

North Barnes Children's Centre

Lowther Primary School, Stillingfleet Road, London, SW13 9AE

Inspection dates	29–30 April 2014
Previous inspection date	26–27 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
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 does not make sufficient use of data to find out about the needs of families in the area it serves. Consequently, resources are not targeted to where they are most needed and too few children and families access the centre's services.
- The centre does not evaluate the impact of its work well enough on those families who access services. As a result, leaders and managers do not have a clear enough understanding of the effectiveness of the centre's work or about how services could be improved.
- The local authority's support for the centre, until very recently, was weak. It has not provided sufficient information about the children and families living in the area the centre serves or challenged leaders fully. Consequently, the centre has been unable to meet the needs of its community.
- Leaders and managers, including the advisory board, have not taken effective action since the previous inspection to improve services. The newly formed advisory board lacks sufficiently wide representation of the community and members are not sufficiently trained to support and challenge the centre's leadership.
- The range of adult learning activities is too narrow. In particular, adults are not developing basic skills quickly and are not prepared well enough for work.

It has the following strengths:

- The committed staff team, many of whom have only recently taken up their posts, are making improvements such as developing partnerships with schools and early years providers. This is contributing to the increasing number of children and families registering with the centre.
- Those families who do access the centre's services praise the quality of care, guidance and support that they receive.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Work with the local authority to:
 - obtain clear and accurate data about the children and families living in the area
 - analyse all of the available data in order to target resources efficiently and increase the engagement of users with the centre, particularly those from target groups
 - use data to evaluate the effectiveness of the centre's work.
- Make governance more effective by:
 - broadening the expertise on the advisory board to include better representation from the full range of stakeholders, including parents and carers
 - ensuring that all members of the advisory board are suitably trained
 - ensuring that the advisory board makes full use of all the available information to evaluate the centre's work and implement improvements.
- Increase the range of opportunities for adults to develop their basic skills and prepare them for work.

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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with: the local authority associate director of early help; the local authority's children's centre services manager, the data officer and early years adviser; the children's centre manager; health and education professionals; partner agencies; representatives from the advisory board, and parents. They also spoke with partner agencies and parents, and looked at outcomes of satisfaction surveys. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including: the centre's action plan, development plan, self-evaluation, safeguarding policy, practice and procedures and children's development records; local authority monitoring reports; and a sample of case studies.

The inspectors visited the main centre and linked outreach sites. Visits to activities were undertaken jointly with the centre manager. The children's centre services manager and children's centre manager attended all team meetings.

Inspection team

Joy Law, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Aileen King	Additional Inspector
Shagufta Shahin	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Barnes Children's Centre is located within Lowther Primary School. It is managed by the local authority and covers the areas of Kew, Mortlake, Barnes and East Sheen (KBMES) to the south west of London. The community is largely residential and is mixed with areas of affluence and deprivation. Housing is predominantly privately owned.

The centre is designated as a stand-alone centre with linked outreach sites. Services are delivered from shared sites with Lowther Primary School (URN 102892) and Windham Nursery (URN 102882). These settings are subject to separate inspections and the reports can be found on the Ofsted website. Services are also delivered from Mortlake Hall, which has received significant investment from the local authority and the Power Station. The Lowther site opened fully in September 2012, although some information technology (IT) facilities were not available until May 2013. The centre aims to meet its core purpose by delivering a range of services and working in partnership with other agencies.

There have been significant changes to the leadership and management arrangements of the centre since the previous inspection. In September 2013, the local authority joined the neighbouring borough of Kingston upon Thames to deliver its children's services. Children's centre provision which sits within the Early Years Service became one service across the two boroughs with one management team overseeing the delivery of services. Since then, senior leaders have identified and established a Strategic Joint Children's Centre Partnership Board, with key strategic leads and partners as members, to oversee the quality of the provision, identify emerging needs and monitor access and impact. The board has: established advisory boards; employed the acting centre manager as a permanent member of staff from November 2014; revised all staffing roles and responsibilities with effect from February 2014, introducing additional roles such as Families Information Officers; and commissioned a new database to enable the staff teams to record and monitor access and attendance.

There are approximately 3,703 children aged from birth to four years living in the area served by the centre. Of these, approximately 299 children live in two of the 30% most deprived areas in England. Approximately 15.5% of the households in the area with dependent children are lone parent families. A very large majority of families living in the locality are of White British origin, and a very small minority of families are from Asian or mixed heritage backgrounds. Approximately 19% of the primary school population speak English as an additional language. There are eight primary schools and one nursery school within the area covered by the centre. Children's skill levels on entry to early years provision are broadly in line with those expected for their age.

The centre's target groups include: families living in the most deprived areas; children aged under one year; children aged under five years subject to a child protection plan; children in need; looked after children and those being supported by the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) procedures; two-year-old children entitled to funded nursery education; and children aged under five years supported through the 'Strengthening Families' initiative.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Inadequate

- Despite an increasing trend in the number of families registered with the centre, registrations remain unacceptably low at 49%. The number of children and families accessing and engaging in services is very low, currently being around 25%. This means that too few children and families, particularly those most in need, are engaging in the range of services available.
- Attendance at sessions varies and, in a few cases, is good. The highest attendance is at universal services such as baby clinics, stay and play sessions and 'Little learners'. The lack of reliable data analysis means that the centre is unable to confirm if families from its target groups have accessed these services or continue to use them. The centre provides antenatal and baby clinics on site, ensuring that those parents expecting babies, and new parents, have access to appropriate services.
- Partners have not shared information with the centre regarding families well. For example: live birth data are unavailable from health; information regarding children subject to child protection plans, children in need, and looked after children has only been made available to this centre in the last month before the inspection; and information from the speech and language therapists about children they have supported has not been shared routinely. Consequently, the centre's ability to analyse the impact of its work on children and their families and identify what their needs are is inadequate.
- Improving networks and partnerships ensure that the very large majority of two-year-old children access their free entitlement to early education.

