

Fawcett Children's Centre

Fawcett County Primary School, Alpha Terrace, Cambridge, CB2 9FS

Inspection date 22–23 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Requires improvement	3
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 is a centre that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- The number of families registered is increasing at a rapid pace. However, almost half of the families living in the reach area are currently not known to the centre. Access to services is not good because too few families, particularly those who are more vulnerable and who could benefit from its services, are currently accessing the centre.
- The systems for monitoring and tracking the progress of children and particularly those adults accessing further education or employment, are not sufficiently well developed.
- There are insufficient opportunities for adults to participate in further education and training to develop their employability skills and enable entry to volunteering and employment.
- The centre's self-evaluation processes are not rigorous enough. There is insufficient involvement of families, partners and the advisory body in the evaluation of the centre's services and tracking of families' outcomes.
- Although the centre is improving, the advisory board and the governing body are not fully effective in challenging the centre's on-going development and holding it to account.
- Action planning and use of data in the monitoring of the centre's services and self evaluation is currently underdeveloped.

This children's centre has the following strengths:

- Strong partnerships have had a positive impact on the number of families accessing the centre's services. A wide range of professionals work well together to help parents improve their life chances.
- Parents speak highly of the centre. They can rely on the staff providing good quality care, guidance and support particularly from Family Workers who often visit families in their homes.
- Families from different target groups, including those new to the country benefit from a range of effective services, which improve their outcomes, personal circumstances and help to reduce inequalities.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are rigorous and are a strength at the centre, ensuring the safety of children and their families who are accessing its services.
- Staff and managers work together as a small team, have vision and are committed to improving centre services and outcomes for the families they are supporting, so that the impact of their work is starting to have a positive effect for families who use the centre.

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, partner professionals from other agencies, the headteacher of Fawcett Primary School, two representative from the local authority, parents and staff from Homerton Children Centre.

The inspectors visited three activities held during the inspection. Two of these, 'Messy Play' and 'Raising Children' Parenting course were jointly observed with the centre manager and family support worker who also attended all team meetings.

They looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Qaisra Shahraz, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Mary Dudley

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Fawcett Children Centre was designated in March 2010 as a phase three stand-alone centre, one of forty children's centres in Cambridgeshire. The centre is situated in Trumpington, in the southern fringe of Cambridge city. The centre meets its core purpose for families living in the area, by delivering shared services with a range of partners and other designated local children's centres.

The majority of families living in the area are of White British heritage, however, the number of families from other ethnicities moving into the area, especially overseas transient families is starting to increase rapidly. The centre has identified its key target groups as: families living in the most deprived areas; parents under 25 including teenage parents; children accessing Early Support; those from minority ethnic backgrounds and children on integrated plans. Of all those families registered and accessing the centre's services 21% have English as an additional language.

There are 630 children under five years of age living in the reach area. The communities the centre works with are ranked amongst the 70% least deprived nationally. The majority of children living in the area currently enter school with skills and knowledge at an expected level for their age. The centre faces a varied range of challenges and issues, including social isolation for those families newly arrived in England and those that have recently moved into the extensive new housing in the southern fringe development area.

The centre is located in Fawcett Primary School (URN: 110766), whose governing body manages it on behalf of the local authority. The headteacher line manages the centre manager. The school is subject to separate inspection arrangements and was last inspected in October 2011.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of families registered and engaging with the centre, particularly those from the identified target groups, by:
 - ensuring the centre has an on-going knowledge and understanding of how many families are engaging in services from each of the target groups
 - working with the local authority to ensure accurate data reports are received more regularly.
- Demonstrate that outcomes are improving for the majority of families by:
 - monitoring more closely the progress that children make at the centre
 - tracking adults to show qualifications achieved and employment gained and to demonstrate the impact of learning on their longer term economic well-being
 - increasing the opportunities for adults to participate in volunteering, further education and training to develop their employability skills and enable entry to employment.
- Improve leadership and governance arrangements by:
 - improving self-evaluation through better monitoring of actions and increasing the involvement of the advisory board, key partners and users on a regular basis
 - ensuring that the governing body and the advisory board play a more robust role in the monitoring and evaluation of services to enable them to provide rigorous challenge and hold the centre to account
 - setting and monitoring of measurable and specific targets relating to centre services outcomes
 - working with the local authority, governing body and the centre's key partners, to collect and effectively use data about the impact of the centre's activities in order to further improve the provision.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- The centre has made great strides in increasing the number of families registered and supported despite a difficult time last year, due to staff capacity issues. However, at just over 50%, the proportion of families registered with the centre remains low, indicating there are still around a half of the families in the area who do not access the centre's services. Participation rates of the centre's target groups such as those families living in the most disadvantaged areas and most in need of intervention and support have not been monitored carefully enough, to ensure that the centre is having the greatest possible impact.
- The centre benefits from strong collaborative relationships, including with the co-located Fawcett Primary school, health team and other children centres. It has become a 'Midwifery Hub'. Its good partnerships with health visitors and midwives has helped the centre to identify families with young children.
- Good use of live birth data, through effective sharing of information with its partners, and home visits, helps to ensure that families' needs are quickly identified and met. This has enabled staff to ensure services are effectively tailored to meet users' individual needs. However, the centre does not have a clear enough picture of the needs of those families who are not registered. As a result, some families who would benefit from the centre's services are missing out.

