

Bodmin Children's Centre

55 Higher Bore Street, Bodmin, PL31 1JS.

Inspection date

November 2013

| Overall effectiveness | This inspection: Previous inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
|--|--|--------------------------|---|
| | | 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:

- Not enough families, particularly those who need most help and support, access services. Engagement with specific groups of families varies and while the centre has engaged with the large majority of teenage parents, they have not had this same level of success in ensuring other groups access the services they need.
- While leaders have accurately identified a need to tackle poverty and worklessness within the local area, they have not developed a clear plan of action in order to effectively support adults find work. However, they are making increasing use of information available to them to understand the needs of the different groups who live locally.
- Information and data provided by the local authority are not always detailed enough or analysed sufficiently to help leaders have a clear enough picture of where they need to focus the efforts of the centre. Systems to effectively evaluate the quality of centre services are at an early stage. The difference services are making to the lives of families is, therefore, not always clear.
- Target setting by the local authority is not precise enough to ensure priority is given to engaging those families who would most benefit from centre services.

This children's centre group has the following strengths:

- Staff are well qualified and skilled. They show a strong commitment to improving the lives of the families they work with. Safeguarding of young children and their families is given high priority both in the work conducted at the centre as well as in one-to-one work with individual families.
- Teenage and young parents benefit from good quality teaching and support that helps them to grow in confidence, learn how to care for their children's personal and academic wellbeing and gain further qualifications to help them to return to work when they are ready.
- Improvements in the leadership by the local authority have resulted in more effective monitoring of children's centres and improved ways of working. The clarification of responsibilities and the terms of reference for advisory boards means that members are now more engaged in their role and beginning to challenge leaders and hold them to account.

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 other children's centres which were Bude and Launceston Children's Centre and Wadebridge and Camelford Children's Centre.

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, managers from the local authority and centre staff. They also met health, education and social care partners, parents, early years practitioners, volunteers, and representatives from the advisory board.

The inspectors visited Bodmin Children's Centre main site as well as the Berryfields site. They had discussions with a range of partners and the breastfeeding support group. They observed some of the centre's activities and did an observation of the 'Baby Basics' group jointly with the centre manager.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Jane Burchall | Her Majesty's Inspector, Lead Inspector |
| Sue Frater | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Penny Mathers | Additional Inspector |
| Georgie Beasley | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about the centre

Bodmin Children's Centre is a phase one centre which is located in the town of Bodmin. In 2012 the local authority reorganised its children's centres into six localities. Bodmin Children's Centre is in 'locality five'. It works closely alongside the two other centres in the locality, Bude and Launceston Children's Centre and Camelford and Wadebridge Children's Centre. The centre is managed directly by the local authority and has its own advisory board. The centre has two linked sites: Berryfields, located alongside Strawberries Day Care and Beacon, located alongside Beacon Infants School. Both the day care and the school are subject to separate inspection arrangements and their reports can be found at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>.

The centre covers an area of 70.73 square miles and includes the market town on Bodmin as well as outlying villages. Public transport facilities are limited and families in outlying villages are at risk of social isolation. The centre is located in an area which has been identified as being within the top 30% most deprived in the country, with some areas in the top 10% most deprived. There are a total of 1,564 children under five years living in the area served by the centre. Twenty-six percent of children live in households claiming out of work benefits and almost 22% have been identified as living in poverty. The population is mainly White British but with increasing numbers of families from minority ethnic heritage, some of whom speak English as an additional language.

Many children in the area start early years provision with skills which are below those typical for their age. Communication and language and, personal, social and emotional skills are the weakest areas. The centre meets its core purpose by offering a range of services which includes health services, family play sessions, parenting programmes, family support and some adult learning. The current manager has been in post for seven months.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Improve the accuracy and use of data and information so that leaders have a better understanding of how effective the centre has been at engaging with those in most need of its services, the impact they are having and where they need to target their efforts.
- Improve access to services particularly by those who are less likely to participate so that a large majority of families who are most in need of help and support engage in services.
- Together with the local authority, set clear, challenging and measurable targets focused upon the priorities for the centre.
- Develop, implement and evaluate a plan for working with those who live in workless households so that adult learning, volunteering and the services provided by employment agencies are co-ordinated.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Working with partners the centre has successfully registered the very large majority of families who live in their area and the number of families who seek help and support is steadily increasing. The majority of families who live in the most deprived areas access services and high numbers of teenage parents enjoy services designed specifically for them. However, only a minority of other groups, such as children with disabilities, lone parents and minority ethnic families use the services provided by the centre.
- Staff work well with a range of professionals to identify individual families who may benefit from early help, including those expecting children. Service requests to the family support team for one-to-one support are processed swiftly so that families receive the help they need as quickly as

possible.

