

# Aylesbury (Quarrendon) Children's Centre

Jonathan Page Community Centre, 147 Meadowcroft, Aylesbury, HP19 9HH

<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 July 2014
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b> Previous inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
		Not applicable	
Access to services by young children and families		Inadequate	4
The quality of practice and services		Inadequate	4
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Inadequate	4

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This is a centre that is inadequate

- Too few families use the centre services regularly, particularly from priority groups. Attendance levels at some activities are too low.
- Just over a third of eligible two-year-olds do not take up their free nursery entitlement.
- Immunisation rates have decreased and are not high enough.
- There are not enough opportunities for adults to access courses that help to improve their long-term employability.
- Information on priority groups is not always up-to-date, clearly presented and fully checked, in order to provide centre leaders and the advisory board with a clear picture of the impact of services on families in most need.
- Systems for senior leaders to monitor the quality of the centre's work have been strengthened, but have yet to bring about the necessary improvements.
- Recent leadership and management changes along with staffing issues have prevented staff from being able to deliver high-quality services.
- The advisory board has not been effective in holding the centre to account.

### It has the following strengths:

- The acting centre leader has made positive changes to the leadership of the centre. She has been instrumental in supporting staff and helping the centre to make improvements
- Staff have been active in developing partnerships with schools and early years providers. This is contributing to the increasing number of children and families registering with the centre.

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

- Increase the registration of priority groups so that, as a minimum, the large majority regularly access services.
- Ensure that most two-year-old children who are eligible for free early education take up their places by working with partners and parents to promote this entitlement.
- Improve immunisation rates so that they are closer to the levels seen nationally.
- Increase opportunities for more adults, particularly those preparing for work, by:
  - improving participation rates in adult learning programmes to aid progression into further education and employment
  - strengthening systems for measuring the long-term impact of the centre's work to show how well adults benefit from training courses that prepare them for work.
- Working with the local authority, ensure that information on priority groups is up-to-date, easily accessible and checked in sufficient detail, in order to give centre leaders and the advisory board a clear picture of the impact of services on families in most need.
- Improve leadership, governance and management arrangements by:
  - ensuring procedures for checking the effectiveness of the centre's work and performance are strengthened and play a vital role in driving improvement
  - working with the local authority, devise strategies to provide stability in staffing to enable the delivery of high-quality services
  - strengthening the role of the advisory board so that members are able to confidently challenge centre leaders and hold them to account.

## 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.

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the acting centre leader, headteacher of Berryfields Church of England Primary School, representatives from the local authority, and partners from health, education, and the local community. They also met parents, representatives from the advisory board and parents' forum. The acting centre leader, head of children's partnerships and representatives from the local authority attended all meetings of the inspection team.

Visits to activities, such as 'Babybeeps', 'Holding Hands', 'Happy House' and 'Sparkles', were undertaken. The inspectors looked at the centre's self-evaluation, action planning, a sample of case files, safeguarding practice, policy and procedures, and a range of other relevant documentation.

Inspection team

David Scott, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Ann Janssen	Additional Inspector
Peter Towner	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Aylesbury (Quarrendon) Children's Centre was designated in April 2008 as a stand-alone centre and delivers a range of services including health clinics, parenting classes, stay and play groups, family support, and adult learning. The main centre is co-located with The Jonathan Page Play Centre (EY 248616). In addition, a satellite centre is located two miles away on the site of Berryfields Church of England Primary School, which is part of Aylesbury Vale Academy (URN 135879), and subject to separate inspection arrangements. The inspection reports for the play centre and the academy can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The centre is managed by the local authority to provide strategic leadership. There is also an advisory board and parents' forum, comprised of key partners and parents.

The community the centre serves includes 1,131 children under five years of age. It is situated in a densely populated area which is socially and economically mixed. A quarter of families in the area served by the centre live in workless households.

The majority of families are of White British or Other White heritage. The proportion from minority ethnic groups is around the national average, with the largest group being of Pakistani heritage. Children's skills and abilities on entry to early education are below the levels expected for their age. The centre has identified lone parents, children from workless households, families from minority ethnic backgrounds, disabled children, male carers and teenage parents as its main priority groups.

The substantive centre leader has been absent since February 2014. The senior coordinator is currently responsible for leading the centre.

