

# Tilehurst and Area Children's Centre

Warbrick Drive, Tilehurst, Reading, RG31 6FE

<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 July 2014
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b> Previous inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
		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 children's centre manager makes good use of the information provided by the local authority about families that live in the area to plan good quality services and activities.
- Parents like the centre's positive atmosphere and the approachability of staff. As a result, they enjoy coming to the centre and are confident to ask for help and advice.
- Staff give families experiencing difficulties in their lives good care, support and guidance and ensure that they get the precise help that they need.
- Good partnerships with local pre-schools and schools ensure information about children's learning and development is used effectively to prepare children well for school.
- Local authority specialists and staff give excellent early support to the parents of disabled children and those who have special educational needs to ensure they are ready for school.
- Parents make a strong and active contribution to the running of the centre through the parents' forum and the frequent opportunities to give feedback after sessions.

### It is not outstanding because:

- The health partnership has only recently shared information about new births in the reach area and so the centre has not been able to ensure that all new parents know about, and benefit from, its services and groups until recently.
- The centre and the local authority do not know whether all eligible two-year-olds take up a funded pre-school place and do not check with enough rigour that they are subsequently making good progress.
- The advisory board is not fully effective in challenging the centre about its performance.

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

- The local authority should agree a set of rules with health partners for sharing information about new births in a format that enables the centre to sustain its ability to promote its services and groups to all new and expectant parents.
- Encourage parents of all eligible two-year-old children to take up a funded pre-school place and then track their progress to measure the benefit to their learning and development.
- Review the work of the advisory board to maximise the impact that it has in challenging the centre's performance.

## 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 centre staff, parents, health, education and community partners, and representatives of the parent and carer forum, the advisory board and the local authority. They took account of responses in the centre's recent parent survey and parents' feedback after groups.

The inspectors visited the childminders' drop-in group, and Stay, Play and Learn groups at the centre, and the Bumps and Beyond outreach group. The lead inspector observed the Little Learners group with the centre manager.

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

## Inspection team

Georgina Beasley

Additional inspector

Megan Dauksta

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Tilehurst and Area Children's Centre serves an urban population on the western fringes of Reading. It was designated in 2009. There are currently approximately 870 children under the age of five living in the centre's reach area. Almost all families are White British; about 5% are from a number of different minority ethnic groups. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills, knowledge and abilities that match those typical for children of their age. There is no onsite childcare or pre-school provision.

The centre is governed and managed directly by the local authority. The centre works closely with Calcot, Theale and Area and Pangbourne Children's Centres to provide a range of groups and services at the centres and at outreach venues in Purley on Thames and Birch Copse. It shares an advisory board with Calcot, Theale and Area Children's Centre.

The proportion of families on benefits is low; unemployment is low and around 300 of children live with a lone parent. The number of looked after children and children subject to protection plans is low. Housing in the area is a mix of owner-occupied, privately rented and social housing.

The centre has identified its target groups as new parents, children eligible for a two-year-old funded place, disabled children and those who have special educational needs and families who live in Purley on Thames.

### Inspection judgements

#### Access to services by young children and families Good

- The centre promotes its services and groups effectively to families and children who live in the area. Registrations have increased every year since the centre opened and now most families are registered.
- A large majority of families regularly attend groups and events and access the services offered. A large majority of families attend the outreach group at Purley on Thames in response to an identified need to extend services to this area.
- Assessments under the Common Assessment Framework are carried out in a timely manner to identify the needs of children at a young age and ensure effective early support is put into place. A very high proportion of parents with disabled children or with special educational needs attend centre groups such as Sunshine and Showers to meet with specialists and to discuss their children's specific needs.
- The centre responds quickly to give families experiencing difficulties targeted and effective support. Parents who have received support value the difference it has made to their own and to their children's lives.
- There are good facilities for families to access financial advice and adult education, including courses in English and mathematics. Families receiving benefits are fully aware of the support on offer, so that those looking for work or further education are able to make informed choices.
- The centre has been able to increase dramatically this year the number of expectant and new parents registering with the centre and attending postnatal groups such as Bumps

and Beyond and other services. This is because it received information about new births in the area from its health authority. This is not a formally agreed set of rules; discussions are taking place about whether this information will be made available every year.

