

Waterloo Children's Centre

Crosby Road North, Waterloo, Liverpool, Merseyside, L22 0LD

Inspection dates	8–9 July 2014
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
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 has been very successful at increasing the number of families who are registered. The large majority of those who are most in need of support and those who live in the most deprived areas are accessing and make good use of the services that the centre delivers.
- Highly committed centre staff provide a good level of individual care, guidance and support to families both in the centre and through one-to-one support in families' homes. Parents speak highly of the centre and describe it as a 'welcoming and safe environment'. Typical comments include, 'The centre has helped to build my confidence as a parent and kept me sane.'
- The centre has a good impact on the health, general well-being and achievement of children and their families because it provides a wide range of good-quality services. It is particularly successful at narrowing the achievement gap for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and at helping parents to increase their confidence levels.
- Strong leadership and management coupled with effective governance are the driving forces behind the good quality of practice and services and the centre's good capacity to sustain further improvement. Leaders' good community knowledge means that they know what is working best and where scope for improvement lies.

It is not outstanding because:

- The systems for monitoring and tracking the progress of children and those adults accessing further education or employment are not sufficiently developed to demonstrate fully the impact of the centre's work.
- Data provided by the local authority, particularly on some families identified by the centre as in most need of their services and in relation to key health information, are not always sufficiently accurate and up to date to give centre leaders a clear picture of the full impact of their work. Priorities are clear, but improvement targets lack precision and clear timescales to achieve and this hinders sharper evaluation.
- Quality assurance monitoring systems are not yet embedded sufficiently well. Consequently, leaders cannot be fully confident that all services and activities are delivered to a consistently high standard.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Demonstrate that outcomes are improving for the majority of families by:
 - extending further the tracking of adults' progress to show qualifications achieved, employment gained and to demonstrate the impact of learning on their longer-term economic well-being
 - monitoring more closely the progress that children make at the centre.
- The local authority should work more effectively with centre leaders, with the governing body of Waterloo Primary School and with the advisory board to improve the monitoring and evaluation of the centre's work by:
 - ensuring that all data, particularly on families identified by the centre as in most need of their services and key health information are accurate and up to date so that these give a clear picture of the engagement levels and impact of services on families' lives
 - establishing clear and measurable performance targets in all aspects of the centre's work, with clear timescales by which leaders can check the progress being made towards achieving its priorities
 - developing the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the quality of all centre services.

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 the children's centre manager, headteacher and school governor of Waterloo Primary School and officers from the local authority. They also held meetings with centre staff, parents, members of the advisory board and a number of partners, including health, education and children's social care professionals. Centre leaders took part in joint observations with inspectors.

The inspectors visited a number of sessions held during the inspection, including 'Rhyme Time', 'Baby Group', 'Baby Massage', 'Preschool', the 'School Readiness project' and a parenting course. They also involved the children's centre manager and headteacher of Waterloo Primary School in all team meetings.

They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation, such as the centre's self-evaluation, development plan, a sample of case studies, parent evaluations, key policies and the centre's equality and safeguarding procedures.

Inspection team

Tara Street, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Qaisra Shahraz Ahmad	Additional inspector
Elaine White	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Waterloo Children's Centre is a stand-alone centre which includes Thornton and Valewood sites. It offers a range of services including child health services, family play sessions, parenting programmes, adult education, family outreach, crèche facilities and a sensory room. Staff work across all three sites and also deliver services from community venues.

