

Ashcombe Children's Centre

Stepping Stone Walk, Weston-Super-Mare, BS23 3NA

Inspection date

December 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.

- The centre works extremely well with a range of partners. Good information sharing and a strong emphasis on multi-agency working means that the centre is successfully identifying and engaging with those families most in need. Effective systems for allocation of families who would benefit from specific targeted support mean that they swiftly get the help they need.
- Highly skilled family support workers provide very effective one-to-one support that enables many families to bring about very positive changes in their lives. Parents particularly value the consistency and stability the children's centre provides for them and their children especially during periods of change and disruption in their own lives.
- A wide range of good quality services is provided for families in the area served by the centre. These are having a positive impact on preparing children well for school, improving health indicators such as breastfeeding rates and on improving parenting skills.
- The centre lead has very high expectations of her staff team and the services that they deliver. A culture of continuous improvement is helping to effectively drive improvement, such as the better targeting of services to those who need them the most.

It is not outstanding because:

- Systems to fully measure the quality and impact of the centre's work across all services are still developing. Records of the centre's self-evaluation are overly descriptive and not sharply enough focused on the impact that services are having on improving the lives of those the centre serves.
- While leaders have a clear picture of their priorities for improvement, action plans lack clear and measurable targets so that leaders, staff, the advisory board and parents can fully understand what needs to be achieved.

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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders and managers in the local authority, the centre leader, partner agencies, parents, centre staff, volunteers and representatives of the advisory board. The children's centre leader and the locality leads attended all inspection team meetings.

The inspectors visited services delivered at the children's centre's main site.

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

Inspection team

Jane Burchall, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Penny Mathers

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Ashcombe Children's Centre is a phase one centre located in the coastal town of Weston-Super-Mare. It is managed directly by the local authority and has its own partnership board. It works closely with the two other centres in the town, South Weston and Weston Central Children's Centres. The local authority is currently undertaking a consultation and is proposing to move to a group model of children's centre service delivery for the three centres from April 2014.

The centre opened in 2006 and is located on the site of Ashcombe Primary School. The children's centre building also accommodates Ashcombe Children's Centre Nursery, Springboard Opportunity Group and the Reception classes of the primary school. Both of the early years settings and the school are subject to separate inspection arrangements and their reports can be found at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>.

The centre serves families who live on the outskirts of the town. Although it is not located in an area which has been identified as being deprived overall there are pockets of deprivation among areas which are more affluent. There are a total of 747 children under five years living in the area served by the centre. 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 have skills which are in line with or just below the levels 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 adult learning. A range of partners providing specialist advice, guidance or services supports the work of the centre. These partners include a domestic violence support group, the local food bank, and portage services.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Together with the local authority and the partnership board, strengthen leadership and management by:
 - ensuring self-evaluation is better focused on the impact that services are having on families and on meeting priorities for the centre
 - ensuring development plans include clear, challenging and measurable targets
 - improving systems to monitor the quality of services so that observations of practice are better focused on evaluating how well staff facilitate the learning of children and their parents
 - extending the systems used to closely check the progress that children make to include all children who attend groups and activities.
- Develop the planning of services to develop adults' personal skills and education by identifying their starting points and ensuring subsequent opportunities build on their skills and knowledge. Closely check the progress they make so that the centre can better show evidence of the impact it is having.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families Good

- Most families who live in the local area are registered with the centre. Leaders have appropriately prioritised encouraging the engagement of those families in most need of help and support and those who live in the most deprived areas of the community. As a result, involvement by these families has rapidly increased over the past few years so that now the large majority regularly access relevant services.
- Successful work with a range of partners such as health, early years providers, portage services

and speech and language services is used well to identify families who would most benefit from services, including those expecting children. Effective information sharing and working together mean the needs of individual families are known, understood and well met.

- The take-up of funded early education is good. Most three and four year olds attend early years settings, maintained nursery provision or are at school. The large majority of disadvantaged families with two year olds take up their entitlement to free education either in the on-site nursery or in equally high-quality provision elsewhere.
- One-to-one targeted support for individual families is successful in helping families access the services they need. Staff build very positive relationships with families so that they remain engaged in relevant services until their needs are met.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- Very strong partnerships with a range of partners contribute to the positive difference the centre makes on the lives of families. Staff provide or signpost parents to a very good range of relevant activities and services which meet their needs.
- Assessment of needs are comprehensive and result in well-organised action plans to support families to make positive changes to their lives. The Common Assessment Framework process is used particularly well to assess the complex needs of families and to ensure an integrated approach is taken to provide early help and intervention.
- Staff are good role models. They provide effective care, guidance and support to a wide range of families both through targeted one-to-one work and in services available to all families. Parents have a consistently high level of satisfaction with the quality of services and their ability to meet their needs.
- The centre provides opportunities for adults to participate in activities that improve their personal skills and education. Good links are in place with family learning and relationships with adult training providers are developing. While families have a strong say in what courses they wish to attend, planning of training for individuals does not identify their starting points or build upon this so that they are provided with a clear pathway of progression.
- By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage the majority of children reach a good level of development due to good quality activities provided by the centre alongside good quality early years provision in the local area. Close checking of two year olds who receive free early education by the centre shows the excellent progress that is being made by this group of children. Staff are not currently checking the progress made by other children who access centre services as closely and therefore the impact they are having on their progress is less clear.
- Centre staff work extremely well with health partners to promote healthy lifestyles. A coordinated approach to encouraging breastfeeding has seen a very positive trend of improvement from approximately 35% of mothers breastfeeding at six to eight weeks in 2012 to 50% currently. The centre also works hard to encourage the take-up of immunisations.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Leaders have a clear and accurate understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for improvement. Self-evaluation makes suitable use of the useful range of data and information available to the centre so that leaders have a good picture of the needs of families in the area and shape relevant services accordingly. However, it is not used sharply enough to help leaders and partners fully understand the overall impact that services are having on the lives of the families they work with.
- The local authority checks the effectiveness of the children's centre through an annual review where priorities and areas for improvement are identified. Development plans are focused well on areas which will make the biggest difference to families but targets for improvement are not easily measurable so that staff and partners understand the contribution they can make to the success of the centre.

- Governance arrangements are well established. Partnership board members are clear on their role to support and challenge the centre. They work well together and with centre staff, drawing on their individual knowledge of the community to ensure the centre is offering a good range of appropriate services.
- The children's centre works well to safeguard the welfare of children and families known to it, 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. They receive regular supervision, which guides them in their work with families.
- Systems to monitor the quality of services provided at the centre are developing well. Staff evaluate each group they deliver and discuss the impact that they have had on families. The early years consultant undertakes observations of practice, although these do not always focus sufficiently on how well practitioners have facilitated learning for children and their parents.
- Resources are used very well. Families have access to excellent, well-planned facilities in the children's centre building which they share with the co-located early years settings and the school. Staff are well qualified and their skills are used effectively to support families and to deliver good quality services.
- Parents contribute to evaluation of the service and feel free to give their views. Parents and children are well consulted about their needs and this information is used well to develop services further.

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.

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Local authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	427565
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	747
Centre leader	Nicky Stead
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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