

# East Reading Children's Centre Group

Katesgrove Children's Centre, Elgar Road, Reading, RG2 0BN

## Inspection dates

Previous inspection date

5–6 November 2013

Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
	Previous inspection:		
Access to services by young children and families		Inadequate	4
The quality of practice and services		Inadequate	4
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Inadequate	4

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This group of centres is inadequate.

- Leaders and the advisory board do not routinely receive or seek information from the local authority or key partners to help them target services precisely to support those families who may benefit the most. For example, the centres do not receive information on new births or vulnerable two-year-olds that is held by different departments in the local authority.
- Too few families access the centres. These include those who need the most help, those with social care involvement, those from minority ethnic groups and fathers.
- Senior leaders do not monitor the centres' work with sufficient rigour. They are unable to measure whether or not what the centre has to offer is making a difference to the lives of children and families.
- Parents are not represented on the advisory board or routinely involved in decision making.
- There are not enough places for eligible two-year-olds to take up their free entitlement to early education. Only 36% of children are accessing a nursery place and the centre is not doing enough to ensure this group of children is accessing activity sessions or the support the centres have to offer.

### This children's centre group has the following strengths:

- The staff team is committed to its work with families. Parents appreciate and praise the support they receive. A new parent comments, 'I wouldn't have known how to cope without the help of the children's centre'.
- Activity sessions, such as Stay and Play and Wiggle Waggle are helping parents to support their children's learning because staff are good role models and use focus activities and 'parent tips' well.
- Families have access to a good range of health services. Staff work closely with health partners, responding to the needs of families providing sleep clinics and support with weaning and dental hygiene.

## 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 senior leaders in the local authority, centre leaders, partner agencies, parents, family development workers, activity workers and representatives from the advisory board.

The inspectors visited a range of activities across the three centres. They observed the centres' work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Inspection team

Wendy Ratcliff, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Helen Cawston	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sarah McDermott	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the group

East Reading Children's Centre is a group of children's centres located in Reading, run directly by the local authority. The group is made up of three centres: Hamilton Road Children's Centre, a phase three centre; Katesgrove and East Reading, both phase two centres. The local authority has recently undertaken a review of how it runs its 13 children's centres and has re-structured staff roles and responsibilities. Centres are now working in five cluster groups. Reading East centres have been working as a group for 18 months and the new staff structure was implemented in October 2013. The children's centre cluster manager oversees the centres in the group and is supported by a senior leadership team. There are three full time family development workers, two full time equivalent activity workers and part time administrative support. The centres currently have staff vacancies due to the re-organisation of the staff structure. The children's centre group has one advisory board, which includes representation from key partners.

Katesgrove Children's Centre is the hub for the group and open each weekday from 9.00am to 5.00pm. East Reading and Hamilton Road Children's Centre are open for specific centre activities. Families who access the centres at other times are re-directed to the hub centre at Katesgrove. The centres offer a range of services, including health services, family play sessions, adult learning and family support. Waterloo Meadows Play Centre, an after school and holiday club run by the local authority, operates on the same site as Katesgrove Children's Centre. Registered early years providers are subject to separate inspection arrangements. Reports can be found at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>.

There are 3,128 children under five living in the area covered by the centres'. The centres serve the east of Reading. East Reading is a densely populated area, which is ethnically, socially and economically diverse and include areas of higher deprivation. The largest ethnic groups in the area are White British, Black African, Pakistani and Indian. There are smaller percentages of other minority ethnic groups including an increasing number of White European families. Several languages other than English are represented amongst centre users. Around 26% of children in Reading are living in poverty and this increases to around 40% in areas of higher deprivation around Katesgrove and East Reading Children's Centres. Children's skills vary when they start in early years provision with communication and language being a weaker area.

