

Doddington Green Children's Centre

28 Doddington Grove, Bartley Green, Birmingham, B32 4EL

Inspection date 15–16 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 is a good centre:

- The local authority has a strong commitment to improving the lives of families and children. It provides good support, sets challenging targets which have ensured improvement, and checks closely to make sure the centres deliver high quality services that are matched to users' needs.
- A large majority of the families, including those who have the highest levels of need, engage in the wide range of good quality services which the centre provides. As a result, the centre is working very successfully with its main target groups of children in most need including those living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
- The well-qualified and highly committed staff team along with key professionals work extremely well together to provide a good service to children and families, particularly those most in need.
- The centre provides good care, guidance and support to all parents, particularly those who are most vulnerable. This is achieved through effective one-to-one support and parenting programmes. This builds self-confidence and has resulted in parents' greater resilience and support to their children.
- The one-to-one early help that families receive, often when they have multiple and complex problems, is very effective. Parents speak very highly of the staff and the support they receive across many aspects of their lives, summed up by one parent who said, 'We wouldn't have made it without their help'.

It is not outstanding because:

- The local authority, health services and the centre do not always have information specific to the area that they provide services. This hinders the centre's ability to identify and target those families who are not accessing services, including free early education for two year olds, and identify and address health inequalities across the area the centre serves.
- There are not enough opportunities for workless adults to train or gain skills that will improve their chances of gaining employment or to volunteer. They do not always effectively check the difference they are making for those families who access education and training opportunities.

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 of Her Majesty’s Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders and managers from the local authority and Barnardo’s, centre staff, health, education and social care partners, parents, early years practitioners, schools, training providers, employment partner and volunteers.

The inspectors visited various sites where activities were taken out in to the community, including Milebrook Hall and Holloway Hall. They saw a number of activities, including two ‘Stay and Play’ sessions, childminders network group and observed numeracy course for adults.

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

Inspection team

Sue Crawford	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Jan Smith	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Aileen King	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

The centre opened in 2006 as a Phase 1 centre and was developed from a Sure Start local programme. It meets the core purpose of children's centres. It is situated in the residential area of Bartley Green and it is situated in the city Birmingham. Statistical data indicates that the area is one of high social and economic disadvantage. The children's centre serves a community which is in one of the 30% most deprived areas in the country. The local population is predominantly white British, the next largest ethnic group is Afro-Caribbean, 5% of children live in households where adults are claiming out of work benefits (2011 data) and 27.9% of households have economically inactive adults. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities are much lower than those expected for their age when they enter Early Years Foundation Stage provision.

During the last two years, the Centre has been through a number of changes. In November 2013, Doddington Green was clustered with Weoley Castle Children's Centre which was inspected in February 2011. This is part of the local authority's reorganisation of all children's centres and early intervention services. The centre is currently in the first phase of moving into a locality model with Weoley Castle where services will be split between the two centres. Weoley Castle takes the lead for early years, outreach and new births with Doddington Green leading on family support, health and inclusion. All services are co-ordinated by the strategic lead from the local authority.

Barnardo's are responsible for the management of the Centre with governance arrangements lead by the local authority. A consortium advisory board was previously in place which is moving towards a joint advisory board between Doddington Green and Weoley Castle with parent representatives being at the heart. The centre uses nearby venues to deliver some of its services. Early year's childcare is provided on site by a private provider and is subject to a separate inspection. The inspection report can be found on the Ofsted website www.Ofsted.gov.uk.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Extend the opportunities for more adults, particularly those from workless homes, to improve their economic well-being by:
 - building stronger links with training providers to provide more opportunities for literacy, numeracy and work related skills
 - improving the tracking of adults to show how they gain further skills and qualifications that help them progress to further education and training and employment prospects
 - increasing opportunities for users to engage in volunteering roles in the centre.
- Work with the health partners and the local authority to obtain data to support clear identification and consistent engagement with children and families, particularly those who do not take up their free entitlement to early years funding, those who are obese, from workless households and those who are lone parents.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The large majority of families in the community are registered with the centre and 80% access a range of good quality services and activities that they find interesting and useful. This is because staff know the local community well and plan and provide services that are relevant to families, particularly in the areas of most deprivation.' They are able to accurately identify which families

are not registered enabling them to target those who most need their services.