- A very large majority of families with three-year-old children have taken up pre-school places this year. The local authority and centre are not clear enough whether two-year-old children who are eligible have taken up their free pre-school place this year.

### **The quality of practice and services**

Good

- Parents say that the centre is a hub for meeting other families and for making friends. Relationships with staff are good, which is reflected in the centre's positive atmosphere. Everyone receives a warm welcome and receives good quality services until their needs are met.
- The centre uses the information that it receives from local schools about children's levels to plan activities that are successfully closing any gaps in the learning and progress of different groups. More children than nationally reach the levels expected for their age in all areas of learning and development. More children who live in the most deprived households reach the levels expected for their age than similar groups across the rest of the country. Boys and girls do better than boys and girls nationally.
- Following a detailed analysis of attendance and of the needs of families that lived in Purley on Thames, a large majority of families and children from this area now attend Purley playtime and centre groups.
- Parents with a disabled child and/or special educational needs value the excellent care, support and guidance that they receive from centre staff and local authority specialists. As a result, they have an excellent understanding of their children's needs and how to manage their children's behaviour and support their learning and development.
- Several courses run by the centre and local authority partners enable parents to improve their skills in a variety of areas, including Boost for personal development, helping children in school, and cooking well on a budget. Many go on to attend other courses, to find new or better paid jobs or volunteer in the centre or within the community.
- The proportion of new parents breastfeeding at six to eight weeks is close to the local average. The proportion of children identified as obese in the Reception year is below average. Good links to the council's benefits officer have resulted in improved economic circumstances for those families with an identified need.
- Children who attend centre groups make good progress, as shown in the learning journals completed by staff and parents together. The centre is only just starting to track the progress of children who have attended centre activities to the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage to measure the impact of its work on children's progress over time, including those who take up a funded two-year-old place.

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

Good

- The local authority and centre manager know the centre's strengths and areas for improvement well. Information about services and groups is shared at regular meetings with the advisory board, so that members know what is going well and what needs to be improved. The information is used well to deploy the small number of part-time staff effectively and efficiently.
- The local authority works closely with the children's centre manager to agree

improvement targets for the manager's performance management. These are linked to those in the centre's development plan, in response to a detailed and accurate analysis of the centre's performance. The centre manager, partners and local authority meet regularly to review the targets and to make any necessary changes to improve further services and groups.

- Parents make a good contribution to the running of the centre. A newly formed parents' forum is helping to extend the range of activities on offer, for example by funding and arranging educational visits and coffee mornings. Feedback from surveys and during activities is used to plan additional activities that respond to children's interests as well as parents' requests.
- Arrangements for managing the performance of staff are good. Staff have regular conversations with the centre manager to check that the quality of services and groups are making the planned difference to families' and children's lives. Consequent training is delivered. The centre provides a structured programme of supervision and development to volunteers that enables them to extend their skills and to improve their employability.
- The centre manager has good oversight of case files which are kept to a high standard. All cases are discussed fully and detailed actions planned to ensure continued good support. Disabled children, those who have special educational needs and the very small number subject to care plans are extremely well supported by the centre and its partners.
- There are robust systems for ensuring that staff know, and follow consistently, procedures for safeguarding children and adults. In the recent survey, 97% of responders said that they felt safe. All parents follow the procedures for signing in and out of the building and understand the policy for taking photographs and using mobile phones.
- The advisory board meets regularly and always has enough members attending to make decisions about the centre's work. Information about the difference that the centre is making to the lives of families and children is shared by a number of health, school and community partners. There is little evidence that board members ask the centre challenging questions about its performance.
- The local authority gives good support, but has been slow to establish a formal protocol with health partners for the sharing of information about new births. Information about the take up of a funded place by eligible two-year-olds is not always shared quickly enough to enable the centre to contact those families who have been slow to take up a place.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	23319
<b>Local authority</b>	West Berkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	451742
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority
<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	870
<b>Centre leader</b>	Carole Cowen
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01189 413680
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