

Warwickshire - Badger Valley and Wellesbourne Cluster

Kineton Road, Wellesbourne, CV35 9NF

Inspection date 14–15 January 2014

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 children's centre group is good.

- In the three years that it has been operational, the centre group has been very successful in securing strong partnerships, building trusting relationships and establishing both centres at the heart of their communities.
- The group has registered the large majority of children and families living in the area, including workless families and lone parents who use services regularly.
- A sensible balance is achieved between activities open to all and those in place to meet specific needs such as improving parenting or helping adults extend their literacy or numeracy skills. The group is sensibly making sure that activities such as 'Stay and Play' take place in a range of locations so that families who otherwise might not access services can do so.
- Family support work is well targeted at the most vulnerable families. Case files are maintained to a good standard, and robust safeguarding procedures ensure that children are well protected.
- Governance is well-embedded and leaders and managers have a thorough understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for development. The staff form a happy and highly committed team who are well supervised and keen to share best practice, and who help to move the group forward.

This children's centre group is not yet outstanding because:

- Not enough eligible two-year olds living in Wellies' reach area take up their free entitlement to early education.
- There is inconsistent follow up of how well children who have accessed centre services achieve relative to their peers at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, and too few checks on how well adults progress after they have completed courses.
- Parents' involvement in decision-making is not strong enough, particularly at Wellies.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children's centre group was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. The centres that form part of this children's centre group are Badger Valley Children's Centre and Wellies Children's Centre.

This inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the Senior Family Support Worker who deputised for the Head of Centre during the inspection, local authority officers, partners, parents, centre users and members of the centre's advisory boards.

The inspectors visited a number of activities held at the centres, including health clinics and visited an outreach session at the Rosebird Centre in Trinity Mead. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Christine Field, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Karen Cooper

Additional inspector

Keith Brown

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the group

The children's centres were designated as Phase 3 centres, formed as a group and opened in March 2011. They are managed by the local authority. A Head of Centre, who was on leave during the inspection, oversees both centres and their small staff teams. Family support work operates across the group's reach area. Each centre has its own Advisory Board. A local authority consultation on the future of children's centres across the county, which commenced last year, is near completion. There is currently a freeze on any new staff recruitment.

Services to meet the group's core purpose run from both centres and in outreach venues in Quinton and Long Compton, Ettington and The Rosebird Centre in Trinity Meads, which is a development of more than 700 private and social dwellings on the outskirts of Stratford-upon-Avon.

Badger Valley children's centre shares a site with Shipston-on-Stour Primary School (URN 125520), and a nurture nursery has been operating on site since September 2013. The school and nursery are inspected under separate arrangements. The area contains extremes of wealth and deprivation, ranging from second homes and large properties to social housing. Public transport in the area is limited; the nearest train station is over eight miles away at Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire. A third of families are assessed as living in isolated communities. Wellies children's centre is located as part of the library in Wellesbourne, a large village which has grown rapidly as a commuter town servicing its larger neighbours Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwick and Leamington Spa.

There are 1,360 children under five years living in the group's reach area. Most families are of White British heritage with a very small number from different ethnic minority backgrounds, including Travelling families living in Badger Valley's catchment. The proportion of children living in poverty is significantly lower than the national average. Children's attainment on entry to early years provision is broadly at the level expected for their age.

