

Windsor and Datchet Children's Centre Hub

Little Cygnets (Datchet), Datchet St Mary's Church of England Primary School, The Green, Datchet, SL3 9EJ

Inspection dates	9–11 September 2014
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	Previous inspection:	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 group requires improvement.

- Information provided by the local authority is not always helpful to ensure staff understand the changing needs of the local community. This means leaders cannot always accurately measure how well services improve families' lives.
- The numbers of two-year-old children taking up their entitlement to free early years provision is low.
- Centre staff do not link closely with training providers to find out how well parents achieve in their learning.
- Leaders and managers carry out regular reviews of services and identify some priority areas for improvement. However, this process is not linked together sufficiently well. This means procedures to help the centres to improve do not work as well as they could.
- There is often insufficient staff available to support the number of services provided. As a result, staff are sometimes overstretched and a few staff are not used effectively. This impacts on the quality of some services and the time staff have available to keep records up to date.
- The numbers of families accessing services are improving. However, due to a lack of accurate information provided by the local authority, staff cannot always be sure they are reaching all families who are in most need of support.

This children's centre group has the following strengths:

- The centres are managed by a dedicated and highly committed hub coordinator. Staff work above and beyond what is expected of them, demonstrating their strong commitment towards supporting local families.
- Partnership arrangements with all key services, such as health, social care and local schools, are developing well. This means, despite the lack of information provided by the local authority, centre staff use their local intelligence to understand what families need.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the procedures for leadership, governance and management of the centres by ensuring information provided by the local authority:
 - enables centre staff to consistently analyse the context of the area and continue to assess the priority needs of families within the locality
 - helps leaders and managers, and those responsible for governance, to rigorously monitor the centres' performance and trends in registration and engagement levels of all priority families to inform the range of services provided
 - is used to set challenging targets to accelerate the centres' rates of improvement
 - allows centre staff to monitor the take-up rates for two-year-old funding to ensure that most eligible children benefit from this
 - is used more efficiently to track improvements towards agreed targets and actions.
- Develop the procedures for monitoring the centres' performance by:
 - making closer links between the centres' business plan, self-evaluation procedure and annual review process
 - making improved use of locality information to measure continually the centres' performance and progression towards agreed strategic targets
 - checking the annual review process to ensure it is rigorous and objective and offers leaders and managers a clear improvement strategy.
- Improve the deployment of resources:
 - to enable staff to sustain the delivery of good or better services
 - to make improved use of assistant support workers to maximise the quality of all sessions
 - improve the signage arrangements to all centres to ensure they are easy for families to find
 - to ensure staff have sufficient time to maintain case files effectively.
- Strengthen the partnership arrangements with bought-in commissioned services for adult learning to ensure secure systems are in place to track the learning and development of all priority 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. The centres that form part of this children's centre group are Little Cygnets (Eton Wick), Little Cygnets (Old Windsor), Little Cygnets (Datchet), Poppies Children's Centre, The Manor Children's Centre, The Lawns Children's Centre, and South Ascot Children's Centre.

This inspection was carried out by four of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre hub coordinator and senior leaders and managers from the local authority, centre staff, senior managers from children's services and health services, representatives from commissioned services, health professionals, local headteachers, speech and language therapists, parents and centre users.

The inspectors visited range of services and activities taking place at each of the centres, including childminder drop-in groups, stay and play sessions, nurture groups, provision for children with special educational needs, health clinics, speech and language support and creative play sessions.

Inspectors observed the centres' work, spoke informally with parents and looked at a range of relevant documentation. This included the hub's development plan, Early Years Foundation Stage Profile data and information reports on the centres' performance.

Inspection team

Jo Caswell, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Susan Crawford

Her Majesty's Inspector

Susan Mann

Her Majesty's Inspector

Cliff Rose

Her Majesty's Inspector

Alan Comerford-Dunbar

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the hub

The children's centre hub consists of seven centres serving a wide geographical area across Windsor and Datchet. All centres are managed by one hub coordinator. The centres are managed by the local authority. An advisory board provides governance. Since 2012, centres across the borough have been re-structured into a 'hub and spoke' model. The Little Cygnets centre at Datchet provides the main services within the hub, with a range of services being delivered across the remaining six centres. The hub offers a range of activities and services including family support, adult learning, community work, stay and play groups, child health clinics and parenting programmes.

