

Burnham Children's Centre

Minnicroft Road, Burnham, Buckinghamshire, SL1 7DE

Inspection dates 9–10 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous Inspection:	Requires improvement	3
		Not previously inspected	
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 children's centre requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Despite increasing registrations overall, not enough families from some priority groups are coming to the centre regularly. This is especially so for families from workless households and for first-time lone parents.
- Not enough has been done to assess the specific requirements of families who need additional support and to provide services to meet the needs such as for workless families or for twoyear-olds eligible for free early education.
- The centre has started to track the longer term impact of its work with children and adults but this is not being done on a regular basis, especially where other partners are providing support.
- The local authority has not provided consistent levels of support and monitoring to the centre. The information about which families are coming to the centre, and especially about those who are engaging regularly, is not readily accessible to centre staff.
- The advisory board is not sufficiently challenging. Members are supportive but lack a clear understanding of the centre's priority families and how to measure the centre's impact on those families. In addition, the centre's action plan does not have specific enough targets related to families identified as needing support the most. This limits the centre's capacity to improve.

It has the following strengths:

- The family support workers provide highly effective care, guidance and support for children and families. This has had a very significant impact on their lives.
- There are well-embedded links with health services, schools and social care. These lead to good levels of information exchange ensuring that families who need support the most are provided with it from partners best able to meet their needs.
- The centre is very welcoming, and families who use it hold it and the staff in high regard. They feel fully involved in the centre. Volunteers are providing good support to the small team of staff.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that at least the large majority of children and families from all the centre's identified priority groups access and engage more frequently with services by:
 - assessing needs specifically and checking whether current services are meeting those needs by investigating why more are not using the centre
 - checking frequently who is using the centre and how often, to ensure priority families are benefiting from services
 - developing services that meet the needs of families from workless households, first-time lone parents and helping more families with two year-olds who need additional support, to access free early education.
- Measure the longer term impact of the centre's services on children and adults by working closely with partners such as schools and adult education to track more families during and after their time with the centre.
- The local authority, leaders, governors and managers should ensure that information about priority families' access and, especially, frequent engagement is always accurate, up-to-date and readily accessible to centre staff. Leaders should incorporate this into an action plan that has measurable, time-specific targets related to the centre's key aims and improving the outcomes for priority families.
- Improve the monitoring, support and challenge from the local authority and the advisory board by:
 - ensuring regular and meaningful reviews are undertaken by the local authority, with the emphasis on the centre's impact on its priority groups
 - developing the knowledge of advisory board members, especially in relation to the centre's priority groups and then use the information to measure the centre's impact.

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 the operations manager, the chair and other members of the advisory board and representatives of the local authority. They also spoke to staff and several partners, such as those from health and support services, adult learning and social care as well as parents and volunteers.

The inspectors visited sessions and activities taking place during the inspection, including 'Baby Explore and Learn' and the child health clinic.

They looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the centre's self-evaluation and action plan, a sample of case studies and safeguarding practice, policies and procedures. The operations manager and local authority representatives attended all meetings of the inspection team.

Inspection team

Joan Lindsay, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Tricia Collis

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Burnham Children's Centre is a stand-alone centre that was first designated in August 2008. It provides family support, adult learning and health services. The centre occupies a purpose-built building adjoining St Peter's Church of England Combined School and The Beeches Nursery. Both the school and nursery are subject to separate inspections. Their reports can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk. The centre is one of 14 managed directly by Buckinghamshire County Council, overseen by an operations manager. There is an advisory board in place. The day-to-day running of the centre is the responsibility of the senior co-ordinator who also oversees Farnham Common Children's Centre. Farnham Common Children's Centre was not part of this inspection.

There are 831 children under five years-old living in the area served by the centre. The area includes five separate defined localities, none of which is considered to be in the top 30% most disadvantaged compared to the rest of the country. The area covered by the centre is widespread and has a varied social mix that includes some rural areas, pockets of affluence and also parts that are relatively less advantaged. The centre is very close to the border with Slough and a high number of families from there access services at Burnham Children's Centre. The large majority of local children are from White British heritage families with approximately 25% from minority ethnic groups. The percentage of children under five years of age living in workless or low income households is 10% which is well below the national average of 20.9%. There are 50 eligible families benefiting from the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. Children generally enter the Early Years Foundation Stage at levels in line with those expected for their age.

