

The Key Centre For Children and The Community

Feltham Lane, Frome, Somerset, BA11 5AJ

Inspection date

January 2014

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
		Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Requires improvement	3
The quality of practice and services		Requires improvement	3
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a centre that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- The centre is not making sure that the large majority of families most in need engage in its services. Information regarding who is taking part in the centre's services is not fully accurate. This makes it difficult for leaders to know whether or not they are reaching enough families who most need the centre's help and support.
- Staff do not track the progress of children and families most in need sufficiently or check how successful adults who take part in courses have been in gaining qualifications and employment. As a result, the difference that services are making is not clear.
- Case records do not provide clear enough information to show how and why decisions are made.
- Improvement in the centre is hampered because leaders and managers are not yet setting precise enough targets. They are unable to closely check the quality of the centre's work because information is not always clear or used effectively enough to understand the how well the centre is doing.

This children's centre has the following strengths:

- The centre is a hub of the community. Families who attend the good range of services offered by the centre demonstrate a strong sense of ownership. They develop good support networks and encourage each other to progress.
- Increasing numbers of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve a good level of development. There is a high take up of funded early education in the area, including by families with eligible two-year-olds. Very strong partnerships with local schools ensure children are well prepared when they start school.
- Families receive good care, guidance and support. Staff build strong relationships and know families well. In times of crisis, families confidently turn to staff knowing they will receive the information and help they need. Good support is given to those who may feel isolated or are at risk of developing poor mental health.

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. It was carried out at the same time as other children's centres which were The Bridge Children's Centre.

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 in the local authority, centre leaders, partner agencies including health and social care, parents, family support staff, volunteers and representatives of the advisory board.

The inspectors visited services run at both The Key Centre For Children and The Community and The Bridge Children's Centre.

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

Inspection team

Jane Burchall	Her Majesty's Inspector, Lead Inspector
Jane Neech	Her Majesty's Inspector
Patricia Collis	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

The Key Centre For Children and The Community is a phase two centre situated in Frome, Somerset. The centre works in collaboration with The Bridge Children's Centre, also located in Frome. The centre is managed by the headteacher of Christchurch First School on behalf of the local authority. It shares an advisory board with The Bridge Children's Centre and two other centres in the East Mendip area of Somerset. The centre serves families who live in the town of Frome and outlying villages. It is located on the site of Christchurch First School. The Key Nursery is also run by the school and is situated in the centre building. Both the school and the nursery are subject to separate inspection arrangements and their reports can be found at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>.

Although the area served by the centre is not identified as being deprived overall, there are pockets of deprivation among areas considered to be more affluent. Levels of worklessness vary and many families are in low income employment. Families in outlying villages are at risk of social isolation. Most of the population is White British, with smaller percentages of families from Black and minority ethnic heritage, some of whom speak English as an additional language. There are 927 children aged under five years living locally. Most children in the area start early years provision with skills broadly in line with what is typical for their age, although communication and language skills are often weaker. The centre meet its core purpose by offering a range of services which include health services, family play sessions, parenting programmes, family support and some adult learning. Services are offered from both children's centre sites. Somerset is currently consulting on changes to its children's centre provision.

What does the centre/group need to do to improve further?

- Together with the local authority and partners, improve the accuracy of information so that the centre is able to better identify how well it is engaging with those families who most need help and support and can increase participation rates.
- Carefully check the difference the centre is making to:
 - adults' learning and their pathways to further training and work
 - the lives of families, particularly those most in need
- Improve the quality and management oversight of case files by:
 - ensuring case records are completed accurately and in enough detail to demonstrate how well families are progressing
 - maintaining records of case supervision in greater detail so that there is a clear trail of decision-making.
- Strengthen leadership, governance and management by:
 - evaluating more rigorously how well the centre is doing
 - setting clear, challenging and measurable targets focused upon the priorities for the centre

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Working with partners, the centre has successfully registered the large majority of families who live in their area. The number of families who seek help and support is steadily increasing, particularly in the centre's most deprived areas. High numbers of teenage parents and children with disabilities are using the centre's services. The centre has not had this same level of success in ensuring other groups, such as those in workless households, lone parents and families from minority ethnic heritage, access the services they need.
- Systems to monitor families' access to services are not fully effective. The local authority is developing agreements with partner agencies to ensure that attendance at the services provided is consistently shared with the centre so that leaders have a more accurate picture of how many

families participate in activities.

