

# Ladybird Children's Centre

Westrop Primary School, Newburgh Place, Highworth, Swindon, SN6 7DN

**Inspection date** 19–20 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
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 is a centre that is inadequate.

- The centre has not yet registered enough children living locally, and too few priority families from target groups, particularly lone parents and those living in poverty, use the children's centre services regularly.
- The systems in place to monitor the attendance of priority families are not sufficiently robust and this restricts leaders' and managers' ability to assess needs accurately, shape future services and drive improvements in prioritising and increasing the registration and attendance of target groups.
- The centre does not know how many two-year-olds living in the reach area are eligible for free early education. This is because the local authority does not provide the information that the centre needs to identify these children. As a result, neither the local authority nor the children's centre has an accurate view of how many take up their free entitlement.
- The centre is not playing a strong enough role in supporting children's school readiness or working with early years partners to close the widening gap in achievement between the most vulnerable and their peers.
- Information sharing with health partners is very strong and supports dovetailed services, but is not fully effective with social care.
- Leaders have an overly positive view about the centre's effectiveness because they do not track the quality and impact of services in improving children's and families' well-being rigorously enough. Local authority monitoring lacks sharp focus on supporting the centre's development.
- The centre's development plans lack precision and detail. For example, leaders have correctly identified that the proportion of adults that access further learning or skills training opportunities, including those who are workless, is too low. However, the lack of measurable and achievable target setting and clear timelines for actions impedes the pace of improvement.
- Leaders do not consistently provide one-to-one supervision for all staff, including family support workers, or record the outcomes of the supervision meetings held. Additionally, there are limited checks made on the quality of case files and this restricts the opportunities for ensuring efficient and effective working.

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

- The support provided to the vulnerable families who access centre services, including disabled children, is effective and makes a positive difference to their lives.

## 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 additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with: representatives from the local authority and the advisory board; two governors of the co-located school; the headteacher and centre manager; the staff of the children's centre and co-located pre-school; parents; and a range of representatives of organisations who work in partnership with the centre, including health visitors, midwives and adult learning. They also spoke with parents and the local authority by telephone.

The inspectors visited the two activities delivered onsite, which included the Christmas party. As there were no programmed activities taking place there were no observations jointly undertaken with the centre's leaders.

Inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the development plan, self-evaluation, case files and safeguarding procedures.

## Inspection team

Michael Blakey	Additional Inspector, Lead Inspector
Linda Kaye	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Ladybird Children's Centre opened as a phase three purpose-built centre in 2009 and works with a range of partners to deliver services that meet its core purpose. The centre is attached to Westrop Primary School (URN: 126253), the governing body of which is responsible for its management. An advisory board, comprising parents and partners, is in place to assist governance. The centre also shares its building and outside space with Highworth Pre-school (URN: EY397527). These settings are subject to separate inspections and their reports can be found on [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The centre currently serves the communities of Highworth, Blunsdon, Hannington, Hannington Wick, Hampton, Inglesham, Sevenhampton and Stanton Fitzwarren. There are 485 children under five years of age living within the area served by the centre and approximately 13.3% of these are assessed as living in poverty.

Most of the families living in the centre's reach area are of White British origin. Levels of unemployment and the proportion of families dependent on benefits are below the national average. At 12.9%, the proportion of eligible families benefiting from the childcare element of Working Tax Credit is below the level seen nationally. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years provision are broadly in line with those expected for their age.

The local authority has identified target groups for all its centres as: fathers, teenage mothers and pregnant teenagers; lone parents; Black and minority ethnic families; and disabled children.

From January 2014, the school's governing body will take over formal responsibility for delivering services to families living in the reach area previously served by Saplings Children's Centre, which is closing as a result of local authority reorganisation. At the time of the inspection, staff from Sapling Children's Centre were in the process of transferring to Ladybird Children's Centre.

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

- Ensure that local needs are assessed accurately and increase the registration and access of all target groups, particularly lone parents and those living in poverty, by:
  - making sure that leaders and managers have all the information they need from the local authority to identify the specific geographical areas the centre needs to reach so that almost all children are registered with the centre and priority families are enabled to access appropriate services
  - strengthening the systems and processes used to track the attendance of target groups so that the centre is able to identify and prioritise those families who do not access centre services, particularly those whose circumstances make them particularly vulnerable
  - using accurate information about all two-year-old children living locally who are eligible for free early education in order support their access to good or better quality provision.
- Ensure that services and practices are effective in reducing inequalities and ensuring the well-being of children and families by:
  - shaping services to contribute to children's school readiness and working with partners to close the gap between the lowest achievers and the rest in order to increase the proportion of vulnerable children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
  - enhancing the opportunities for adults, including workless parents, to extend their education and workplace skills and checking up on what progress they make when they access courses
  - strengthening information sharing with the local authority and social care partners to ensure that the centre can make an effective contribution to meeting all vulnerable children's needs
  - establishing a rigorous system to track and monitor the quality and impact of services so that leaders know what is making the most positive difference and can more accurately shape future services to meet priority families' needs.
- Ensure that leadership, management and governance are effective by:
  - making sure that development plans are based on a thorough analysis of local needs and that targets are outcome-focused, specific, measurable, achievable and time limited
  - establishing robust supervision arrangements for all staff
  - sharpening the local authority's monitoring to better support next steps in improvement
  - tightening up the record keeping associated with safeguarding procedures, regularly quality assuring family case files and sharing findings in order to promote efficient working and best practice.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

