

Clarendon Children's Centre

Knapp Road, Ashford, Surrey TW15 2HZ

Inspection date 20–21 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Effective partnerships with key agencies health, social care and other partner agencies, parents and the linked school play a major role in the success of this children's centre. Universal health services and family play and learning sessions provide an open door for most families to get good access to the individual support and expertise they need.
- Work to reduce the risk of harm permeates the work of the centre. Good information sharing, particularly regarding the needs of the most vulnerable children, and strong multi-agency involvement mean that individual families who have been identified as needing support receive help very promptly when problems are identified.
- The overall design of services supports families' health and well-being and is effectively targeted so that it reaches over 90% of families in the area of greatest deprivation. With individual support, vulnerable families make lasting changes to adopt healthy lifestyles and keep their families safe.
- Most services are delivered exceptionally well so that sessions are very popular and attendance is high. Volunteers and parents who get involved in the parents' forum are nurtured so that they develop new skills exceptionally well.
- Children attending the centre's 'Learning together' family play sessions make good progress and they are well prepared for starting school.
- Managers have successfully steered the centre through a difficult period of change and gaps in staffing. They have given strong encouragement to staff to continue improving their qualifications and skills and teamwork.

It is not outstanding because:

- Employment and employability are not promoted strongly and volunteering is not always celebrated to encourage others. The outcomes for parents are not yet thoroughly tracked for all groups.
- The centre has not yet found a way to track outcomes for all children as they move on to school and the numbers tracked so far are too low to draw many conclusions.
- Plans for some activities that currently have a highly positive impact, such as the Freedom Programme that assists women to overcome domestic abuse, are too short-term. There are no clear contingencies for what will be in place to benefit families in a few months' or a year's time.

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 of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, the headteacher and governors of Clarendon Primary School, officers from the local authority, representatives from health services and other key partners including those who deliver support services to families. They talked to children, parents and members of staff at appropriate times throughout the visit.

The inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including case studies provided by the centre.

Inspection team

Christine Davies	Her Majesty's Inspector, Lead Inspector
Nigel Evans	Her Majesty's Inspector
Anthony Mundy	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre/group

Clarendon Children's Centre is a phase two centre managed by the governing body of Clarendon Primary School for Surrey County Council. The centre is supported by an advisory board and parents' forum. The centre manager is line-managed by the headteacher of the linked primary school and is assisted by a team of six staff, although one outreach worker post was vacant at the time of the inspection. To fulfil its core purposes, the centre delivers health services, family play and learning sessions, parenting programmes, family support and adult learning, many of these in collaboration with other agencies and children's centres. The centre runs regular outreach stay-and-play sessions in two church halls in the community. The centre is based on the same site as the linked primary school and a privately owned childcare setting, Link up Kids. The school and the childcare are subject to separate inspections and their reports can be found on the Ofsted website.

The area served is the mainly residential area of Ashford in the borough of Spelthorne in Surrey. Bronzefield women's prison with an 18-bed mother and baby unit is within the area served. The area as a whole is relatively affluent, except in the south of Ashford which is among the 30% most deprived areas nationally. Worklessness is below the national average, although many families are on low incomes and in low-skilled jobs. There are more than 1330 children under five years of age in the reach area and the number is rapidly growing and becoming more ethnically and linguistically diverse. The population is predominantly White British (at around 61%), with Asian and European families constituting the next largest groups. Children in the area start early years provision with a wide variation in skills and experience, ranging from well below to above expectations for children of their age.

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

- Work with partner agencies to improve the visibility, accessibility and provision of information, advice, guidance and support on employability and employment to all groups of parents. Promoting these services should include:
 - making better use of computers and interactive information technology
 - briefing staff well and evaluating the effectiveness of the centre's advice and signposting activities on outcomes for families
 - celebrating the success of volunteers and staff so they might inspire others to follow the same routes to employment.
- Work with the local authority, other children's centres, schools and partner agencies to improve information sharing so that the outcomes for more groups of parents and children are known as they move on from the centre.
- Work with the local authority and partner agencies to plan further ahead and build in contingency to maintain the good match of services to needs.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- Partners share information effectively through the local authority and locally through the advisory board so the centre knows most families with babies born in the area and moving into the area. Referral and outreach work put 91% of children in the geographical target, most deprived, area in touch with the centre for registration and 86% of all families in priority groups (a very large majority of them) are registered overall.
- The centre takes services such as 'Play and learn' out to community venues to promote the full range of children's centre services to families in groups that previously have not taken up

services. Sessions in the community are often full to capacity and parents describe these groups as a lifeline and a high point of the week.