- Outreach work by the family support team effectively helps those families who may be more reluctant to access the help they need. Work with early years providers to raise awareness of the services on offer has increased the number of families who are now directed to obtain help from the centre.
- Staff work well with a range of professionals to identify individual families who may benefit from early help, including those expecting children. Service requests to the family support team for one-to-one support are processed swiftly so that families receive the help they need as quickly as possible.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- Monitoring of the progress that children and parents make is not fully developed. Assessment and planning are in place for individual families, for example through the use of the Common Assessment Framework. However, staff are not checking closely enough whether the work they do is making a difference. For example, there is limited information about the progress that adults make towards training, gaining qualifications and employment. Case files for those who receive one-to-one support do not clearly show the progress that families are making.
- Effective systems are in place for promoting an integrated approach to meeting the needs of individual families. The Healthy Child meetings and MAISEY panel, for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, enable professionals to come together and identify which families are most in need of help and support and plan how they can work together to help them.
- Activities provided for those families who access the centre are having a positive impact on improving parenting skills. In particular, staff model effectively how to support children's developing language and communication skills and how to positively manage behaviour. As a result, children are more ready for school and gaps in achievements are narrowing well.
- Breastfeeding and healthy lifestyles are effectively promoted. The Breastfeeding Support Group and weekly drop-in sessions for babies are both well attended and are highly valued for the friendly support and advice available. The DASH group, promoting a healthy start to the day through exercise and a balanced breakfast, was very popular and helped parents to make positive changes to their lives.
- Families who use the centre's services show high levels of satisfaction. They truly value the help, guidance and support that they receive. 'The staff gave me constant support – I was a very lost person.' 'Staff are very approachable.' 'They help you along the way.' These were just some of the comments made by parents during the inspection.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- Systems in place to check the impact that services have on the lives of families are not being used well enough so that leaders have a full picture of the quality of services and the difference they make. Not all information is accurate or checked frequently enough to ensure the centre is reaching all families who would benefit from services.
- The local authority checks the effectiveness of the children's centre through an annual review where priorities and areas for improvement are identified. Overall, development plans are focused 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 suitably established. Advisory board members work well with centre staff, drawing on their knowledge of the community to ensure the centre is offering a good range of appropriate services. They are clear on their role and offer some challenge. However, gaps in information mean that they do not have all the evidence they need to fully challenge leaders and hold them to account.

- Leaders give appropriate attention to safeguarding children and their families. Recruitment procedures ensure staff are suitable to work with families and staff and volunteers receive relevant training such as child protection and first aid. Close working with partners, including health and social care, means that those families subject to child protection procedures and the Common Assessment Framework receive support to improve their lives.
- Staff receive regular professional supervision. Work with families is regularly discussed so that staff are supported in the work they do. However, recording on case files lacks detail and does not sufficiently show how and why decisions are made.
- Effective use is made of resources across the two centres in Frome. Leaders from both centres work closely together to ensure families have access to a good range of services and to enable the swift allocation of specific work with individual families.
- Parents are represented on the advisory board. Their views are gathered through feedback, the evaluation of activities and the parents' forum. Parents contribute positively to the running of the centre by volunteering their help in groups and by maintaining the centre's community garden. The parents' forum organises fundraising events to fund extra activities to bring families together socially.

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 details

Unique reference number	23159
Local authority	Somerset County Council
Inspection number	430171
Managed by	Christchurch First School on behalf of the local authority.

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	927
Centre leader	Sarah Bullmore
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01373 453371
Email address	keycentreadmin@educ.somerset.gov.uk

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