The hub serves a community of 4,300 children aged under five years. None of the centres in the hub serve areas ranked as being some of the poorest in the country, although there are some pockets of significant deprivation. Approximately 3.4% of young children live in households where no one is working. The population is mainly White British, although there is an increasing number of families from a range of minority ethnic groups. There is an established English Gypsy community within the Datchet area. The Poppies Children's Centre serves a large army base. The centre hub has identified the families who are in most need of support to include army families, minority ethnic group families, parents who are victims of domestic abuse and mothers experiencing postnatal depression.

The Little Cygnets (Eton Wick), Little Cygnets (Datchet) and The Lawns children's centres are located on school sites. However, none of these schools were inspected during this inspection. Separate inspection reports can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early education are generally in line with those typical for their age.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Since the centres moved to a hub model in 2012, staff have worked tirelessly to increase the numbers of families registered at the centre. At present, 65% of families living in the areas served by the centres are registered. The vast majority of these regularly engage in services. However, centre leaders recognise the information provided by the local authority is not always accurate or reliable. This means staff cannot be sure they are aware of all families living in the area.
- The number of two-year-olds who make use of their funded nursery place is too low. This means many children who are entitled to free early years support do not receive it which may hinder their learning. Leaders are taking steps to ensure more eligible children make use of their places, but it is too soon for such action to have made a significant difference.
- Effective links with the local army base, and the central location of the Poppies Children's Centre, mean 87% of army families regularly access children's centre services. Work to engage a greater number of families from minority ethnic groups has been effective, with an increase in registration of 44% from 2013 to 2014.
- The local authority has been unable to provide a baseline figure for the total numbers of English Gypsy families living in the area. However, effective partnership working with other agencies means more families are beginning to access and engage in services.
- The children's centre staff work very well with health partners to identify any new mothers who may be susceptible to postnatal depression. Early referral to relevant groups, such as baby massage, means many new mothers quickly overcome the feelings of isolation.
- Children's centre staff work very well to identify the varying needs of families. Especially good work has taken place with Muslim and Asian families to support their engagement in children's centre services.
- The majority of families experiencing domestic violence have accessed relevant support

programmes which have led to improved safety and family well-being.

- The local authority provides the children's centre with regular information about the numbers of children subject to child protection arrangements living in the area. This means over 70% of all children who may be at harm or at risk are supported through children's centre services.
- Although other information provided by the local authority is not as reliable, centre staff regularly engage with families within the community to find out why some parents choose not to engage with services. This means staff have a reasonably up-to-date knowledge of what services families need.
- Centre staff consistently identify any potential barriers to families accessing services easily. When transport arrangements are difficult, centre staff provide taxis to enable families to attend.
- Good links with health professionals, such as midwives and health visitors, mean prospective parents find out about the children's centre services. Although live birth data are not yet provided to the local authority, health visitors quickly register a large majority of families soon after birth.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The centres provide an extensive range of services for families. However, with a significantly reduced staff team, this means staffing levels are often over stretched. Consequently, some slippage in the delivery of services has occurred, particularly when staff do not have sufficient time to complete records or review services. Assistant support workers are not always used effectively within sessions to enhance the quality of services.
- There are new systems in place to monitor the centres' work with priority group families. However, it is too early at this stage to measure how effective these are. Consequently, the centres are unable to demonstrate how they have helped children to become ready for starting school. Early Years Foundation Stage Profile data are only provided for the borough and are not specific to the children's centre area.
- Senior leaders and the hub coordinator regularly review services and carry out quality assurance monitoring. This leads to improvements in the quality and range of activities. However, time constraints placed on staff mean this has not always been as effective as it could be.
- During some bought-in services, such as the Messy Monets programme, the lack of staff expertise in early years means not all opportunities are utilised to enrich children's learning.
- Staff have recently introduced some initiatives to help children be well prepared for school or the next stage of their education. A new format of planning has been introduced to reflect the learning needs and preferences of children who attend. Some groups were run over the summer holiday to help children and parents prepare for nursery. However, these were only attended by a few families.
- Although some parents identify they would like to return to employment, the lack of tracking arrangements mean the centres are unable to show the impact of the adult learning programme.
- Learning journeys were recently introduced to help measure how well children develop as a result of using the centres. Staff make good use of this information to make sure sessions help children reach their full potential in their learning. However, there has not been sufficient time for staff to fully embed this and the process is still developing.
- Speech and language support speeds up the diagnosis and delivery of support for children with language difficulties. Family support helps parents to understand how to play with their children. This leads to improved levels of children's progress, as well as enhanced family enjoyment.
- Breaking the cycle of poverty and unemployment is not a priority need in the area. Despite this, a small number of parents have now signed up to become volunteers within the centre and are beginning to benefit from relevant training and support. Most parents report this has given them greater confidence and has reduced their feelings of social isolation.
- Health outcomes of the vast majority of families accessing services are improving. Breastfeeding rates, and the numbers of children classified as being obese in the Reception year, are better than national levels.
- The effective working arrangements between centre staff and health visitors mean services delivered from the centres are very popular with families and are very well attended.
- A range of popular programmes has a positive impact on the lives of those attending. For example,

