

# Berwick Hills Children's Centre

Berwick Hills Primary School, Westerdale Road, Berwick Hills, Middlesbrough, TS3 7QH

**Inspection date** 20–21 November 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b> Previous inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
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:

- Whilst an increasing number of families are participating regularly in children's centre activities, this is not yet the majority. Centre data relating to the engagement of families, including identified target groups, lack clarity and interrogation. This prevents the centre developing and targeting its services more effectively, in order to secure the sustained contact of a larger number of families.
- Priorities set out in the centre's delivery improvement plan are accurate but not all have measureable success criteria. It is therefore difficult for staff to demonstrate when they have been successful in meeting their targets across the whole range of work they undertake, and for the advisory board to offer sufficient challenge.
- The progress children aged birth to two years make when they attend some children's centre activities is not recorded sufficiently well. Whilst activities successfully develop parents' understanding of their child's development so they can support learning at home, not enough parents access these activities to benefit from this advice. As a result too many children start school without the key skills that they require for this next stage in their development.
- Health outcomes for families living in this reach area require improvement. The proportion of breastfeeding mothers, whilst improving, is significantly below the Middlesbrough average at 27.9%, whilst the number of mothers smoking during pregnancy remains high at 41.5%.

### This centre has the following strengths:

- The children's centre manager, ably supported by the cluster manager and senior leaders have skilfully guided the children's centre through an extended period of re-organisation of key personnel and services, whilst continually improving service delivery and up-skilling the staff team.
- The authority's 'allocation and review' system ensures that the needs of an increasing number of families in the reach area are accurately assessed and promotes an integrated approach to working with families in need. As a result, parents and young children receive the correct support from the most appropriate agencies in a timely manner.
- The dedicated team of family support and project workers provide much needed support to some of the most vulnerable families in their homes. This has secured the engagement of some families who might otherwise have chosen not to participate.
- A successful volunteer programme provides opportunities for adults to gain new skills and to give something back to the community. For some this has contributed to gaining paid employment.
- Safeguarding is well established ensuring the safety of children is at the heart of the centres' work.

## 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. The centre works collaboratively with three other children's centres; North Ormesby, Park End and Thorntree and together they serve the East Locality in Middlesbrough.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre manager, cluster manager and other members of the senior leadership team, family support workers, project workers, inclusion workers, the locality dads' worker, officers from the local authority, representatives from Family Wise and Job Centre Plus. They also met health, education and early years partners, parents, volunteers and representatives of the governing board. They looked at the centre's self-evaluation, service delivery plan, centre delivery improvement plan, a sample of case studies, safeguarding procedures and a range of other relevant documentation. Visits to activities were undertaken jointly with frontline staff and the centre manager. A local authority representative also attended all team meetings.

## Inspection team

Jayne Utting

Her Majesty's Inspector, Lead Inspector

Jean Webb

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Berwick Hills Children's Centre is based on a shared site with Berwick Hills Primary School and is situated just outside Middlesbrough city centre. The centre is in the Pallister Park ward, which falls into one of the top 5% most deprived wards in the country. There are 670 children aged birth to four years living in the reach area. The locality has a high level of worklessness, with unemployment in this area being twice the national average. Latest figures indicate that 50% of children are living in households in receipt of child tax credit, income support or job seekers allowance.

Children's centres in Middlesbrough are divided into three localities, North, East and South West. This centre is part of the East Locality along with North Ormesby, Park End and Thorntree children's centres. Centre managers from the locality meet regularly to discuss issues and priorities together. The centre is managed directly by the local authority. The range of services provided includes family support, health services, parenting, volunteering and adult education. Target groups include lone parents, first time parents, parents with children under six months, teenage parents and families with chaotic behaviour. There is an identified cluster manager and children's centre lead, along with a team of frontline staff including project workers, a family support team, dad's worker, early years educator, welfare rights and benefits advisor and a town-wide inclusion worker.

The majority of families are of White British heritage. The area suffers from high crime rates, anti-social behaviour and drug misuse. Middlesbrough has higher than the national average numbers of teenage mothers and adults with qualifications are low.

Early years provision is provided through a number of early years settings, school nursery classes and childminders located within the locality. Children generally enter early years provision with skills, knowledge and abilities that are below those expected for their age especially in communication and language and personal, social and emotional development. The proportion of disabled children and those with special educational needs, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is in line with the national average. The primary schools and nearby early years settings were not part of this inspection as they are inspected separately. The reports are available on the Ofsted website at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

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

- Improve access to services by young children and families by:
  - using available data more effectively to monitor, understand and inform engagement levels across the reach area and support the identification of families and particular target groups who are less likely to engage with centre services.
- Better evidence the impact of the good quality universal provision for children aged birth to two years by:
  - developing systems to monitor and track the progress children make from when they start attending
  - continuing to support more parents to better understand the links between group activities and their child's development so that they are confident to support on-going learning in their homes.
- Further improve health outcomes for families across the reach area, particularly in relation to sustaining breastfeeding and reducing the number of mothers smoking during pregnancy, by:
  - developing the use of the breastfeeding peer support mentors
  - providing greater involvement from centre staff in ante- and post-natal services.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management, including the effectiveness of the governance board, on improving outcomes for families by:

- developing the centre's 'delivery improvement plan' further, to include more specific measurable targets that enable the centre to better evidence the impact of the whole range of work they undertake
- continuing to develop the use of data to ensure effective monitoring of identified target families shows the impact of services, so that a more precise analysis of the centre's performance is achieved and used to inform on-going planning.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Through its partnerships with health professionals, the centre has been successful in registering the large majority of families with children aged birth to four years living in the reach area. Leaders understand the needs of the community well and continue to use this, alongside information about levels of deprivation, to plan and deliver a range of services.
- However, whilst the number of children and families engaging in activities is increasing, including lone parents, teenage parents, families from minority ethnic groups, fathers and families from workless households, this is not yet the majority.
- The quality of data held by the local authority is good. However, the centre does not always use data sufficiently well to monitor and understand participation levels across the reach area, including finding out why some target groups do not attend services or fail to participate regularly. This impacts on their ability to securely demonstrate meaningful, sustained engagement in some centre activities.
- Staff are good at identifying children whose circumstances make them vulnerable, and signposting them to good quality early years provision. The centre has successfully supported parents of all disadvantaged two-year-olds to take up their free entitlement to early education.
- A high number of teenage parents are engaging with services. Family support workers have established close links with organisations supporting these families. They are given the highest priority to ensure they can access the services they need. The number of fathers engaged in children's centre activities has also increased following the appointment of a dedicated dads' worker.
- Concerted efforts are made to ensure that identified families with the highest levels of need are benefiting from services. For example, project workers communicate regularly with families where there is social work intervention to ensure they understand the importance of regular attendance. When these families choose not to access services this is followed up to ensure they do not fall through the net and that children's needs are being met.

### The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- A growing range of good quality activities are delivered by the children's centre team and partners. Parents who attend groups clearly benefit from the experience, particularly in terms of improving their confidence as parents. However, the number of families accessing these opportunities requires improvement, restricting the impact the centre has on the lives of local families.
- Where children attend school or registered early years provision, the majority make good progress although the achievement of children in the key area of communication and language remains stubbornly below the authority average, despite numerous locality-wide interventions including 'Bookstart'. The progress of children aged birth to two years is recorded less well where they attend only children's centre activities, as staff are only beginning to implement systems to track and record this. This limits the centre's ability to evidence the impact of this work.
- Staff help parents to understand the links between group activities and their own child's development, ensuring they become confident to support this continued learning at home. However, not enough parents benefit from these experiences. As a result, schools report that too many children are starting Nursery class without key skills such as the ability to drink from a cup or manage their own toileting needs. Joint ventures with school such as 'Ready for Nursery' are beginning to address this gap.

- Breastfeeding rates for the reach area are significantly below the national average. While partnership working and involvement of centre staff in some ante and post-natal services is effective, there is too little of it.
- Staff have been successful at helping families cope with low-level mental health issues such as anxiety and mild depression and many have been empowered to address issues around domestic abuse, through the strong links that the centre has with local support groups including Harbour and My Sister's Place. This, combined with a focus on child safety, has raised families' awareness of how to keep their children safe.
- A range of family learning opportunities ensures that parents are able to participate in programmes that help to build confidence and develop literacy and numeracy skills, along with good individual information, advice and guidance about their next steps for future learning. Many parents go on to volunteer within the centre, for example as literacy champions, supporting other parents with the development of their literacy skills. However, participation levels are often low and data are not always used well enough to measure the impact of services for families in order to inform and influence on-going planning.

### **The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management**

Requires improvement

- The effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement because the centre is not yet having a good impact on outcomes for enough local families.
- The use of available data regarding the engagement of local families requires some further refinement to ensure that analysis better captures all meaningful contact by families in children's centre activities, including the participation of target groups which have only recently been identified. This restricts the centre's ability to both evidence and monitor its performance accurately and means that data are not currently being used as effectively as possible to inform on-going planning.
- Priorities identified in the centre's 'delivery improvement plan' are accurate and targets are ambitious and challenging. However, the progress made towards targets is not always measurable because the strategies needed to meet them are sometimes not precise enough. This in turn weakens the ability of the advisory board to offer effective challenge regarding the centre's on-going performance, particularly regarding the level of take-up of services by local families.
- Staff are well qualified and knowledgeable. Opportunities for continuous professional development are encouraged and taken up by staff who feel well supported and highly valued because professional supervision is embedded in the work of the centre, and all are encouraged to progress within the staff structure.
- The complementary work of partners is used well to support the key challenges of the area such as reducing domestic violence, drug and alcohol misuse and the number of children at risk of harm. This ensures the efficient use of resources, prevents duplication and is testament to the quality of the senior leadership team and their commitment to continually improving services.
- However, some partnerships, such as those with health services require improvement. This is because currently not all aspects of work are fully integrated, for example sustained breastfeeding strategies and reducing the number of mothers smoking during pregnancy.
- Duties relating to safeguarding are taken very seriously. Policies and procedures are thorough and the Common Assessment Framework process is used appropriately to reduce levels of risk. Case files and records are maintained to an extremely high standard and fully reflect the views and opinions of families as well as the involvement of other professionals.
- Parents using the centre feel they are listened to and well supported by the sensitive approach of staff who are described as 'life-changing.' This was clearly evidenced during a 'Fulfilling Lives' consultation meeting attended by inspectors. Parents feel that the centre is open to anyone in the area and new parents appreciate the support they have received. Parents of children with additional and complex needs are particularly appreciative of the support provided by the town-wide inclusion workers who have helped many to access early years provision within the community.

**What inspection judgements mean**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
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**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	20281
<b>Local authority</b>	Middlesbrough
<b>Inspection number</b>	427564
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority
<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	690
<b>Centre leader</b>	Zahra Shan
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Telephone number</b>	01642 245358
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