

Little Hands Children's Centre

Colley Lane, Halesowen, B63 2TN

Inspection dates 10–11 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Good	2
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 centre's good success is due to the strong drive of the manager and the advisory board to promote continual improvement on their journey to establish an outstanding centre.
- Data and management information are used well to monitor access to services, attendance and participation by families.
- Most families are registered with the centre. The centre is successful in engaging with most of its main target groups of pregnant teenagers, young parents, lone parents, children in workless households and families from minority ethnic groups.
- The highly-skilled staff know the local community well. They thoroughly assess families' needs, provide excellent support and carefully monitor individual progress, particularly to help parents improve their parenting skills and keep children safe from harm.
- Partnerships, particularly with parents and schools, are strong. This ensures parents receive consistent and well-coordinated guidance and support and are well prepared to engage with their children's schools and teachers.
- A clear focus on reducing the number of unemployed adults is having a good impact on raising their aspirations. Consequently, many parents volunteer at the centre, access learning opportunities and subsequently gain employment.

It is not outstanding because:

- Despite some effective partnerships having a positive impact on raising achievement, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development is below the level seen nationally and the gap between the achieving lowest 20% and the rest is narrowing slowly.
- The centre identifies its priority areas for improvement through detailed self-evaluation. However, some targets set are not highly challenging or sharply focused on improving the sustained engagement of some target families and the quality and impact of the services provided.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Together with schools and early years partners, develop strategies to accelerate children's learning and development in readiness for school, particularly in mathematics and literacy, and work effectively to reduce any gaps in their educational achievement.
- Strengthen evaluation and action planning by sharpening the use of highly challenging targets to further drive up the regular participation of families in high quality services and enabling the centre to check closely on the impact of its actions on improving the outcomes for children and families.

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 senior staff from the children's centre and the local authority, and other staff from the centre. Inspectors also met with a range of partners including those from health services, educational and voluntary sector organisations and representatives from the advisory board. They listened to the views of parents.

The inspectors observed the centre's work including a 'Time for Twos teacher led intervention', and a 'Walkers and Talkers' session. They looked at a range of relevant documentation. They looked in detail at a number of case files of children, such as those subject to a child protection plan, those deemed to be children in need and others in receipt of outreach support.

Inspection team

Jean- Marie Blakeley, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Ann Taylor	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Little Hands Children's Centre is a stand-alone centre. It delivers a range of services, including targeted parenting programmes, focused play sessions, on site health clinics, one-to-one family support and adult education classes. The local authority directly manages the centre. An advisory board, comprising key partners and parents, assist in the governance of the centre. The centre shares a site with Little Colliers Neighbourhood Nursery (URN EY287123) and is opposite Colley Lane Primary School (URN 103793), who until recently managed the centre on behalf of the local authority. Both are subject to separate inspections. These reports can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

There are an estimated 1,095 children aged under-five-years living in the centre's reach area which covers 11 super output areas. Five of these are in the top 30% most deprived areas in the country. Data provided by the centre show that 28% of children aged under-five-years live in workless households. Most families living within the reach area are of White British heritage. However, 20% are from minority ethnic backgrounds, the majority of which are from Yemen. Housing is mostly local authority housing with some private owned or rented houses. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge below those generally expected for their age.

Target groups include lone parents, teenage parents, young parents, workless families with young children and minority ethnic children and families.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families Good