Target groups have been identified as: vulnerable children and families, workless families, lone parents and families living in rural isolation.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that most if not all eligible two-year olds living in Wellies' catchment take up their entitlement to early education, and work with partners to give them the very best start.
- Set up a rigorous monitoring system to measure the longer term impact of the group's services on improving the learning and skills of adults who have undertaken courses, and to find out how well target children who attend centre activities achieve relative to their peers by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Strengthen parents' involvement in decision-making, particularly at Wellies, by
 - re-energising the Parents' Forum
 - ensuring parents are active members of the advisory board.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The centres have been very effective in establishing themselves as the hub of their communities and users' satisfaction levels are high. Staff with good support from partners have built an accurate picture of the needs of target families, and have used this to shape and locate services to ensure the large majority access them regularly. The group is rightly prioritising its work to increase the engagement of even more families from Long Compton, Quinton and the most isolated rural localities.
- Through careful planning, the centre achieves a good balance between services that are open to all and those targeted at specific groups such as the 'Welcome Group' for particularly vulnerable and isolated families. Outreach work held in community venues, such as 'Stay and Plays', has been very successful in increasing engagement by families living in Trinity Mead and the most disadvantaged areas of Wellesbourne. The group's approach results in a large number of lone parents and workless families accessing appropriate services.
- Strong partnerships with health professionals, including staff attending baby clinics, mean that most young children and expectant mothers are known and provided with appropriate services, such as 'Baby Massage', that strengthen family bonds.
- There is 97% take-up of free early education for three and four-year olds across the group, and 77% take up of funded places for disadvantaged two-year olds in Badger Valley's catchment. In contrast, at 55% the take up of places by two-year olds living in Wellies is significantly lower, and some concerns have been raised by centre leaders about the shortage of spaces available in good or better quality settings.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- Effective planning and the collaborative use of partners' services mean that the balance, quality, range and relevance of the centre's services are good. The quality of care, guidance and support provided for families is strong, helps reduce inequalities and promotes their positive well-being.
- Services open to all, such as 'Toddler Talk' and 'Chatter Matters', enable staff to identify any delay in children's development, such as for speech and language, at an early stage. Staff role-model positive behaviour very effectively and encourage target children to grow as learners. For example, they build confident speaking and listening skills when using animal glove puppets to help identify the sounds the animals make as they sing 'Old MacDonald had a farm'.
- Outcomes at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage were above the national average in 2013 with more boys and girls than seen nationally achieving a good level of development. Although a useful start has been made at Wellies in keeping checks on target children's progress, and some lovely 'Learning Journeys' are being developed by both centres, there is too little follow up to see what impact the group's work has on their overall achievement once they transfer to other settings.
- Working with its partners, the group encourages healthy lifestyles, and their effective collaboration is clearly reflected in the low levels of childhood obesity and the high proportion of mothers who sustain breastfeeding at six to eight weeks. Parents feel very well-supported in knowing how to keep their children safe and healthy through parenting courses, first aid and physical exercise sessions such as 'Play in the Park' at Trinity Meads and 'Buggy Walks' at Ettington.

- Parents' trust and respect for staff are overwhelmingly positive, especially where families are facing significant challenges in their lives. Case files are well maintained at both centres, and although there is variation in their contents, all include detailed record keeping and show clearly the effective multi-agency work taking place to support all children who are in need, looked after or subject to a child protection plan.
- Centre users make their views known by completing evaluations following the services they use. At Badger Valley some parents have recently formed a fund raising group to support the centre in the face of budget cuts. The Parents Forum at Wellies has been active in the past but is not a strong voice currently; this is a missed opportunity to ensure parents across the group are enabled to have their say.
- Parents take up volunteering opportunities and access a range of courses put on by the adult and community learning service. Retention and success rates are generally positive and feedback from parents shows how much they value the chance to enhance their education and skills. However, the centre is not yet recording its impact in helping meet their needs over the longer term.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Leaders draw well on the range of data to help shape services that respond well to local needs and ensure the efficient deployment of resources. Very strong partnership work brings added value and results in families, particularly those most in need, benefitting from well-planned, well-located, good quality services.
- Local authority monitoring is regular and culminates in an annual conversation that challenges the centre's self-evaluation and sets out next steps development. The system of target setting is well embedded and gives focus to the centre's work to sustain its strengths and make improvements to weaker aspects. In going forward, leaders sensibly realise that further developing opportunities for staff to share best practice will enhance capacity and ensure the group's continuing good pace to development.
- Both centres have well established advisory boards that provide support and challenge, but the one at Badgers Valley is more regularly attended by partners and parents than that at Wellies. The terms of reference for both boards have not been reviewed since 2010, and this is a missed opportunity to ensure that they strengthen parents' representation and involvement in decision-making.
- Safeguarding is a top priority across the group. Staff are quick to spot any concerns, such as any mental health or domestic violence issues. Staff work closely with social care and health partners to give the most vulnerable children and families their full support through the effective use of the Common Assessment Framework procedures and attendance at 'Family Matters' meetings. Children subject to child protection plans, children in need and looked after children are well supported.
- Staff are a happy, highly committed team who say they are well led and managed. Supervision is regular and staff appraisal is viewed as a positive process. Parents and carers speak highly of the staff, and value their friendly approach which nurtures trusting relationships. Parents' feedback responses show high satisfaction rates.

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

Unique reference number	80000
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	430125
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,360
Centre leader	Debbie Muitt
Date of previous inspection	Not Previously Inspected
Telephone number	01789 840528
Email address	debbiemuitt@warwickshire.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- 20165 Badger Valley Children's Centre
- 20005 Wellies Children's Centre

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