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

- Improve leadership, governance and management by ensuring:
  - systems to monitor the quality of the centres' work, including staff performance management, are effective and show the extent to which services improve the lives of families, particularly those in most need of help
  - all partnerships are strong, centre priorities are clear and data are shared so the families who need the most help receive the support they need
  - targeted intervention, prevention and early help are strengthened and the profile of the children's centres work is promoted
  - parents are actively involved in decision making and the governance of the centre.
- Improve access to services for young children and their families by ensuring families in the reach area know what is on offer, particularly those in greatest need, fathers, families from minority ethnic groups and those with social care involvement.
- Work with health and early years partners to ensure eligible two-year-olds are known, access what the centre has to offer and take up their free entitlement to early education.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

Inadequate

- The centres are not reaching enough families from the groups they have identified as needing most help and support. This is because leaders do not receive the information they need to find out whether these families are accessing services. For example, the local authority receives information on the number of new births in the area but does not share this with the centres.
- A range of partners, particularly health, work well with centre staff to identify individual families who may benefit from what the centre has to offer. For example, 'maternity pathways' is effectively identifying expectant mothers who would benefit from receiving guidance and support at an early stage.
- Staff do not do enough to ensure families in the area know what services they offer. The centres have developed a helpful interactive website to help families find out about services, especially those who are new to the area, and the welcome booklet is available in several languages other than English. However, too few families in most need of support are accessing services.
- There are not enough early education places in the area for the number of eligible two-year-olds. The centres do not receive information about this group of children to know if they are accessing activity sessions or to identify if specific families may benefit from support.

### The quality of practice and services

Inadequate

- Checks on the quality and impact of what the centres offer families are not effective. Although feedback from families is gathered and some information is available from different partners, the centres are not using this information well enough to track the progress families make or measure whether or not services, including one-to-one support, make a difference to their lives.
- The children's centre teacher supports staff to plan and review activity sessions using the Early Years Foundation Stage. During sessions, such as, Tots on Wednesday, children have fun playing with 'techno' toys alongside their parents and there is a clear focus on developing children's communication and language. The centre is not yet tracking the progress individual children or groups of children make in order to show if such sessions provide children with the skills they need to be ready for nursery or school.
- There is not enough support for families about benefits, training and employment. The centre is not finding out if the small number families who do access benefit advice or training make positive improvements in their lives.
- The centres' work to support early years settings to use the speech and language monitoring tool is helping practitioners to identify children who may be at risk of speech delay, leading to specific support. The centre is collecting information that is beginning to show how this early identification for support is having a positive impact on reducing the risk speech delay for children in the area.
- Specific work with families who have social work involvement, including children in need and children subject to child in need plans, is led by professionals within the social care team and Children's Action Team (CAT). The centre is developing partnerships with social care colleagues to promote the services the centre has to offer. There is some joint working between the centre staff and family development workers from the CAT, but case files lack emphasis on the centres' contributions in supporting children and families.

### The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Inadequate

- Centre leaders do not receive regular and precise enough information about the area to help them identify where to find the families who may benefit the most from support. For example, the local authority does not share information it receives on new births or two-year-olds eligible for free early years education. Recent census information has revealed a significant increase in the number of families with young children in the area. As a result, too few families from the centres' identified groups who would benefit from support are accessing services.
- Resources are not used well enough. The local authority has recently reviewed how it runs its

children's centres, which included changes in staff structures, roles and responsibilities. Current staff vacancies, coupled with a significant increase in number of children under five years living in the area, has resulted in a reduction in capacity to deliver some services, such as undertaking one-to-one support with families who need the most help.

- The advisory board includes representation from a range of partners, but parents are not included in the governance of the centre. The range of partners' expertise provides helpful information about the needs of the community. Members recognise there is more to do to reach a greater number of families with young children in the area, particularly from minority ethnic groups, those with social care involvement and expectant mothers.
- Senior leaders are aware that the systems to monitor the quality of the centres' work are weak. Systems to check the quality of activity sessions are in their infancy and, for some staff, performance management is not happening often enough for them to reflect on the effectiveness of their work with individual families.
- Safeguarding arrangements are adequate. Recruitment and selection procedures ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. Staff know what they should do if they have a concern about the welfare of a child. The centres' role in the local authority's early help, intervention and prevention strategy is developing.
- The senior leadership team and advisory board members recognise the need to improve the performance of the centres and have identified key priorities to reach families in the area that are identified as needing the most help. Their commitment to improve partnership working, ensuring centre priorities are fully understood by all partners, including adult learning providers and local schools is clear.

**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.

**Group details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	80285
<b>Local authority</b>	Reading
<b>Inspection number</b>	433030
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority
<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	3,128
<b>Centre leader</b>	Brian Matthews
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	0118 9015664
<b>Email address</b>	brian.matthews@reading.gov.uk

**This group consists of the following children's centres:**

- 22578 East Reading Children's Centre
- 21354 Hamilton Road Children's Centre
- 21640 Katesgrove Children's Centre

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