

B5 Allsorts Children's Centre

St Mary's High School, Lieutenant Ellis Way, Cheshunt, EN7 5FB

Inspection dates	11–12 September 2014
Previous inspection date	Not inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
		Not applicable	
Access to services by young children and families		Good	2
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 is a centre that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- The monitoring of services by the local authority, governance and leadership lacks a rigorous focus on checking how well the centre contributes to improving outcomes for priority families. As a result, the centre cannot fully demonstrate the impact of its services.
- Leaders do not have a clear strategic overview of the regular participation rates of priority families. As a result, development planning and target setting, are not sufficiently precise.
- The centre is not able to fully demonstrate the difference that its services make because procedures to assess and monitor the progress made by children are not well developed.
- The centre does not effectively track the progress of parents to demonstrate how partners' services are helping them to gain qualifications, access further learning or gain employment.
- Case files are not of a sufficiently high quality and do not all show the impact interventions are having in helping children and families to move forward.
- Not enough sessions are specifically aimed at reaching the centre's priority groups and reducing inequalities.

It has the following strengths:

- Information sharing with partners helps increase registration and support for families and as a result registrations have increased rapidly in the last year. The very large majority of families are now registered with the centre and the large majority have been seen.
- Discussions with parents show that centre staff provide good quality, well co-ordinated support and guidance to some of the most vulnerable families. Parents who use the centre hold it in high regard.
- Parents have good opportunities to volunteer and develop skills which help improve their confidence and employability.
- The centre works effectively with health partners. As a result, families improve their understanding of healthy living and childhood obesity rates are low.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- The local authority, governance, leaders and managers should:
 - more rigorously monitor the impact that the centre's services have on improving the outcomes for priority families and reducing inequalities
 - analyse data more carefully to monitor the regular participation of priority families in appropriate services.
 - sharpen the use of precise targets in development planning to help the centre keep a close check on the pace of improvements.
- Target services more effectively so that most families from the priority groups identified, including those living in workless households, access early childhood services and adult learning.
- Improve the quality of services to a good or better level and enhance the achievement of children and their parents from priority families by:
 - developing a coherent approach to tracking children's development from birth to the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - tracking the progress of parents who attend adult learning programmes to show their journey on to further education, training or employment
 - work with health partners to increase the number of mothers continuing to breastfeed their babies to at least to six-to-eight weeks old.
- Make sure that all family case files demonstrate best practice in assessment and recording, and that actions are fully evaluated and monitored for 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 head teacher of St Mary's High School, the centre manager, staff at the centre and senior staff from the local authority. They also met with representatives from partner agencies, parents, volunteers and representatives from the advisory board.

The inspectors visited the 'Creative Fun for Parents' group run by parents, a crèche session, and the 'Allsorts of Fun and Lunch' session. The centre manager jointly observed a session with an inspector.

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

Inspection team

Jean-Marie Blakeley, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Peter Towner	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Allsorts Children's Centre is managed by the governors of St Mary's High School on behalf of the local authority. The centre has an advisory board made up of stakeholders including professional partners, community members and parents. St Mary's High School (URN: 138360) is subject to a separate inspection. Its report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk

The centre is based on the same site as St Mary's High School within the Bury Green Ward of Broxbourne. Through a separate local authority contract, the centre manager who is line managed by the headteacher of the school, is also responsible for the management of family support work for partnership schools, and for children and young people up to 19 years old.

Approximately 749 children under five years of age live in the centre's reach area. The very large majority of families are of White British heritage. The local area has pockets of deprivation particularly within three of the distinct areas of which the area is comprised, including two which are in the 40-50% most deprived seen nationally. Around 13% of children under 5 years old live in families that have no adult in work. Children's skills and abilities on entry to early years provision vary but are generally at the level expected or sometimes below those expected for their age.

Leaders have identified priority groups as the children and families in most need of support as; children subject to a child protection plan or identified as being in need; children living with domestic violence, adults with mental health or substance misuse issues; low income families, children living in workless households; lone parents and teenage parents.

The centre works collaboratively with partners and provides family support, 'Stay-and-play' activities and access to health, parenting programmes, adult training and employability support.

Inspection judgements

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

- Information sharing between partners has a positive impact on increasing registration and on providing co-ordinated early support for children and families.
- In the last year, registrations have rapidly improved and the very large majority of children and families are now registered with the centre. Data shows that the large majority of families have been seen. However, the centre does not fully analyse its attendance data to monitor how well all priority groups, such as children living workless households, sustain their engagement with the centre's services.
- The strong partnership with health professionals is helping the centre to extend its reach, including its contact with parents expecting children. Information on new born babies is shared by health services and the centre tries to make early contact with these families to offer appropriate support.

