid classes are popular and well-attended.
- Families for whom English is an additional language are encouraged to join the rolling programme of English classes the centre provides. In addition centre staff are always on hand to provide day to day support to help families understand official letters they receive and to address problems that may arise due to a families' lack of English. As a result parents are less isolated and better able to support their children's learning.
- Parents are supported to engage in training and volunteering to help them prepare for work. The centre is proactive in identifying those families who are eligible for early education funding for two-year-olds and the numbers accessing this are good, enabling some parents to take up training and part-time employment.
- The centre staff, together with colleagues from health have identified the need for additional support for families that have children under one year old. Staff now group activities together that are relevant for these families. Baby massage classes, New parents group, ante-natal groups and breastfeeding support are all available on the same afternoon. This has encouraged more parents to engage in a wider variety of activities.
- It is not always easy for centre managers to monitor the number of targeted families that access the centre and the services they engage with, as the local authority information system does not readily provide the information needed and monitoring is often done manually.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- A wide range of good quality activities is delivered by the children's centre team and partners. Parents who attend the activities benefit well, developing good parenting skills and an improved understanding of how to ensure their children and families well-being. The centre provides crèche facilities for all courses enabling parents to undertake training and engage in personal development opportunities.
- Children's development has improved well over the last three years, with schools reporting that they are now at the expected stage of development for starting school. Similarly the gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and the rest is narrowing year-on-year.
- Families with different life experiences and cultural backgrounds enjoy being together and appreciate the way in which centre staff are able to help them overcome barriers. Families in most need are often supported in their own homes to overcome challenges including alcohol abuse, domestic violence or a breakdown in relationships.
- Children and families learn to develop healthier lifestyles through participating in activities such as the 'Monday Munch', where families are shown how to cook healthy meals on a budget, free swimming lessons and breastfeeding support groups.
- Assessments of need, case files and records are maintained to a good standard, are up to date, reflect the targeted families' views and the involvement of other professionals. They demonstrate the wide range of interventions made by staff and the good improvement being made by children and families.
- A strength of the centre is the emphasis it places on keeping children and families safe. Parents are very clear about what they need to do to ensure the well-being of their own children and what actions they need to take if they have concerns about the safety of other children. This awareness has enabled professionals to respond to concerns in a timely manner.
- The effective use of children's learning journeys in most sessions ensures parents are well informed of their child's learning and development. However staff rely on informal means and a few individual

case studies to record the achievements of most parents. This means the centre has only partial information when planning future services.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Managers at all levels are fully committed to making sure local families live a healthy and fulfilling life and overcome the challenges they face. The highly motivated staff team use their expertise to respond positively to childrens' and families' needs. Families benefit from well-planned, well-located, good quality services.
- The centre has a clear plan to improve provision. The local authority provides good data about the population and monitors and supports the centre's on-going development through regular visits. The system for collating data from centre activities does not easily provide centre managers with the detailed information they need to monitor how specific groups use the centre and much of this work is being done manually.
- There is a well-established parents' forum that is actively engaged in the work of the centre. It is regularly consulted on issues and has made suggestions which the centre has adopted, for instance the front door has now been fitted with a bell and the handles have been raised, making the centre safer. Users complete evaluations of activities and courses and help to shape services in this way. Parental satisfaction with services is high. Parents' views are well represented on the advisory board.
- Challenge from the advisory board on how well the centre is doing has begun to improve, following some changes in membership and additional training provided by the local authority. However, it is not yet holding managers to account for the work of the centre.
- Keeping children and families safe is given top priority, supported by robust policies, procedures and practices. Staff vetting procedures are thorough, and ongoing training on aspects of child protection ensures that staffs' skills are up-to-date. This successfully reduces the risk of harm to children and promotes their welfare, particularly for those children subject to child protection plans, Common Assessment Framework processes, looked after children and children identified as in need. Supervision arrangements work well and support the professional development of staff. Managers provide good staff training and development that equip staff well to deal with the challenging situations they face.
- The centre is welcoming and effectively promotes an inclusive environment. Staff have a good knowledge of families and have a genuine interest in their welfare. As a result, families speak very highly of the support they have received and the importance they place on knowing that there is always someone there for them when they need it.

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	20664
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	427455
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1218
Centre manager	Helen Freeman
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