

# St Augustine's Children's Centre

St Augustine's Road, Belvedere, Bexley, DA17 5HP

**Inspection dates** 23–24 October 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
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.

- Attendance by families in greatest need is good. A very large majority of those affected by low incomes, poverty and housing worries are supported well by outreach and family support workers. They receive sustained support and practical help which makes life easier.
- Those in charge accurately assess the needs and interests of families. Health, safety and education for children and adults are covered by a wide variety of universal and targeted courses and services. Evaluation shows attendance has a positive impact on learning for most families.
- Most adults improve their economic circumstances through using centre services. Well-established and effective links exist with organisations such as Jobcentre Plus, the National Careers and Guidance Service, and Family Learning. These provide a successful progression of identifying training needs, achieving qualifications and gaining employment.
- Leadership is effective and prioritises the needs of local families well. The local authority, manager and advisory board have a good understanding of the aims and challenges for centre development so improvement is well-coordinated and ongoing.

### It is not outstanding because:

- Some data used by the centre to plan and evaluate services are not specific to the centre's local area. Some figures about groups living in the local area are not in enough detail to enable accurate monitoring and evaluation of the centre's work.
- Families from some groups, such as workless households, do not attend enough.
- The centre has very good partnerships with most local schools, but this is not the case with every school in its local area.

## 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. It was carried out at the same time as another children's centre, which was Northumberland Heath Children's Centre that works collaboratively with St Augustine's.

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders and managers from the local authority, the managers of St Augustine's and Northumberland Heath, centre staff, health, education and social care partners, parents, early years practitioners, schools, training consultants, employment partners, volunteers and representatives from the advisory board and parents' forum.

The inspectors visited St Augustine's Children's Centre and various sites where activities were taken out in to the community including the health bus. They saw a number of activities, including the 'Step Up Project', Toddler Stay and Play, Baby Group Child Health Clinic and 'Baby Basics' session for the 'Birth, Baby and You' ante-natal group.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the 'user satisfaction survey' which for 2012, showed almost all families (99.1%) were happy with the centre's work.

## Inspection team

Susan Mann	Her Majesty's Inspector Lead Inspector
Marinette Bazin	Additional Inspector
Susan Crawford	Her Majesty's Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

St Augustine's Children's Centre is one of three centres run by the local authority as part of the Bexley Locality 2 collaboration. The other centres are Northumberland Heath and Danson Children's Centres. Danson was inspected in June 2012 and was judged as good. St Augustine's first opened in June 2006 and has its own manager and advisory board. The manager of this children's centre has a coordinating role within the locality, and is responsible for supporting, but not managing, the other two centres in the collaboration. It is based within the premises of St Augustine's Primary School and is open each weekday between 9.00am and 5.00pm. There is an onsite early years provision for children in receipt of two-year-old funding: St Augustine's Children's Centre 2 Year Project was inspected in July 2013 and was judged as outstanding. Health and social care teams are located within the children's centre and provide outreach and family support.

The area served by the centre is recognised as one of deprivation, 32% most deprived nationally overall in the reach area. There are 1000 children aged under five years living in the reach area. Levels of employment are average for the area, but many jobs are low-paid. For some age-groups, numbers of families claiming workless and support benefits are above national and local averages. Most families are from White British backgrounds, and the second largest populations are from Black African and Indian: there is an increasing number of families from Eastern European countries living in the reach area. Children's skills vary when they start in early years provision but are typically below average.

### What does the centre/group need to do to improve further?

- Continue to increase the percentage of users engaging in the services provided by the centre, especially of those most in need.
- Work with the local authority and health services to improve the quality of information provided so that data, including those for the nursery education grant and health outcomes, are specific to the centre's reach area.
- Continue to foster effective partnership working with all primary schools in the centre's area so that information and data are routinely shared, to enable detailed analysis and planning of centre provision.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

Good

- A very large majority (84.2%) of local families are registered and make regular use of the centre. This is because of concerted and well-planned publicity, including delivering course programmes to houses and special events like 'Fun on the Field'. Staff use information about new births together with information from health visitors and midwives to reach new parents, and those new to the area. High priority is given to introducing families to the centre who are in most need.
- The reach and engagement of families living in the most economically deprived areas has increased steadily over time, and at present, most of these families (81%) are regularly using centre services. On the whole, most groups attend the centre regularly once registered, although a few do not attend as often, for example families from workless households.
- The partnership between the centre, health and social care produces good teamwork and leads to rapid collaboration and action when families are referred for additional support. For families needing a high level of support, this partnership enables detailed and prompt assessment of needs, and strong multi-agency planning for coordinated care and support.
- Most children eligible for nursery education funding are placed in early years provision. However, specific data for the children's centre area are not available, which limits the centre's accurate tracking of successful take-up. Children from families receiving support make full use of free early years sessions at settings selected because of the high quality provision offered.