There are approximately 1,933 children aged under five years in the reach area, of whom 27% live in the 0–30% most deprived areas in the country. Families identified by the centre as in most need of their services include: fathers, multiple-birth families, lone parents, workless households, children with additional educational needs and those families identified as in the greatest need. A very large majority of families are White British with a small, minority ethnic community. Housing is mostly private rental with some pockets of high affluence. Free school meal take-up is 13.6% and 38% of children live in households dependent upon workless benefits. Most children enter early years provision with knowledge and skills that are below those typical for their age. There are links to the 11 local primary schools and the centre's childcare provision is delivered by Fun 4 Kidz Mobile Crèche and Next Steps Community Nursery. These are subject to separate inspection arrangements and the reports are available on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Governance of the centre is provided by the governing body of Waterloo Primary School on behalf of the local authority, in conjunction with an advisory board that includes representatives from the centre's partners and parents.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The very large majority of children and families in the area are registered with the centre and have good access to the wide range of services offered across the three sites. Active involvement in the local community, including partnership work with health professionals, social care and schools ensures that the staff are made aware of families, including those expecting children, that are in the most need of their services.
- Staff work hard to involve families who fail to participate regularly. This has resulted in a positive increase in the number of families accessing the services, including lone parents, those living in areas where there is most economic hardship, children with additional educational needs and those families identified as in the greatest need. This considerably improves their outcomes, personal circumstances and helps to reduce barriers to future success.
- Families benefit from a good balance of targeted support and access to the universal services offered by the centre and its partners. Home visits are aimed at reducing inequalities for families and they form part of the centre's effective outreach work. Highly committed staff provide good support, care and guidance in the home to assist families who are most in need and find accessing the centre difficult. This includes parents with twins and triplets and young mothers.
- The vast majority of three- and four-year-olds and the very large majority of eligible two-year-olds are accessing their funded early education place in the range of good and better early years provision in the area. This is as a result of the concerted effort of centre staff, in partnership with the local authority school readiness team, to encourage and support families to take up their place.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The range and relevance of universal and targeted services offered by the centre are good. As a result, families are highly satisfied with the quality of services offered and the take-up by families most in need is high.
- Groups such as the 'Little Owls After-School Club' and 'Intensive Interaction' sessions have effectively supported families whose children have additional educational needs. The 'Multiple-Birth Group' and 'Dad's Club' sessions also help to deepen family relationships. For example, dads commented, 'We do loads of activities such as healthy cookery, planting and growing and make things with the kids' and 'It's great to see granddads and uncles as well as dads and I have made so many friends.' These services effectively reduce inequalities and improve the well-being and lives of families who attend.
- Staff offer good-quality advice to families about leading healthy lifestyles. As a result, the number of mothers smoking during pregnancy is below both the local and national averages and the number of mothers choosing to breastfeed is the highest in Sefton. A strong drive is in place to promote more active lifestyles through, for example, 'Little Fishes Swimming', 'Buggybooty' and 'Outdoor Play' sessions. However, health partners do not provide the centre with regular, updated information to enable staff to monitor and measure more effectively the impact of their work.
- Through strong partnership with local schools, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development is above both local and national averages. Work on enhancing children's speech and language skills carried out through groups such as 'Rhyme Time' and the 'School Readiness project' has ensured that children's skills on entry to nursery are continuously improving. As a result, the achievement gap is narrowing. However, the introduction of 'learning journeys' to record the progress that children make during sessions at the centre is still very new. Staff are therefore not sufficiently able to demonstrate the full impact of their work.
- Parents are well supported to become volunteers and to access a wide range of further education courses. These include short courses such as food hygiene and floral art and accredited teaching assistant courses, as well as mathematics and English. However, systems to track adults' progress and check if they go on to any further training or employment are in early stages of development. As a result, the centre is unable to demonstrate fully the impact of this learning on adults' longer-term economic well-being.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management**Good**

- The leadership team has high ambitions to make the centre the best it can be and it has the full support of the highly committed staff in meeting local families' needs. Everyone is involved in reviewing what is working best and readily changes tack when new developments are identified. The management and deployment of resources are effective and efficient, and financial monitoring is rigorous.
- Staff are well supported in their roles through regular supervision and appraisal arrangements. This enables leaders to address any individual issues of underperformance quickly. Staff are well qualified, keep abreast of best practice and undertake useful training to extend their already good levels of expertise. However, quality assurance monitoring of centre sessions is not carried out regularly. It is not yet sufficiently embedded, and is not always linked well to professional development. Consequently, centre leaders cannot demonstrate that activities and services are consistently good and improvements in practice are not routinely evaluated to assess impact.
- The local authority checks the centre's performance through an annual conversation. However, data provided by the local authority about some target groups and key health information are not always accurate or up to date. As a result, they do not always give a sufficiently clear picture of the full impact of the centre's work on local families who have been identified as particularly vulnerable.
- Governance arrangements are clearly understood. The advisory board contains a good mix of committed professional partners and representatives from the local community. The board receives a good range of information about the centre's work and how well the performance of staff is managed. Together with centre leaders, governance has a clear knowledge of the strengths and priorities for development. Leaders make good use of the available data to help their understanding of the local area and the issues affecting families, and of how effectively the centre is reducing inequalities for children and families. However, the absence of precise, measurable targets in the centre's annual conversation and development plan hampers leaders and advisory board members from monitoring even more effectively the impact of centre's services.
- Staff take their duties relating to safeguarding very seriously. Policies and procedures are thorough; the Common Assessment Framework process is used well to assess need and to decrease levels of risk. Family case files are maintained to a good standard by staff. They clearly record positive improvements in mental health, parenting skills and the safety of families. The centre provides good support for looked after children and their carers as well as children who have been identified as in need or who are subject to a child protection plan. This is helped by effective working relationships with colleagues from social care.

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	23458
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	447511
Managed by	The governing body of Waterloo Primary School on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,933
Centre leader	Mrs Anni Quinn
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0151 928 6539
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