

Warwickshire - Rugby Rural Group

(Rugby Rural Group), Scholars Drive, Rugby, CV22 7GU

Inspection dates

Previous inspection date

1–2 July 2014

Not Previously Inspected

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

Requires improvement

3

Summary of key findings for children and families

This group of centres requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Some of the extensive data provided by the local authority is unclear, and the local authority does not help the governance, leadership and management to understand or use the data to check if enough families access the group's services, and what impact these have on their lives.
- The improvement targets agreed with the local authority often do not help the governance, leadership and management to measure how well they are improving.
- The centre group cannot show their specific contribution to children's readiness for school because they have only recently started tracking children's progress.
- There are too few opportunities for adults to engage in adult learning or volunteering opportunities.
- There is a conflict of interest in the centre group manager holding the role of chairperson of the advisory board.
- Not enough parents take an active role in making decisions about the centre group's services.

It has the following strengths:

- Good sharing of information with health partners helps staff register families from pregnancy onwards and the large majority of targeted families are registered and engaged with the centre group services.
- The group is making a strong contribution to the good health outcomes in the area.
- Outreach staff work regularly with the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community.
- Good quality teaching and modelling of good practice by staff helps children to make good progress in their learning and development while attending the sessions.
- Case files are well-written, take families' views into account and are monitored well.
- The manager has maintained a useful mix of universal and targeted services in a period of significant change, despite budget cuts and staff shortages.

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

Improve governance, leadership and management by:

- improving the clarity, relevance and usefulness of data provided by the local authority and support the centre group manager to make effective use of data to monitor the access and overall engagement of children and families and their outcomes
- using the data to agree precise targets with measurable success criteria against which the extent of the centre's improvement can be assessed
- appointing an independent chairperson to the advisory board to ensure that board members can objectively challenge and hold the centre group to account for its work
- continue to increase the numbers of parents, including those from target groups, who are meaningfully involved in making decisions about the development of services.
- Improve the way the centre group systematically tracks the progress of children of families who use their services, and how they work with local schools to identify children's levels of entry, so that the leadership, governance and management can show what contribution the group is making to children's readiness for school.
- Establish more robust methods to identify and meet the learning and development needs of parents, and increase their opportunities to volunteer, in order to help them improve their employability and the future economic well-being of their families.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children's centre group 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 one Additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre group manager, a representative from the local authority and a representative of the advisory board, partner agencies and parents.

The inspectors visited the Cawston Grange Children's Centre, Dunchurch Children's Centre and Wolston Children's Centre. They also visited a session at Bawnmore School delivered by centre group staff.

The inspection covered Cawston Grange Children's Centre, Dunchurch Children's Centre and Wolston Children's Centre.

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

Inspection team

Linda McLarty

Her Majesty's Inspector

Derrick Baughan

Her Majesty's Inspector

Georgina Beasley

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the group

The Warwickshire Rugby Rural group of children's centres comprises Cawston Grange Children's Centre, Wolston Library and Children's Centre and Dunchurch Children's Centre. All of the centres are open part-time. They share leadership, management, and a joint advisory board. Governance is provided by the local authority. From September 2014 Barnardos will be commissioned by the local authority to deliver the services of this group.

Cawston Grange is co-located with Cawston Grange Primary School and acts as the hub because it is the largest centre in the group. Also on site are linked early years provider Blue Strawberry Kids Daycare. The local authority deems Wolston Library and Children's Centre (based in a room in Wolston Library) and Dunchurch Children's Centre (located in a room in the Bawnmore Community Infant School) to be satellite outreach venues.

The schools and day care were not part of this inspection and their reports are available at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

The three centres serve rural communities of relative affluence, each ranked within the 70% least deprived in the country. They have worked together as a group since April 2014.

There are 1,568 children aged from birth to four years living in the reach areas of the three centres. Children generally enter school-based, early years provision with skills and capabilities at or above the levels typically seen for their age.

The priority target groups for the centre are children under five years of age from low-income families, children under five from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller heritage, children under five at risk of communication delay and two-year-old children in receipt of education funding living in the reach area.

Across the group, the centres serve areas in which the majority of the population is of White British heritage, with Asian families comprising the most prevalent minority ethnic group. Unemployment across the group's reach areas varies, but averages out at 1.2% and approximately 15.3% of families are in receipt of benefits.

The group offers services which comprise a mixture of universal and targeted provision delivered on-site, in the community and through outreach. Services include baby clinics, baby massage, stay and play sessions, Chatter Matters and speech and language sessions. The group offers family support, parenting courses and adult learning, and support to early years settings in the private and voluntary sector.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- The group has registered the large majority of families in the combined reach area. Staff monitor the active engagement of priority target groups and work hard to encourage those families who are less likely to do so to use services.