- The centre provides a friendly environment where parents say they feel they and their children are welcomed and safe. This leads to good levels of attendance at most sessions. Parents appreciate the social environment that reduces their feelings of isolation. For example, a parent said, 'I have no family here, but have found people with the same issues as me, and now have made a very good friend.' The manager conducts detailed evaluation of services to check that times, content and delivery are well suited to families' needs, and so remain popular, useful and good value for money.

### The quality of practice and services

Good

- The centre works well with health services. An example of this is the 'Baby Group and Health Onsite Clinic'. Parents speak highly of the pleasant environment at the centre: one parent praised the breastfeeding support commissioned by the centre. Specific data for the area are not available, but the centre's own data show the proportion of women continuing to breastfeed after six to eight weeks is above local averages (58%).
- Activities in groups such as 'Let's Play' and the baby group are planned to help children learn. Children receiving two-year-old funding make good progress, as do those in receipt of individual speech and language therapy. Thus children are well prepared for school.
- Tracking to the end of one school's Reception Year shows children at risk of falling behind their peers who attend centre services do better in their learning and development than children who do not. However, not all schools currently share data to allow the centre to conduct a full analysis. Early years provision and transition to school arrangements in the area are supported effectively by the local authority through individual contact and the Under 5s' Forum. This results in the number of children reaching a better stage of development than is found nationally (71%), and there is a sustained closing of the development gap between children (26.8% in 2012).
- Three parenting courses designed for different levels of need are well attended by a large majority, from universal to targeted families. All courses demonstrate a positive impact in helping parents to become safer and confident parents. Good links with the local family centre enables vulnerable parents to access higher level support with parenting when required.
- The economic stability of vulnerable families is helped by a wide range of partner services and staff support to encourage sustained access. Although data show only a small minority of workless households engage with the centre, generally many target families access training, careers or benefits advice, and employment. The centre works effectively with a wide range of good quality adult education agencies, and works very well with Jobcentre Plus, who are fully engaged in the centre's work with families.
- Families working with outreach and family support workers are involved in decisions and plans for their future. Staff engage a wide range of services to meet individual needs and almost all families improve their physical and emotional well-being.

### The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Governance arrangements are clear and the centre is managed well. The local authority is supportive and helps the centre set challenging priorities for the future that are grounded in families' needs. Data provision is currently being updated to a more useful format, although percentage comparisons for some categories are not included. Some data, such as for health and the nursery education grant, are not presented for the centre's area which prevents wholly accurate measurement of success. The advisory board, supported by the views of the Parent Forum, is well informed and effective in its role.
- Children's safety is paramount and parents develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves and children safe. Parents who experience domestic abuse develop resilience and safe practices as a result of individual and group support. Safeguarding arrangements to protect the welfare of children and vulnerable adults are good. Children subject to child protection plans do well as a result of social care family support and vigilant case monitoring by line managers. Children with a Bexley Early Assessment of Need (BEAN), looked after children and children in need are protected well: staff draw in as many agencies as required, including housing and debt support and, as a

result, families improve their overall well-being.

- The strong working relationship between social care, health and centre leads to seamless inter-agency working with vulnerable families. This team has confidence in the centre's safeguarding practice, and one of the team commented, 'If you have families in these two centres, they will be OK because the managers put themselves out.' The centre makes the second largest number of referrals after health visitors as a result of its individual work and assessment of families, demonstrating its vigilance and willingness to act upon concerns.
- Resources and services are rigorously evaluated to ensure the needs of targeted children are fully met. Performance management arrangements are used well by all relevant agencies to ensure staff are fully skilled in their roles, and cases are frequently monitored.
- The centre manager is well respected by staff and families alike, leading a friendly and skilled team. She is reflective on the successes and proactive in securing future development, such as the recent initiative to establish sessions in a different part of the reach area. Planning for improvement takes all relevant factors into account and is clearly focused on families most in need of improved outcomes.

### 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.

**Centre details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	22834
<b>Local authority</b>	London Borough of Bexley
<b>Inspection number</b>	427518
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority
<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	1100
<b>Centre leader</b>	Janice Ward-Wilson
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8320 6617
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