- Staff use the information well that they collect about local families with young children to provide groups and services which are well matched to their needs. Therefore, families make good use of centre's services and are improving their life chances and well-being.
- A quick phone call or visit when attendance is seen to fall off often reveals underlying problems that the family has been unable to resolve. Families who made their comments known to inspectors spoke highly of centre workers who were said to be, 'a life line', giving help when they most need it.
- The centre is aware of the number of children using their early education funding entitlement. However, the local authority does not give details of those children who are not using their funding so that they can explore why families are not taking up this opportunity. The large majority of three and four year olds use their funding, however only 53% of eligible two year olds accessing good or better provision.
- Good communication exists with health partners, midwives and the designated health visitor. This means that the centre is kept well informed about expectant parents who may need support and all new births in the area. This enables the right support to be planned and delivered, including home visits by family support workers, weekly sessions such as 'Baby Group', and the midwife clinic, to ensure families' well-being and a healthy start in life for young children. Other information is less useful because it is out of date or not available. The good communication with partners ensures that the needs of children and families are identified and met because local knowledge is shared about what services are needed.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- All activities promote children's learning and development effectively. Sessions are productive, well-organised, and adapted to meet children's needs, interests and abilities. Effective partnership work with schools and Early Years Foundation Stage settings in the area helps the children who use the centre to make good progress. Information shows that these children achieve a good level of development from their low starting points. Targeted sessions to boost children's development, such as the 'Little Chatters', have a good impact on improving their skills and, as a result, help to narrow the achievement gap.
- Sessions such as 'Little Graduates' run throughout the holidays to support children's transition on to school. These sessions help parents to feel more confident and give children the opportunity to try out school-type activities, as well as learning about healthy lunch boxes and what to expect when they start school.
- Home visits managed by family support workers provide highly personalised support and access to other services. Staff work well with families, developing trusting and constructive relationships to support improving outcomes.
- The centre provides or signposts families to good quality help and advice on benefits, debt and housing, and some parents have become volunteers in order to prepare themselves for work. However, too few adults are involved in volunteering and as a result there are not as many opportunities for this as there could be.
- Some parents have engaged in adult learning such as numeracy classes, first aid, confidence-building and managing stress. However, the centre does not offer a broad enough range of training, including accredited courses, to help parents to improve their employment readiness. The system to track adults' progress and measure the centre's effectiveness in this area does not provide clear evidence of the individual's learning or whether they went on to further education, employment or training.
- Children and parents engage in a wide range of good quality, well-planned and delivered sessions to support families' well-being, such as 'Stay and Play', 'Creepy Crawlies' and 'Little Chatters'. Parents speak positively about the centres' services and how they are developing understanding of how to support their children's learning, particularly around the importance of physical activity and their communication and language skills.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Leaders and managers, through effective governance, have taken the centre through a period of many changes and staffing re-structures. Leaders have managed this process well, protecting most frontline services and resources. They have a clear vision for the development of the service and communicate this well to all staff.
- Senior leaders have a good understanding of the needs of the locality and use local intelligence well to target key vulnerable groups. They have developed good strategies to engage with those families seen as particularly vulnerable. However, the children's centre does not have access to up-to-date information about the levels of obesity, the numbers of lone parents and children in workless households in the area. In the absence of this information they have developed strong interagency partnerships with key partners to identify and reach out to these children and families.
- The local authority has a range of plans to help improve and develop provision across Doddington Green and Weoley Castle Children's Centres. These plans all link with each other and show a clear pathway from work on the ground to strategic priorities which are overseen by the strategic lead. Methods such as 'challenge visits' are carried out quarterly by the local authority to monitor the quality of the centre's work and the progress towards clearly set targets.
- The advisory group is due to be reformed under the strong leadership of the local authority strategic lead to promote collaboration between Doddington Green and Weoley Castle Children's Centres. The previous advisory group along with the local authority provided the centre with a good level of challenge which has promoted and supported improvement.
- Staff morale is high. They have high aspirations for families and provide good positive role models for them. Appraisal and supervision are very effective in providing support and challenge for staff. Managers provide good staff training and development that equip staff well to deal with the many challenging situations they face each day.
- Partnerships with social care and health visitors are exceptionally strong. They allow staff to identify families quickly and provide an integrated package of care for families and children.
- Parents' views are gathered through various methods and are used well to help shape and evaluate the effectiveness of services.
- The needs of children subject to a child protection plan and children in need are particularly well met and a 'family needs analysis' is used well to coordinate effective early support. Well-organised preventative work with partners, such as those from social care, enhances the centre's ability to help keep families safe. All the required policies and procedures are in place to ensure effective safeguarding practice across all aspects of the centre's work, including those for recruiting and vetting 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

Unique reference number	20965
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	430130
Managed by	Barnardo's on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1797
Centre leader	Yvonne Bacon
Date of previous inspection	N/A
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