

Butterflies Children's Centre

Abbey Meads Primary School, Hugo Way, Swindon, SN25 4GY

Inspection dates 24–25 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
		Not applicable	
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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for children and families

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

- Though the numbers are increasing over time, not enough families from all target groups are using centre services. The newly extended reach area has meant there are many more children and families to contact and engage in relevant services.
- The range of adult education, learning and skills services is too narrow, especially for workless and low paid families. There is limited follow up to see how well those who access courses get on.
- The checks on how well target children make progress during activities are under-developed.
- Case files on families' one-to-one support are not all maintained to a good standard, and sometimes the actions taken are not recorded thoroughly enough to assess their impact.
- Until recently, leaders have not had a reliable set of data to assist the centre's development.

The children's centre has the following strengths:

- Leaders have a realistic view of the centre's strengths and weaknesses, and have set clear priorities with appropriate deadlines for managing positive change and driving improvement.
- Governance is well established; the revised advisory board is supportive and challenging.
- Strong partnerships underpin the centre's effective work to improve health outcomes, help children get ready for school and reduce the risk of harm to the most vulnerable children and families.
- Highly effective support is given to families who are facing personal challenges in their lives, particularly those experiencing domestic abuse.
- Parents who use the centre hold it in high regard.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Increase the engagement of families with young children living in the most deprived areas, those who are out of work and lone parents, so that at least the large majority regularly access services.
- With partners, extend the adult learning offer, and find out more about the needs of families who are out of work or on low pay; also ensure that appropriate services that enhance their education, skills and life chances are available, and that outcomes are carefully checked.
- Sharpen the arrangements for checking on how well target children make progress during activities.
- Make sure that all family case files demonstrate best practice in their organisation and recording, and that actions are fully evaluated for impact.
- Move swiftly to make the best use of all data to help meet or exceed the challenging targets in the development plan to assist the centre's rapid improvement.

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 three additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders and managers, local authority officers, partners, parents, volunteers, centre users and members of the advisory board.

The inspectors visited a number of activities held in the centre and at outreach venues. Two observations and the scrutiny of case files were undertaken jointly with centre leaders.

They also looked at a wide range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Christine Field, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Teresa Kiely	Additional inspector
Helen Scott	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Butterflies Children's Centre opened in March 2010. It shares a site and buildings with Abbey Meads Primary School and Little Scholars day care, both of which are inspected under separate arrangements. These reports can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk. The centre offers a range of targeted services for families and children under five years, including family support, children's development, parenting programmes and health services, from three sites: Abbey Meads Primary School, Catherine Wayte Primary School and part of the former Greenmeadow Children's Centre. Additionally, activities open to everyone, for example 'Stay and Play' sessions, are held at schools and other community venues located across the reach area.

The local authority has commissioned Abbey Meads Primary School to manage the centre on its behalf. An advisory board, which reports to the school's governing body, provides governance. The head of service at Butterflies is the headteacher of Abbey Meads Primary School, and day-to-day management is the responsibility of the centre manager. Greenmeadow Children's Centre has very recently merged with Butterflies and this has meant a significant increase in the number of children and families living in the centre's reach area. New staff have been appointed and others, previously at Greenmeadow, have joined the staff at Butterflies.

There are now 2,927 children under the age of five years living in the reach area, which is mixed socially and economically. Most are White British, but Chinese, Japanese and an increasing number of families from Eastern European backgrounds have recently moved into the area. At 10.6%, a below-average proportion of children are living in poverty. However, some 23% of families are eligible for the childcare element of Working Tax Credit, which is above local and national averages. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early education vary but generally are at the levels expected for their age.

Key target groups are identified as: vulnerable children in need, including those subject to a child protection plan; children from minority ethnic families; lone parents; and workless or low income families.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

 Requires improvement

- Registrations are rising. However, the children living in the most disadvantaged communities and those from lone, workless and low income families who use the centre's services are not yet the large majority. The 60% target set for the end of June is unlikely to be met.
- Increasing use is being made of the improving range of data provided by the local authority. It is used to help the centre find out about the needs of local children and families, including those unlikely to attend, and to encourage wider engagement by taking services to community venues.
- The very strong partnership with health professionals is helping the centre extend its reach, including its contact with those expecting children. Three quarters of all newborn babies are already registered with the centre, and early contact enables staff to devise effective packages of support.
- Families from minority ethnic backgrounds make good use of the centre's facilities. For

example, a weekly group, specifically for Japanese parents and children, is very well attended.