- Most families are registered with the centre and the very large majority of targeted families access its services. Thorough initial assessment and the use of a traffic light system of identified needs, enable the centre to use its resources to target its services at those most in need of support.
- Ante-natal and post-natal clinics held in the centre, together with close liaison with health partners, ensure that the centre not only knows about all new births within the area, but also gains an early understanding of the needs of individual families. Parents, including those expecting babies, value accessing health services held at the centre.
- The centre has strong partnerships with schools and early years providers which enable staff to share information and help identify and support parents, particularly those who are reluctant to engage with the centre or other agencies. This helps break down barriers and build trust between parents and professionals.
- Most eligible families take advantage of available funding for nursery places for two-year-old children. In addition, most children access their three- and four-year-old entitlement to early years education.
- The small centre premises are a hub for local families with young children. Whilst the majority of services are rightly targeted at those most in need, a good range of universal services helps the centre to maintain contact with many families. The centre recognises

the need to increase activities focused on helping children develop early mathematics and literacy skills in order to narrow achievement gaps.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The centre provides a wide range of good quality relevant services that balance those provided on a one to one basis with those open to everyone. Services have a positive impact on improving the life chances of families and children's well-being.
- Effective partnerships with adult education providers and voluntary organisations promotes the good development of adults' employability skills which, in turn, helps some gain employment. Adults have good access to training, one-to-one advice on such things as benefits and job applications, and volunteering opportunities that improve their employability skills. A good number gain employment or go on to further training.
- Parents say that they feel relaxed and welcome in the centre. This helps them to share their difficulties and provides someone to whom they can turn to for help and advice. One-to-one support for those in most need, in their own homes or at the centre, is particularly valued and often gives families the confidence to join in sessions and group activities.
- Good opportunities are taken up by parents to improve their parenting skills through well planned courses. Parents who have attended such courses, or had one-to-one support, are very clear about the positive impact it has had on their family lives. In particular, it helps them to develop more positive relationships with their children and to learn how to manage their children's sometimes challenging behaviour.
- The centre meets most of its health targets and is a 'breastfeeding friendly' environment. Although breastfeeding is promoted well at ante natal clinics, the number of mothers that choose to breastfeed their babies is below national averages. However, highly effective support for those that do breastfeed means that the large majority continue until their baby is at least 6-8weeks old.
- A good range of services focus on developing children's independence, personal, social, communication and physical skills and helps them prepare to start school. Parents and children enjoy sessions such as 'Walkers and Talkers'. Nevertheless, although progress of most children is good, it is not exceptional or consistently good across all areas of learning.
- Partnerships with early years settings and schools are strong but the impact on improving the outcomes seen at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage which are lower than seen nationally and work to narrow the gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest is not rapid enough.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The dynamic centre manager is totally committed to making this an outstanding centre. She is relentless in ensuring robust assessment, analysing data, targeting the most disadvantaged families and tracking families' participation. She has built a hard working,

highly qualified and skilled team who have the expertise to respond well to children's and families' needs.

- Data and management information are used very well to monitor access to services, attendance and participation by families. In addition strong partnership work results in families, particularly those most in need, benefiting from a good range of well-planned services.
- Staff regularly seek the views of parents during and following each activity. Parents and carers speak highly of the centre and value the welcoming and knowledgeable staff team. They describe staff as providing 'amazing support' and 'a life line'. Parents are highly involved in shaping services and wider decision-making through their membership of the parents' forum and advisory board.
- Governance arrangements are effective and the advisory board keeps a close eye on the work of the centre, providing good levels of support and challenge. The local authority monitors the centre's performance through regular meetings, checks on participation and engagement levels and through an annual review.
- Safeguarding is given a high priority. Staff vetting procedures are thorough, and training on child protection ensures that staff have appropriate knowledge and skills. Early help procedures and use of the Common Assessment Framework result in the most vulnerable families, including children subject to a child protection plan, children in need and looked after children, being effectively protected.
- Leaders and the advisory board share in the process of identifying priorities and ensure that resources are used efficiently. However, the action plan is mostly focused on increasing participation levels, and targets set are not all sufficiently challenging or sharply enough focused on improving services and the outcomes for children and families.

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.

Centre details

Unique reference number	21812
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	450405
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,095
Centre leader	Caroline Moylan
Date of previous inspection	Not Previously Inspected
Telephone number	01384 815723
Email address	cmoylan@caslon.dudley.sch.uk

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