Inadequate

- The information provided by the local authority about the proportion of families registered and attending the children's centre does not give a clear picture about the attendance of target groups. As a result, centre leaders do not have an accurate view about how well it serves the most vulnerable families living in its reach area, including those expecting children. Data show that the large majority of lone parents and teenage parents do not engage well enough.
- The identification of target groups is not sufficiently grounded in a detailed analysis of local needs in the centre's reach area. As a result, children assessed as living in poverty are not identified as a priority, yet there are a small but significant number of children in this group, and only a minority are registered and have attended services more than twice.
- The centre does not know how many two-year-old children living in the area are eligible for free early education because the local authority does not provide this information. Leaders have been able to find out about a small number through their partnership work with local providers, but are

restricted in working effectively in support of more families by the lack of comprehensive data.

- Information sharing between health services and the children's centre is well embedded and centre staff receive weekly information about all new births. At 56.9%, the majority of children under five years living in the reach area are registered with the centre. Leaders are increasingly using their local knowledge to help extend the centre's reach into the most deprived neighbourhoods to engage with specific target groups, including those who may be less likely to do so.
- Families using the centre say the welcome they receive from staff is 'warm and friendly' and successfully builds trusting relationships. Parents and grandparents speak positively about the impact of family support and children enjoy activities such as the Christmas party.

### **The quality of practice and services**

Inadequate

- The quality and practice of services are inadequate because the centre fails to track and monitor the impact of the services it delivers. As a result, leaders and managers are not able to adequately demonstrate how effective the centre is in improving the well-being of most children and families and reducing inequalities. Leaders and managers have correctly identified that this is an area for urgent development and are implementing systems that have the potential to demonstrate how much individual family outcomes have improved.
- Outreach work is not sufficiently targeted because the centre does not routinely have access to information about registration and participation rates of children and families broken down to local super output areas. This is because the centre is not able to generate its own reports in a timely manner. As a result, registration rates are highly variable from area to area and workers do not know which areas to best allocate home support.
- Not enough children from key target groups are accessing services and, as a result, the centre has limited involvement in supporting their learning, development and readiness for school. The proportion of children living in the area who achieved a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has shown some improvement over time but, at 57.6%, was well below average in 2012. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest is much wider than seen nationally.
- The number of adults accessing further learning or skills based training is low overall. However, programmes such as Parent Power and first aid help improve parenting skills and raise awareness about how to keep children safe.
- Information sharing with social care partners is not fully effective and this impedes the centre's ability to check whether family support staff can contribute further to the work with children in need and looked after children.
- Those families who receive specific support say that without the centre their lives would be very different and they would not have known whom to turn to for help. Parents and grandparents with a wide range of needs, including those who have experienced mental health issues, are helped to improve their lives.
- The wide range of health services delivered from the centre contributes well to the positive health outcomes for children in the reach area. Breastfeeding rates at six to eight weeks are consistently above those seen nationally, and the level of childhood obesity at the end of the Reception year is well below average.

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

Inadequate

- Leadership, management and governance are inadequate because not enough focus is given to ensuring that the needs of priority groups are assessed accurately, services and practices fully meet local needs and that development plans include precise and measurable targets that drive improvement at a good pace.
- Governance arrangements are suitably embedded. The governing body and the advisory board are supportive and minutes show that members ask appropriately challenging questions. However, the local authority's processes to monitor the centre's performance are not challenging enough.
- Self-evaluation processes, including those supported by the local authority, are not sufficiently robust because information, including reach-specific data, is not always made available to the centre or used well to plan and evaluate services.
- Supervision of staff takes place on an ad-hoc basis and is not recorded formally. In addition, family case files are not monitored by leaders and managers to ensure that family support work is the best quality it can be.
- The target groups identified by the local authority on behalf of the centre do not cover some of those most in need, including families with young children assessed as living in poverty in the local area. As a result, the centre has not been effective enough in targeting its resources towards all of these vulnerable families.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are appropriately in place. The centre works in partnership with other agencies to ensure that any risks to children subject to a child protection plan are reduced, but is not fully involved in supporting those in need or looked after. The centre works effectively to ensure that staff training is up to date and vetting checks are robust. However, there have been some gaps in recording these during the current merger of the two children's centres.
- Leaders, managers, centre staff and partners are passionate and highly committed to delivering high quality services for the families living in the local area. Feedback from centre users shows that they enjoy attending activities and appreciate the support provided by the staff.

**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.

**Children's centre group details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	21496
<b>Local authority</b>	Swindon
<b>Inspection number</b>	434445
<b>Managed by</b>	The governing body of Westrop Primary School on behalf of the local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	485
<b>Centre leader</b>	Janet Urban
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01793 762897
<b>Email address</b>	head@westrop.swindon.sch.uk



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