

# Sankey Valley Children's Centre

c/o Sankey Valley St James CE PS, Dorchester Road, Great Sankey, Warrington, Cheshire, WA5 1XE

<b>Inspection date</b>		17–18 December 2013	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
	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 is highly regarded by parents and other professionals with whom it works. Partners work closely together to ensure that families have access to a wide range of good quality services that have a positive impact on the lives of a large majority of children and adults.
- Young children enjoy the well-planned activities such as, 'Keep the Beat', 'Mini Makers' and 'Little Gardeners' Club'. These effectively help children to move on in their learning and personal development and also help them to prepare confidently for school.
- The highly skilled staff are very passionate about reducing inequalities. They assess family needs very well and carefully monitor individuals' progress, particularly to help parents improve their life chances and keep children safe from harm.
- Parents value the warm and friendly environment at the centre and greatly appreciate the very good care and support which they receive from the manager, staff and partners.
- A clear focus on improving training and employability skills, combined with excellent tracking of adults' progress, is having a very good impact on raising parents' aspirations and confidence levels. Consequently, very trusting relationships have been built with parents and many are eager to support the centre's work through acting as a volunteer.
- Strong leadership, management and governance enable the centre to focus clearly on priority developments. Well-targeted action planning, underpinned by a thorough process of ongoing review and robust local authority monitoring, mean that the centre has a good capacity to sustain future improvement.

### It is not outstanding because:

- A small minority of families remains difficult to engage and are not benefiting from the good services offered by the centre.
- The systems to track and monitor the progress of two-year-old children accessing free entitlement to early education, are not robust enough.

## 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 three additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre manager and local authority lead officer. They also held meetings with centre staff, parents, members of the advisory board and a number of partners including health, education and children's social care professionals.

The inspectors visited a number of sessions held during the inspection including, 'Chatter Box', 'Mini Makers', 'Storycraft' and 'Little Gardeners' groups. They also involved the children's centre manager and the local authority lead officer in all team meetings.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation such as the centre's self-evaluation and service improvement plan, parent evaluations, key policies and the centre's equality and safeguarding procedures, as well as a range of other relevant documentation.

## Inspection team

Tara Street, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Qaisra Shahraz Ahmad

Additional inspector

Ann Taylor

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Sankey Valley Children's Centre is a phase two centre, situated within the grounds of Sankey Valley St James Primary School. In April 2013, the centre merged with Calland's Children Centre, Leadership, management and Governance of the centre is provided by Warrington Local Authority, in conjunction with an advisory board that includes providers, delivery partners, and members of the local community and users that attend the centre. The centre offers a range of services which include child health services, family play sessions, parenting programmes, adult education, family outreach services and crèche facilities.

There are approximately 2,554 children aged nought to five years in the reach area, of which 9% live in the 0-50% most deprived areas in the country. Within the reach of the centre there are significant issues surrounding mental health and isolation. There is a mix of residents, with 9.4% from minority ethnic groups, some of whom speak English as an additional language. Housing is mostly social or private rental, with some moderate areas of high affluence and privately owned housing. Levels of unemployment are low, with 8.5% of children living in households dependent upon workless benefits, but many of the existing jobs are low paid. Most children enter early education with knowledge and skills that are slightly below expectations for their age, particularly in communication, language and personal, social and emotional development. There are links to the 12 local primary schools which are subject to separate inspection arrangements. The reports of these inspections are available on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

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

- Increase registration and participation rates further to ensure that almost all families benefit from the good services on offer, particularly lone parents, fathers and two-year-old children.
- The local authority should work with the centre and local childcare providers to:
  - establish a robust system for tracking the progress of two-year-old children who are accessing free entitlement to early education more effectively, so that the centre can monitor progress from their individual starting points and measure the long-term impact of its work.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