- Families, from priority groups, are referred to the centre for one-to-one help because of their circumstances which make them particularly vulnerable; and they engage well with family support services. The centre works well with partners to contribute to the integrated support for children subject to a child protection plan or identified as being in need.
- The centre refers children with special additional needs and/or disabilities to specialist services. Children with autism from across the borough have good access to support at sessions held at the centre.
- Most three- and four-year-old children access early education. The majority of eligible two-year-olds access their entitlement to high quality nursery places. Although there are not enough available places in the local area, the centre knows most of these children and is supporting their families to access appropriate provision.
- Although the centre knows many of its priority families including children living with domestic violence, adults with mental health or substance misuse issues; low income families and lone parents, as they are registered with the centre, leaders do not routinely monitor the participation rates of each group. Three parents under 20 years-old are accessing support from the centre. Leaders do not know of any pregnant teenagers living in the reach area.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The quality, range and relevance of services available do not currently provide an appropriate balance between those open to everyone and children and families who need targeted support.
- Staff vacancies and long term absences have limited the activities the centre has to offer. Some openly available activities, such as 'Messy Mondays' are well attended and parents say that they value the opportunity to play with their children at these well-resourced sessions.
- The centre does not analyse its attendance data to monitor the number of workless families that are in regular contact with the centre or engaged in activities to help them get back to work. There are examples where some effective work has taken place to support a few parents back into work, not least through the well-developed volunteer programme. However, the progress made by those who are signposted to education and skills training run by partners, is not being systematically checked.
- Family support workers are highly valued for the work they do with families, some of whom have complex problems. Parents say 'Staff are genuinely good- they are non judgemental.' However, not all case files provide clear details of the positive impact of the centre's work in helping families get back on track. Additionally, the quality of record keeping, including ensuring a clear chronology of contact and detailed assessment of need, requires improvement.
- Parents benefit from their good attendance at parenting programmes and confirm that their confidence and skills increase because of what they learn. However, the centre does not sufficiently monitor the participation of the most vulnerable parents who may benefit from these programmes.

- Staff are positive role models in sessions. Parents interact well with their children as they enjoy playing outside in the attractive garden and play area. However, 'Learning Journals' are not used effectively to track the progress made by children that attend sessions and parents are not sufficiently involved in completing them.
- Data show that the majority of children living in the reach area achieve a good level of development by the time they reach the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, the centre does not carefully track all of children who access its services to measure how much value they add to raising achievement, reducing inequalities and ensuring children's readiness for school.
- Strong partnerships with health professionals are helping to reduce childhood obesity, which is now below the national level. However, breastfeeding rates at six to eight weeks are not improving rapidly enough.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and managers are ambitious and strongly committed to the work of the centre. Governance arrangements are established and help drive continuous improvement. However, although monitoring at all levels take place, governance, leaders and managers do not have a full and accurate picture of the impact of the centre's work.
- The local authority's performance monitoring processes are not sufficiently rigorous or precisely focused on measuring the full impact of the centre's work or monitoring the sustained engagement of priority groups. There are insufficient checks to ensure the centre has evidence for some assertions made in its self-evaluation. As a result, the centre has an overly optimistic view of its performance.
- The development plan in place to drive the centre's improvements is not sufficiently detailed, and lacks clear and accurate performance measures for some key aspects of its work. This is impeding the otherwise secure capacity of the centre to move forward.
- Most of the data that the centre requires is readily available. However, a recent issue with the new data management system introduced by the local authority has limited the ability for the centre to have a full range of accurate and timely information. Additionally, the centre is not making best use of what is provided to help it check progress over time. The advisory board is well established and has a wide membership including a local housing association partner, school and health professionals and parents. The group effectively shares information which helps support families in need and increase access to services but the challenge provided is limited.
- Surveys, consultations and informal feedback from parents contribute to the development of the centre. Although very few parents take part in the parents' forum, they take account of the views of others. Some parents make a good contribution to shaping the centre's services through their membership on the advisory board.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Close partnership working with health services and children's social care ensures that children and families receive

effective early help. Children who are subject to child protection plans, children in need and those who are looked after are known to the centre and staff contribute to their support packages as appropriate. All staff are safely recruited and vetted.

- The centre provides a high quality indoor and outdoor environment. Staff are appropriately qualified and have good access to training, professional supervision and support from managers. However, staff absences and vacancies during the last year have reduced the centre's capacity to provide some stay and play activities for children and parents.

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	20161
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	447486
Managed by	St Mary's High School on behalf of the local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	749
Centre manager	Sue Potter
Telephone number	01992-633761
Email address	sue.potter@st-maryshigh.herts.sch.uk

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