The centre has identified priority groups needing most support as: workless households with young children; families with two-year old children considered to need most support; families requiring early help services or who are eligible for social care intervention; first-time lone parents.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- The large majority of children under the age of five years living in the local area are now registered with the centre but not enough are using the services frequently. The centre and the local authority have only recently monitored regular use of services by children and families, including those identified as needing additional support. Initial information shows that some groups, such as children from workless households are not coming to the centre often enough.
- The local authority recently identified two key priority groups for all their children's centres namely families with two year olds needing most support and families requiring early help services or who are subject to social care. The centre has only just identified the additional two groups and so has not yet carried out analysis of what services will best meet their needs or why some families are not using services frequently.
- Although 54% of eligible two-year olds take up free early education, a relatively high proportion of children are still not benefiting from this offer.
- The information system to monitor families' use of the centre is not easily accessible to centre staff. This hampers their ability to check which families are using the centre. In addition, well over a third of families who use the centre live in Slough, which is outside the reach area and therefore are not included in the centre's data.
- Strong links with health services, including antenatal and new parents' groups plus two well-attended baby clinics held each week in the centre, have improved access for young families, including those expecting children.
- The weekly 'Lent Risers' session held at Lent Rise School has improved access for some families living in one of the less-advantaged areas.

The quality of practice and services**Requires improvement**

- The quality of services provided for families is good but the range and relevance require improvement. This is because some target groups have only recently been decided on and the centre has not identified specific-enough services to fully meet their needs.
- The number of adults, especially from priority families, who are supported to develop their skills, training and employability, is too low. Some services have been provided, such as the very successful NVQ 2 Childcare course. However, strategic planning for courses such as for English and mathematics, and then participants' further progression, is not in place.
- Tracking of families supported by the centre or their partners is not carried out consistently unless they are receiving one-to-one support. This limits the centre's ability to show the impact of its work, especially with some priority groups such as workless families.
- The centre has just begun to track the progress of a small number of children through good quality 'Learning Journeys' but systems to see the longer term benefits when children move on to school are just in their infancy. However, anecdotal evidence and Early Years Foundation Stage profile results that are above national averages indicate that children develop good social and independent skills ahead of starting school.
- Health outcomes are generally good, although information is not always available for the centre's specific geographic area, given the proximity of Slough. However, at over 60%, the percentage of mothers still breastfeeding six weeks after birth is well above the national average. Childhood obesity rates are largely in line with those seen nationally.
- Staff are very good role models and parents have a great deal of confidence in them. Family support workers have been particularly successful in working with individual families to meet their often varied and complex needs. Families are very appreciative of this, typically saying 'I don't know what I would have done without them. They have been the most important thing in my life.'
- Very good links with health services and social care mean that all families who have children who are subject to child protection plans or those children who are looked after or are considered children in need, are known to the centre. This priority group engages very well with staff. Detailed case files and assessment tools show that those families often make significant progress and outcomes are good.
- Families feel fully involved in decision-making at the centre. There is an active parents' forum and regular evaluation of services. Volunteers are actively encouraged and those who do volunteer provide significant support to the centre and also gain personally through improved confidence, with some using the role as a springboard to employment.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management**Requires improvement**

- The local authority has not carried out a full annual review since November 2012. Quarterly reviews are conducted but those are for groups of centres managed by different commissioned providers and therefore are not specific or challenging enough to support the centre.
- The current information system is not easily accessible by centre staff and therefore is not a useful tool to monitor which families are using the centre and how frequently. The centre has only recently supplemented this by doing its own analysis of attendance by priority groups and so has not been able to use this information effectively enough to set specific improvement targets in the action plan.
- Members of the advisory board, whilst supportive and willing, are not knowledgeable enough about the specific groups the centre is working to support nor how best to measure the impact of the centre's services.
- Child protection policies and safeguarding procedures are comprehensive and well understood by staff and volunteers. Staff are very well trained and are experienced in working with other agencies, for example when children have early help assessments. They are held in high regard by other professionals.
- The centre is well resourced and the purpose-built building is welcoming. Families particularly

appreciate the attractive outdoor area. The staff team is very small, with only two family support workers, a centre coordinator (this post is currently unfilled) and a senior coordinator, who is also responsible for another children's centre. Staff work hard to meet the needs of families. However, with limited time and lack of specific resources targeted at all the priority groups, the centre's impact on reducing inequalities is limited.

- Families speak very positively about the centre and the impact it has on some of their lives. They feel able to drop in when they need to, stating 'I can come here at any time; they are so helpful and do even more than a friend would.' Families know that their views and suggestions will be listened to. For example, the parents' forum played a major part in the redesign of the garden. Additionally, members are able to choose certain activities, for example selecting a five-week craft course for the young mums' group.

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	20509
Local authority	Buckinghamshire County Council
Inspection number	447478
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	831
Senior co-ordinator	Brian Roohan
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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