- The centre offers a specialised playbus outreach service for mothers and babies in Bronzefield prison, to much acclaim from the prison service. The centre introduces teenage and young parents to tailored groupwork that the parents praise highly, which is offered by Surrey youth-service partners. Access to adult learning and qualifications is dispersed among partner agencies and the tracking of outcomes is not fully developed.
- The open access through universal services is an effective gateway for parents, including a growing number of fathers and speakers of English as an additional language, to contact and have their needs recognised by the centre. Staff carry out joint two-year-old assessments and work with the health visitor and share information to be able to offer tailored services effectively.
- Parents talk of being offered 'just the right course for me' and personal support, which one parent said she 'cannot do without'. All families targeted for services meet at least one priority criterion and the support ensures that even families with the most complex needs keep up their participation.
- The centre ensures that targeted groups and individuals are offered free early education and most take up the offer so that children make a good start. Work with midwifery, health visiting and social care ensures that well-established pathways for referral for specialist speech and language, psychology or children's safeguarding services offer help as early as possible.
- Lone parents are not reached in the numbers that the centre aims to serve. Although 66% are registered, only 50% of these are receiving a specific service. The centre is working with JobCentre Plus to build up services to improve this. Access to wider employability services is only through information and signposting at present.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- Parents' confidence improves significantly as a result of outstanding teaching and guidance in key courses and family learning sessions. They build up skills in helping their children to learn through the well-structured PEEP-learning together (parent early education partnership) programme. Families talk about shapes, colours and textures while engaged in creative activities in learning together sessions.
- The centre keeps good track of the progress of children and families attending regularly and keeps very detailed records for vulnerable families receiving individual support. Although the centre is beginning to track outcomes, processes are not well developed in the centre. The centre does not always have information for those families getting services through other centres or partner agencies.
- Children in all priority groups, such as children living in the most deprived area and children in need, make good progress in their learning and development. The limited tracking carried out by the centre shows that children do particularly well in speaking, listening and aspects of mathematics. Children helped through the 'Step into School' experience settle much more rapidly into school than their peers, and parental support for education is stronger.
- There are good outcomes for the large majority of targeted parents and for some volunteers who make outstanding progress in their own development and confidence in literacy and numeracy skills. They go on to take up employment. The centre does not always celebrate these achievements widely enough to encourage other parents to take the same route, and guidance for employment is underdeveloped.
- Confidence and self-esteem improve rapidly and personal development is strong for the small number of parents who get involved the parents' forum or governing the centre. Parents value the 'learn to shine' return to learning course, and completion rates are high. Signposting to high quality partner-organisations that support adults into employment is routine but in-house guidance is underdeveloped.
- Intensive work with partner agencies keeps the most vulnerable families, with multiple or complex needs, safe from abuse or neglect. Families are supported as their children come off child protection plans or child in need plans to take up universal services. Parenting course completion

rates are very high. There is excellent impact of the Freedom Programme, for example women making new choices in their lives that are likely to keep their families safe.

- Well-established work with midwives and health visitors means that families with new babies have a smooth supportive pathway in health. Health outcomes for children are good or improving. The centre focuses well on physical activities and healthy lifestyles to help reduce rates of obesity in the area. Parents' learning from the HENRY course (Healthy Eating and Nutrition in the Really Young) is good and sustained.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Partnership working is essential to improving the work of the centre in all aspects of evaluation of needs, planning services and delivery. Leaders, senior managers and governors are highly ambitious and focus clearly on improving outcomes for families. Agencies share information effectively through the advisory board to identify changing local needs and challenge the centres plans.
- Partner organisations and parents are systematically involved in helping the centre to evaluate and shape the content of services. With strategic lead from the local authority, the centre uses data from partner agencies well. Effective consultation with parents means that the centre takes difficult decisions, like moving to a booking system for the popular stay and play sessions, with the assurance that families back the change.
- Senior staff have opened up the centre's work to scrutiny from other centres, partner agencies and academics and the manager is a systems leader, coaching other centres. The centre evaluates each activity thoroughly, as it has often chosen many course programmes that have clear measures of the participants' progress built in. Parental satisfaction is very high.
- There is a good shared understanding of priorities. Although partnerships with adult training and education partners are developing well, the centre does not always have information for those families getting services through other centres or partner agencies.
- Safeguarding practice is at the forefront of work of the centre to build a strong and safe community. Robust risk assessment, safe recruitment and supervision policies and procedures, aligned with the policies of the linked school, ensure the health, safety and security of families using the services. Staff are sensitive to changes in circumstances and refer families promptly for support from social care services to reduce the risks of harm.
- Managers have improved quality monitoring arrangements for services delivered directly by the centre and the quality is high. There are beginning to be effective arrangements for evaluation and improvement of services delivered by partners. With the support of the linked school, finance resources are well managed.
- Managers have developed the performance management framework and the supervision of staff consistently. This is having a markedly positive effect on staff development and good impact on their analysis and work. Teamwork is strong and helps to sustain improvements at the centre.

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

Unique reference number	20746
Local authority	Surrey County Council
Inspection number	427590
Managed by	The governing body of Clarendon Primary School on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1333
Centre leader	Susan Burgess
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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