### Inspection judgements

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

Inadequate

- Over the last three years, registrations have increased, and currently stand at 64%. Nevertheless, only 36% of the registered children and families are accessing and engaging in services. Also, only a small minority of the six priority groups attend regularly. This means that too few children and families, particularly those in most need, are using the centre's services.
- Almost all three and four-year-olds and 66% of eligible two-year-old children access their funded early education places. However, the centre's information does not show what proportion from priority groups take up funded place. This means that leaders do not know the impact of their work on priority families eligible for a funded place.
- The two staff who provide support and advice in the community have a good knowledge of the area and the often very difficult issues facing many families, including isolation and domestic violence. Recent visits to early years settings and schools are beginning to help more parents to access services, but it is too early to assess how effective this is.
- Attendance at sessions varies, but overall it is too low, particularly for priority groups. Numbers attending parenting courses are relatively low, this reduces the potential impact on priority families. The lack of timely and routine checks on information means that the

centre does not always know which of its families from priority groups have accessed services or continue to do so.

- Insufficient help is available to reduce the number of children living in workless households. Only a very low number of parents have been supported through training programmes.

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

Inadequate

- Although the centre provides a balance between activities open to all and those aimed at specific groups, the range is inadequate. As a result, inequalities for priority families are not reducing quickly enough.
- Those parents who do attend benefit from activities such as 'Holding Hands' and 'Stay and Play' that are specially designed to improve their parenting skills. Support for disabled children and those with special educational needs, through sessions such as 'Sparkles', is effective. The acting centre leader has recently introduced more robust tracking, but it is not yet possible to evaluate the full impact of these services.
- The promotion of the benefits of breastfeeding for new mothers has resulted in a modest rise in outcomes. At 52%, the proportion of mothers who continue breastfeeding at six-to-eight weeks is just above national, but below county, averages. Over time, the proportion of reception-age children who are obese has reduced to below national averages. However, immunisation rates have declined over the last year, and overall health targets have not been met.
- The referral of adults for employment advice to Jobcentre Plus and other agencies are at an early stage of development. The centre holds some information in the form of case studies about the short-term achievements of adults, such as those who successfully complete parenting courses. However, systems to track the longer-term impact of adult learning and employment opportunities are not yet fully in place. As a result, this restricts the centre's ability to help adults to progress more quickly to develop their skills or gain access to employment. Currently, there are very few volunteers at the centre, and only a limited number of programmes to enable parents to develop literacy and numeracy skills. This, again restricts opportunities for adults to gain qualifications or progress into further education or employment.
- The centre's work to evaluate how well staff support children in readiness for school is not sufficiently well developed. Systems introduced to record what children do in their time during the centre's activities, for example through 'learning journeys', have been strengthened. However, checks to track pupils' progress lack detail and do not enable the effective planning of further learning and development.
- Over the last three years, a much lower percentage of children achieved a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage than that found nationally and locally. This means that children are not sufficiently helped to get ready for school.

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

Inadequate

- The local authority conducts annual reviews and regularly monitors the work of the centre. However, although challenging targets are set, progress towards achieving the targets is not checked sufficiently thoroughly. This restricts their usefulness in bringing about rapid improvement. Also, information on priority groups provided by the local authority is not always up-to-date, easily accessible and checked in sufficient detail. This

reduces centre leaders', and the advisory board's, ability to measure the impact of services to support priority families.

- Safeguarding recruitment practices meet current requirements and staff receive appropriate training. Families identified as in need are referred to the family resilience service. As a result of improving inter-agency working with health and children's social care services, staff are able to intervene early and prevent concerns escalating. Children who are looked after, subject to child protection plans, and those deemed to be children in need are supported well.
- The acting centre leader has strengthened procedures for professional supervision, training and the setting of targets for staff. She has also prepared a well-considered action plan which focuses on the right priorities, with clear, measurable targets. However, it is too early to assess the effectiveness of this strategy.
- Although advisory board members receive performance information, they have a limited understanding of it. As a result, they have too little involvement in self-evaluation and are not in a position to challenge and hold the centre to account. Also, some partners do not attend meetings regularly enough. The acting centre leader currently chairs the advisory board. She has made a good start in improving the format and structure of meetings. However, this is only an interim arrangement and not a long-term solution.
- Staffing resources are not well organised. Leaders have not been given sufficient time and appropriate levels of staffing to deliver services of a consistently good or better standard. Despite this, and the many staffing changes, staff have pulled together extremely well as a team in an attempt to keep providing services and ensure families use the centre.
- The centre benefits from a highly-regarded acting centre leader who is acutely aware of the impact of recent management changes on the range and quality of services. She has been instrumental in supporting staff and helping the centre to make improvements, such as increasing the effectiveness of the parents' forum by making meetings more informal.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	20152
<b>Local authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	442843
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority
<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	1,131
<b>Centre leader</b>	Ann Winsor (Acting)
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01296 331495
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