The quality of practice and services

Inadequate

- Although the centre provides a balance of universal and targeted services, the range is inadequate. This is because the centre does not ensure that what is being delivered meets individual needs well enough. Not all inequalities, particularly for children and families from target groups are reducing quickly enough.
- The range of parenting programmes is adequate. Some of these are run directly by the local authority. However, the local authority does not provide the centre with evaluations of the impact of these programmes on improving the outcomes for those who participate. Consequently, the centre is unable to support parents who attend them in their next steps or tailor services to meet their on-going or wider needs.
- Almost all health targets are met. There is good partnership working with health visitors; partnerships with midwives are less effective, but improving. Mothers identified with postnatal depression are supported well. However, the centre does not have access to live birth data which means it is unable to make contact with these parents at an early stage.
- The range of learning provision for adults is variable in its effectiveness. The programme of activities is not sufficiently informed by reliable information about the needs of the families in the locality. Courses such as 'Financial Management' help parents understand how to manage their finances. Other courses such as 'Paediatric First Aid' improve the confidence of new parents and the well-being of their children. However, courses that would enable adults to improve their education and reduce worklessness are limited. For example, there are no programmes to help parents develop literacy and numeracy skills, gain qualifications or progress into further education or employment.
- Parents speak positively about the care, guidance and support they receive from the centre. Case studies show that the centre supports children and families well in times of need. Activities, such as cookery, promote healthy lifestyles.
- Children behave well and have positive attitudes to each other. They approach adults in the centre with confidence. However, the centre's work to evaluate how well they support children in readiness for school is not sufficiently well developed. There are systems to record what children do in their time during the centre's activities, but these are not used well enough to track progress over time and to plan further learning and development.

- Partnerships are a relative strength of the centre's work. Links with childminders and private and voluntary providers are being developed to improve networking, provision and families' access to services. Partnerships with schools located on the same site as the centre are strong; however, links with schools further afield are less well developed. Strategies are being used to identify and place children in settings appropriate for their age. This is having a tangible impact on the number of families involved in helping their children get off to a positive start.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Inadequate

- The local authority was slow to respond to the recommendations from the last inspection. Consequently, the centre has not improved quickly enough to be having sufficient positive impact on improving the lives of children and families within the locality.
- Action has been taken at a strategic level, such as establishing a strategic partnership and an advisory board, revising staff roles and responsibilities and commissioning a new database. However, actions to improve the provision for families have had too little impact.
- The local authority has set priorities for the centre. As a result, the manager and staff have a clearer understanding of what they are trying to achieve. However, the centre and its partners do not have a shared vision. The local authority has provided good support to the manager to help her develop understanding of her role and to develop new systems and processes. Nevertheless, few of these have been implemented.
- Safeguarding recruitment practices meet requirements and staff are well trained. Children known to the centre who are subject to child protection plans and those who are deemed to be children in need are supported well. However, until very recently, the centre has not received the information it needs to reach all of these families. Staff engage with the CAF but do not initiate CAFs as families identified in need are referred to the family support team.
- The local authority does not provide the centre with all of the data it needs to function effectively. The data it does provide have only been made available very recently. For example, no live birth data are available to the centre; information about children subject to child protection plans, looked after children, children in need, and children eligible for two-year-old funding was only given to the centre in March 2014. Consequently, this has impacted on the centre's ability to support families who are most in need.
- Leaders and managers do not have an effective system to monitor and evaluate the impact of the centre's work. They are developing and beginning to implement a programme of monitoring and evaluation. Service level agreements are being updated to ensure services have data-driven outcomes. The centre does not make effective use of resources to meet the needs of the children and families in the area it serves. This is partly due to the centre's lack of knowledge about the children and families living in the area.
- Staff are suitably qualified. New objective setting and a training plan, linked to the centre's priorities, is planned to be implemented in May 2014. Leaders and managers responsible for managing staff performance have developed new systems and are starting to implement these. It is too early to measure their effectiveness.
- The staff team has come a long way since September 2013. It is described by leaders and partners as being a cohesive and motivated team which is passionate and committed in its work. The centre manager is well respected and highly valued for her contribution.
- A new advisory board was established in September 2013 although too few key partners and parents are involved. Members have not been trained in their role and attendance at meetings, by some partners, is irregular. They have not had access to accurate and relevant management information and had too little involvement in self-evaluation and improvement planning. Consequently, they have not been in a position to challenge and hold the centre to account. The centre manager has tried to develop a parents' forum. However, she has not been successful in achieving this and so parents' voice in decision making remains as a development priority.

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 well-being 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.

Centre details

Unique reference number	20579
Local authority	London Borough of Richmond
Inspection number	442806
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	3,703
Centre leader	Katie Walsh
Date of previous inspection	26–27 June 2013
Telephone number	020 3021 1990
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