- Staff give priority of access to their services and activities to the target families, for example, those with low incomes, or children with communication delay. This further increases participation, and activities are tailored to the families' interests and needs, although all sessions also have a strong emphasis on improving communication skills.
- The group work well with health colleagues to share information which enables them to make contact with families from pregnancy onwards. However, the manager and local authority acknowledge that arrangements to accurately measure the percentage of families in the general community who regularly use the group services are much less systematic than those to monitor the participation of target families.
- Outreach work is effective. Staff have secured the confidence and trust of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families and deliver services on the Wolston site regularly.
- Take-up of funded nursery education for three and four-year-olds is high, and the number of children aged two who are in receipt of a funded nursery education place is increasing rapidly, with the result that most eligible two-year-olds now take up their entitlement.
- The staff are committed to providing equal opportunities for all their families and children. Their warm welcome and diligent following-up of non-attendance at courses and activities is helping to increase the numbers of targeted families engaging with services. The care, guidance and support offered are good, which further encourages those families who need the services most to attend regularly.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The centre group manager has maintained a relevant balance of generally good quality universal and targeted services which is responsive to families' needs and interests. This is despite part-time opening hours and recent cuts to services and staff. The manager and the local authority recognise that there is a lot more work to do to increase adult learning and volunteering opportunities, and have made this an ongoing priority in their development plan.
- Although employment is high in the reach area, staff are aware of the small pockets of relative disadvantage and target their outreach work there. In the last year 39 of 43 parents completed the evidence-based parenting courses which are delivered by staff both at the centres and in the family homes. This contributes to raising parents' awareness of how to keep families safe and well.
- The centre group is contributing well to improved health outcomes in the reach area and a much higher percentage of children enter Reception Year with a healthy weight than is seen nationally. More mothers continue to breast feed their babies than is the case across Warwickshire.
- The proportion of children across the reach area who attain a good level of development as measured by the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scores is close to or above local and national averages. The achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and their peers is narrower than that seen nationally. However the group cannot demonstrate their contribution to these good educational outcomes because

tracking is not yet used for all children of families using centre group services, and is still at an early stage of development.

- Teaching is generally of good quality and children who attend sessions such as 'Cawston Caterpillar's make good progress while in the sessions. The group is not working with local schools to compare the levels on entry of children of families using group services, with their peers. Consequently the centre cannot show what difference they are making to children's school readiness.
- Case files are completed in detail and are a very clear record of interventions and their impact on the lives of families. Records are routinely audited with helpful and developmental comments for staff. Support is tailored to need and families' progress is tracked well. Early intervention and targeted activities and services are helping to reduce inequalities in the area.
- Not enough parents systematically contribute to the development of activities, despite many attempts to encourage parents to join a forum or participate in the advisory board. Past use of questionnaires indicates high levels of satisfaction, but opportunities are missed to invite parent's contributions to shaping services. The manager has identified this as an ongoing area for improvement is now using the group's Facebook site to solicit parents' views.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The hardworking, dedicated centre group manager has successfully increased the engagement of target families and maintained a strong staff team during a time of significant change. She has managed this in the face of challenges, including cuts to the budget and reduced staffing, the resulting reduction in the range of services, and the uncertainty around the tendering process which resulted in Barnados being commissioned to deliver the group's services from September 2014.
- Her careful deployment of staff and resources, for example in well-planned outreach work, has helped to remove barriers to the engagement of children from priority groups who need the services most.
- The manager demonstrates a sound capacity for improvement in her very honest identification of the areas for improvement. However, the evaluation of the group's strengths and overall effectiveness by the local authority and the manager is not systematically based on convincing evidence of the impact services have and is over-generous.
- Governance at local authority and advisory board level requires improvement. The local authority is increasingly challenging and holds the manager to account for the impact of the group's work on the community it serves. However, the authority does not support the manager enough, for example, by providing relevant data in a manageable format or responding to requests for training in the analysis and use of this data.
- Data are also not used well to set measurable targets with clear success criteria, in order to help the manager, advisory board and local authority to gauge the extent

of progress towards meeting identified goals. There is a conflict of interest in the manager also being chairperson of the advisory board, and therefore holding herself to account for the impact of her centre group's work. Too few parents are meaningfully involved in decision-making about all three centre's services, including parents from the priority target groups.

- The performance management records indicate that the manager is highly supportive of her staff during this time of change, and continuous professional development arrangements are securely in place. Resources are being used efficiently.
- Safeguarding arrangements are secure, with good partnership working around early intervention to reduce the risk of harm to children. The progress of children subject to child protection plans or Common Assessment Framework procedures is monitored carefully. The safeguarding policies and procedures are understood well by staff who are trained to the appropriate level to support their roles and responsibilities.

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.

Group details

Unique reference number	80066
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	442741
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,568
Centre leader	Sheree Bailey
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01788 579488
Email address	shereebailey@warwickshire.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- 20588 Cawston Grange Children's Centre
- 20219 Dunchurch Children's Centre
- 23640 Wolston Children's Centre

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