parents attending the Fantastic Food Finders programme report that they have a better understanding of healthy eating for their families.

- Support programmes for victims of domestic violence are consistently positive. Course evaluations confirm how parents feel significantly more confident and able to make life-changing decisions as a result of the support they have received. One parent stated, 'I feel empowered and stronger.'
- In 2014, to date, 181 parents have benefited from completing parenting programmes to support them in promoting family well-being, children's development and positive parenting strategies. Parents spoken to by inspectors were overwhelmingly positive about the centres' work.
- Parents who regularly access services see the positive impact it has on their own well-being and that of their children. They praise the level of care and support shown to them by staff. Typical comments from parents include, 'Nothing is too much trouble for staff,' 'Staff do not judge,' and 'Everyone is friendly and helpful.'

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

- The local authority recognises information shared with the centres has not always been helpful for centre staff to accurately identify local need. Much information is only provided at borough-wide level and not at locality level.
- Due to a lack of accurate and reliable information, procedures for monitoring the centres' performance have been inhibited. Leaders and managers are unable to accelerate improvement as targets cannot be accurately measured and systems to track the impact of the centres' work are too new.
- The advisory board fully accepts its role in challenging the hub coordinator and driving improvement. However, without reliable information, the procedures for self-evaluation, the annual review and the setting of strategic priorities have been hindered and this has slowed the rate of improvement.
- The local authority's deployment of resources is not always fully effective. As a result, staff sometimes lack sufficient time to complete administrative duties. This has led to slippage in the accuracy of some case files. Some centres are difficult for families to find due to a lack of signage.
- Assistant support workers are not fully utilised during some sessions. This means not all opportunities to enhance the learning programme are utilised and this affects the centres' ability to consistently provide services of good or better quality.
- A full programme of services continues to run, despite a significant reduction in budget and staffing. The children's centre hub coordinator and centre staff should be commended for the tireless way in which they have worked to support local families despite the significant constraints on their time.
- The local authority fully accepts the implications of the centres not receiving health information and is currently addressing this issue at a senior management level.
- The local authority has responded extremely positively to a serious case review in 2011. As a result, all safeguarding arrangements have been fully reviewed and children's centre policies and procedures have been significantly improved. Relevant risk assessments are carried out on all premises, including those that are shared with other services.
- Good support is provided for disabled children and those with special educational needs. The sensory room at the Eton Wick Children's Centre is utilised well. Specialist groups, such as Using your Senses and the Twinkle Twinkle group are particularly valued by parents.
- Strong partnerships exist with other agencies, including social care, local schools and health professionals. This means that children who are in danger of not doing so well are closely supported. All services work together effectively to support the families known to be at most risk. Children who are looked after, subject to child protection plans, and those deemed to be children in need are well supported. Systems to check and identify individual needs operate well.

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 group details

Unique reference number	80599
Local authority	The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	451697
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	4,300
Children's centre hub coordinator	Serena Rumsey-Mitchell
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01753 582564
Email address	childrens.centres@rbwm.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- Little Cygnets (Datchet) (20920)
- Little Cygnets (Eton Wick) (23747)
- Little Cygnets (South Ascot) (22756)
- Old Windsor Youth and Community Centre (23748)
- Poppies Children's Centre (20474)
- The Lawns Children's Centre (23205)
- The Manor Children's Centre (23706)

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