- Families benefit from a good balance of targeted support and access to universal services being offered by the centre and its partners. Home visits form part of the centre's highly effective outreach work and are aimed at reducing inequalities for families. Family Workers have good knowledge of the varied and extremely difficult issues facing some families, including those experiencing financial difficulties or isolation as a result of being new arrivals in the country.
- Opportunities for parents who are eligible to receive funding for their two-year-old children to attend early education are improving and the centre is actively engaging with a wide range of partners to identify children missing out on this entitlement.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- Fawcett Children's Centre is a welcoming and well respected place. It has a positive impact on improving the lives and well-being of many families who engage in its services and as a result it is successful in reducing inequalities. Parents in particular value the strong support and guidance provided by the extremely resourceful family outreach workers who go 'that extra mile' to provide up-to-date information about benefit changes, help with children's routines and fill in grant forms for new furniture. 'She organised my calendar for me – so that I know what I am doing and when' reports one grateful parent.
- There is a trend of improvement in Early Years Foundation Stage profile scores across the reach area and the achievement gap between the lowest achieving children and their peers is narrowing. The centre has begun to use 'learning journeys' (records of what children have achieved) to monitor children's progress. However, staff acknowledge that assessment and tracking of children's progress from their starting points and the progress they make whilst accessing centre services is underdeveloped.
- Similarly the centre does not have robust tracking systems in place to see whether all parents it signposts to courses and activities elsewhere successfully complete them or if they go on to further training or employment.
- Well-planned, high quality activities such as 'Messy Play' and 'Stay and Play' are helping to make sure more children are ready for the transition to school. Borrowing of story sacks supports parents to help their children to learn at home.
- Parents appreciate the opportunity to learn from each other and receive good advice about caring for their children through the centre's 'Raising Children' parenting course. 'Learning so much – what a fantastic course' are the words of one happy user, enhancing her confidence and parenting skills. However, opportunities for adults to improve their functional skills, gain formal qualifications and take part in centre's activities through volunteering which might help them back into employment are currently under-developed.
- The centre places a strong emphasis on adopting a healthy lifestyle. The proportion of mothers who continue breastfeeding at six to eight weeks is rising and levels of obesity for children entering Reception class are lower than those seen nationally.
- Parents are represented on the advisory body and make some contribution to the centre's decision making, but this is limited. There is currently no formal parents' forum. However, some parents provide an informal support network for each other, through the centre's 'Tea, toast and talk' sessions.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement. Data and information available to the centre are not always analysed well enough to show that services are having an impact for families or consistently used in self-evaluation and action planning. Similarly the centre acknowledges that it needs to improve its self-evaluation processes further by better monitoring of specific targets and increasing the involvement of the advisory board, key partners and users on a regular basis.
- The centre leader and her small team of staff are resilient, highly skilled, hard-working, and ambitious to improve. They have already developed strong working relationships with partner agencies to start to support families needs in a coordinated way. They are planning well for future communities to be settled on a new housing estate in its reach area. Resources are of good quality and are deployed appropriately.
- Governance and accountability arrangements are clear. The centre receives effective support from the local authority, governing body and the advisory board, on which there is suitable representation from parents. The centre, however recognises the need to strengthen the capacity of the advisory board and the governing body to challenge further the centre's on-going development.
- The centre's inclusive approach enables it to successfully foster good community relationships. One of its key success stories in reducing inequalities, in partnership with Cambridge University, is of a majority of minority ethnic students' families successfully accessing a range of pertinent services through its 'Stay and Play' West Cambridge sessions. Parents speak highly of how these sessions have improved their lives, including their emotional well-being by reducing their feeling of isolation and how this has enabled the spouses of overseas students, in particular, to integrate well into life in Britain.
- Robust safeguarding policies, procedures and practices are in place and adhered to. Strong multi-agency partnerships and good use of Common Assessment Framework (CAF) procedures make sure that children who may be more vulnerable receive coordinated early help. Those subject to a child protection plan or who are identified as being in need are well supported by the centre.
- Family case files are maintained to a high standard by family outreach workers and clearly record positive improvements in mental health, economic stability and the safety of families. All users of the centre spoken to expressed high levels of satisfaction.

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/Children's Centre Group details

Unique reference number	21146
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	432834
Managed by	The governing body of Fawcett Children's Centre on behalf of the local authority.

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	630
Centre leader	Clare Wilkinson
Date of previous inspection	N/A
Telephone number	01223-840258
Email address	childrenscentre@fawcett.cambs.sch.uk

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