- Work to take services out to communities who have been traditionally harder to engage has been slow to progress due to staff shortages. The centre is now fully staffed and they are implementing plans to deliver outreach services to increase the number of families who access services.
- Most children aged three and four years take up their entitlement to funded nursery education. Increasing numbers of eligible families with two-year-olds are also accessing funded provision in settings of good quality. A lack of comparable data means that it is not possible for leaders to determine what proportion of eligible children are not engaging in nursery education.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- Partnership working across a range of services is developing well. There are some long-standing relationships which have resulted in strong provision for some target groups such as that for young parents and for children with disabilities. Better engagement of key partners on the advisory board is now leading to an improved understanding of roles and responsibilities and to a more integrated approach to service delivery.
- There is a clear process in place for the consideration and allocation of targeted support for families. Assessment of needs are comprehensive and result in well organised action plans to support families to make positive changes to their lives and family support workers work closely with families to bring about these changes. On occasion, direct work with families stops before staff can be confident that families' needs have been fully met resulting some families being referred back for further support for the same concerns at a later date.
- Activities provided for those families who access the centre are of good quality. Well planned sessions now provide a good focus on supporting children's developing language and communication and their personal, social and emotional skills so that they are better prepared for school and gaps in achievements are beginning to narrow.
- The children's centre is having an increasing impact on improving the quality of early years provision in its area. The children's centre teacher works well with settings and local childminding groups to monitor and evaluate the quality of provision and to provide training, advice and guidance.
- Parents confirm that attendance at activities has helped them to become better parents. They have developed an understanding of how to help their children to learn through play, how to support them to be ready for school and how to improve their health and well-being through diet and exercise.
- The centre has established provision in place for families to engage in family learning. Numbers of families who attend these services although low overall are increasing. The very large majority of those who start programmes complete them. While provision for young parents to gain qualifications is strong, monitoring by the centre shows that only a very small number of other adults have gained qualifications in literacy and numeracy over time.
- Staff refer a good number of families from workless households to 'Cornwall Works for Families' to gain support in seeking employment. However, leaders do not have a clear plan of how adult learning, volunteering and opportunities to increase confidence are used to support families into employment or onto further education. As a result, the centre is not yet having a noticeable impact on reducing worklessness in its area.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- In the short time the centre manager has been in post she has had a positive impact on improving provision. She has rightly focused her initial efforts where there was most need. A full staff team is now in place and deployed sufficiently, premises are safe for families, and a review of all services has ensured activities meet the needs of families and are mostly focused on the

centre's key priorities.

- Systems for monitoring the progress that children and families make are not fully developed. New systems to check the impact that services have on children's progress and the lives of families are being implemented so that leaders to have a better picture of the quality of services and the difference they make. Not all information is accurate or used well enough to check whether the centre is reaching all families who would benefit from services.
- Recent monitoring by the school improvement team has accurately identified areas for improvement. It has shown the good progress made by the centre in tackling areas of underperformance. While an action plan to help the centre to continue to improve is in place, it does not include precise enough targets to ensure that the centre focuses its work on those who need most help and support.
- The children's centre works well to safeguard the welfare of children and families known to them, including those subject to a child protection plan or the Common Assessment Framework. Staff are well trained and have a good understanding of safeguarding arrangements and what to do if they have concerns about a child.
- Staff access a very comprehensive and highly relevant programme of training which is tailored to meet the needs of their individual roles. For example, staff across the county who assess of the needs of children and their families, including family support workers, are all undertaking nationally recognised early help assessment training. This training is also delivered to those who provide services on behalf of the centre to further secure consistency of practice.
- Parents are represented on the advisory board, their views are gathered through feedback and evaluations including the use of a graffiti board. They are involved in some decision making in the centre such as being involved in the recruitment of new staff. The centre manager has plans to reintroduce a parents' forum in order to involve them more fully in decision making.

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. |

Select details

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Unique reference number | 20356 |
| Local authority | Cornwall Council |
| Inspection number | 427533 |
| Managed by | The local authority |
| Approximate number of children under five in the reach area | 1,564 |
| Centre leader | Nicola Murphy |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Telephone number | 01208 262960 |
| Email address | nmurphy@cornwall.gov.uk |

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