- The take-up of early education by two-, three- and four-year-olds is above the level seen nationally. The centre is working with a small number of target children and their parents to provide extra support to help them get ready for moving to pre-school or nurseries.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- There is a reasonable range of services which are well located. However, the centre has yet to ensure that the large majority of children and families from priority groups use them regularly so as to improve their well-being and life chances.
- Case files include well-kept case notes and good evidence of the effective work taking place between professionals in support of families facing complex problems. However, not all files are well organised and some miss out the 'working together agreement' or fail to show clearly enough the follow up on recorded actions and any value added.
- Volunteering opportunities provide parents with good opportunities to run groups and to enhance their existing skills, and some have consequently moved into paid work. Some parents access courses such as first aid which build their knowledge, but those available to extend further education and skills are thin on the ground. It is not clear how the few who accessed the recently run numeracy course got on or what their future learning needs are.
- Parents identify how much their children enjoy attending the 'Stay and Play' sessions which are welcoming, inclusive and friendly. A range of multi-sensory experiences are provided, and clear links to promoting early education are identified in session planning. However, there are no specific objectives set for moving children's learning and development forward, including for target children.
- Though they provide parents with useful ideas to support their child's learning at home, staff's assessments, including those in 'Learning Journeys', lack sharp focus on the progress being made by children from a clear baseline.
- A high number of parents benefit from attending the expertly staffed parenting courses. Participants' feedback shows the positive effect these have in helping them manage their children's behaviour, get into good routines at meal- and bedtimes, and feel much more confident as a result.
- Almost all of the health-specific targets are met as a result of the centre's work with partners such as the 'Breastmates' group which promotes breastfeeding. Early education outcomes are also good as the gap between the lowest-achieving children and others is narrowing more quickly than seen nationally. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development is higher than the national average.
- Family support work is very effective, with robust information sharing between different agencies, including social care, ensuring a strong safety net of support for the most vulnerable children and families, particularly the high number suffering from domestic abuse. Parents who told inspectors 'their story' spoke about the highly respectful and trusting relationships built with staff that help them get back on track and live more positive lives.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Leaders have placed the centre firmly on an improving course following a period of significant change, particularly in recent months. They have already nurtured a well-bonded staff team who between them have the right experience and skills to play a full role in

meeting the challenges ahead. Leaders have an accurate view of what the centre does well and which aspects need more work, and this is reflected in the well-focused priorities and challenging targets in the development plan.

- Governance is effective. The advisory board, which has met twice in its current form, provides support and acts as 'critical friend' in equal measure. Membership includes a wide range of partners and parents who have a clear picture of the centre's performance and are committed to steering it towards good effectiveness quickly.
- The local authority has moved forward in establishing a reliable data set that centre leaders are using with increasing confidence to support decision making concerning access and services. There are still some gaps, for example in information sharing at the strategic level between social care and Jobcentre Plus, but in the main the centre gets around this and gathers information and local knowledge with the help of partners. The local authority keeps a close eye on how well the centre is meeting agreed targets and through regular visits provides constructive challenge to help reduce inequalities.
- Safeguarding is central to the centre's work, which places children and their well-being at its core. Lessons learned from a local case review inform daily practice, which is also supported by rigorous early help procedures. Effective multi-agency work ensures that looked after children, children who are subject to child protection plans and children in need are all known to the centre and receive coordinated support.
- Resources, including the new, much healthier budget, are managed efficiently. The staffing level has just been completed following the merger of the two centres in April. Premises suitable for outreach work in the Redhouse area are proving hard to find but the centre is working proactively to overcome this temporary barrier.
- Parents make their views known through a variety of means and there are examples of changes to services as a result. The most recent annual survey identified that some families are still unsure about what the centre has to offer, but work is well under way in marketing to raise awareness, by a range of methods including leaflet distribution and the very well-used Facebook page.

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	22188
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	442865
Managed by	The governing body of Abbey Meads Primary School on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	2,927
Centre leader	Tanya Parkinson
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