**Good**

- The centre is well known in the community and 79% of families are registered. A large majority of these families regularly accesses services, including those expecting children and those living in the most deprived areas. At 83%, contact with teenage parents is very positive, and 66% of families belonging to minority ethnic groups are engaged with the centre. However, a small minority of potential users, such as fathers, lone parents and families with two-year-olds, still do not participate regularly in activities.
- This vibrant centre provides a good range of information for families in all aspects of care. Displays and posters provided inside and outside of the centre signpost families to a wide range of services and effectively reflect the diverse community in which they live.
- Centre users speak highly of the friendly and supportive services they receive. Staff work hard to build trusting relationships and ensure that everyone is included, irrespective of their background. The comments of two parents sum up the views of many. 'It's an incredibly friendly centre, you are made to feel really welcome and staff are mum and child friendly' and 'With the centre's support, I love the person I have become'.
- The very proactive family support workers know the community well, including its most vulnerable and hard-to-engage groups. They target support and advice effectively to meet individual families' needs, particularly those suffering from domestic violence, post-natal depression or isolation. Referrals, outreach work and assessments are all used effectively to identify needs and match families to the services they require, such as speech and language.
- At 100%, the vast majority of children aged two, three and four years old, take up their funded early education places. Good partnership work and thorough arrangements enable children to get ready for their new setting with confidence. However, there is no robust system for tracking and monitoring the progress of children who access their two-year-old free entitlement to early education with local childcare providers. This means that the centre cannot fully measure its impact in this area and inform future planning.

### The quality of practice and services

**Good**

- The centre's wide range of well-planned, good quality universal and targeted services results in families' improved well-being. Outreach work is a particular strength and helps a number of families to get through times of crisis and become much better equipped to make sensible future choices. Strong multi-agency work, especially with health, educational and social care professionals, underpins the safety net of support in place to protect those most in need.
- A strong drive is in place to promote healthy eating and more active lifestyles through, for example, 'Mini Chefs Kitchen' and 'Mini Movers' sessions. As a result levels of obesity, at 8.5%, are below the national average. Other health outcomes are also positive. There are very low levels of smoking in pregnancy, and breastfeeding at six-to-eight weeks is only just below the national average, at 44.2%.
- Through strong partnership with local schools, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development is above the national average. Targeted sessions to boost children's development, such as the 'Storycraft' and 'All Kinds of Play' groups, have a good impact on improving their skills and school readiness.
- Good opportunities are in place for parents to improve their parenting skills and self-confidence. Parents who have attended the 'Strengthening Families' programme are very clear regarding the difference it has made to their family lives. It helps them to develop more positive relationships with one another and to learn how to manage their children's behaviour well.
- Parents are well supported to become volunteers and to access a wide range of further education courses. This has led to many undertaking further accredited courses and being supported into employment. Good completion rates and the gaining of formal qualifications effectively improve their life chances and reduce inequalities. In addition, there are excellent systems in place to track

adults' progress and measure the centre's effectiveness in this area.

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

**Good**

- The highly respected centre manager has powerful ambitions to make the centre the best it can be and has the full support of the dedicated and passionate staff team in meeting local families' needs.
- The centre has robust systems for checking on its performance and setting priorities for future improvement. Good systems are in place to monitor the quality of services through regular meetings, observations and robust analysis of evaluations. The centre manager gives regular reports to senior managers and the advisory board to ensure that they have an accurate knowledge of how well the centre is driving improvements and reducing inequalities for local families.
- The local authority sets ambitious targets for the centre and regular monitoring is very robust and accurate. This helps the local authority to support the centre effectively towards still better performance. As a result, the centre provides good value for money.
- Families are highly valued and their views and ideas are routinely sought through a variety of consultation methods. Parents have a strong voice, together with a range of partners, on the advisory board. This ensures that they have a clear input into centre improvement plans and the review of the centre's services. For instance, a parent forum member commented that, 'It's great to see that our ideas are valued and we can make a difference'.
- Safeguarding is a high priority of all those working in the centre. Strong partnerships and highly effective use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) ensure that all children identified as in need, those subject to a child protection plan and looked-after children are engaged with the centre. High quality case notes demonstrate how well families are supported in times of crisis and how this support is reduced as families' needs change and they develop skills to support themselves.
- Staff feel valued and well supported in their roles and identify supervision arrangements as being a very positive feature of management. They keep abreast of best practice, undertake useful training to extend their expertise and, as a result, are highly qualified. Staff make good use of the high quality resources and available space, including the use of venues in the community, to provide a variety of groups.

**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>	22632
<b>Local authority</b>	Warrington
<b>Inspection number</b>	433090
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority
<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	2,554
<b>Centre leader</b>	Tracy Collins
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01925 572153
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