

# Spelthorne Children's Centre

Chertsey Road, Ashford Common, Ashford, TW15 1SF

## Inspection dates

Previous inspection date

23–24 September 2014

Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
		Not applicable	
Access to services by young children and families		<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of practice and services		<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This is a centre that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Although 70% of families are registered with the centre, more needs to be done, especially by health workers, to ensure that still more families are registered and made aware of services available at the centre.
- Too few families regularly access the centre's services, and activities are not always well attended. Only a minority of those families identified by the centre as in most need of their support regularly receive the centre's help. As a result, the impact of services on narrowing inequalities is limited.
- Too few users benefit from the services run by the centre. The centre is being used to full capacity and an outreach site in one of the more deprived areas, identified by leaders, is not yet being used.
- Parents and prospective parents do not take an active role in decision making as representatives on the advisory board. Too few parents are members of the parents' forum.

### This centre has the following strengths:

- Centre staff are positive role models who provide good-quality care, guidance and support, especially for families during times of crisis.
- The quality of services offered by centre staff and, in particular, by the local adult education college, are good. All users feel safe and valued while at the centre.
- Governance of the centre is good, especially support from the linked primary school. The experienced leaders and the local authority recognise the centre's overall effectiveness requires improvement and have appropriate plans in place which they are effectively implementing

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

- Increase the number of families registered, and therefore aware of services, offered by the centre by:
  - working more closely with health colleagues
  - better recording all contact and support offered to families.
- Increase the engagement of all families, but especially lone parents of children aged 0–4 in workless households and families with vulnerable two-year-olds, so that, as a minimum, the large majority regularly access services.
- Extend opportunities for all users to benefit from the good-quality services provided by:
  - ensuring all services run to capacity
  - swiftly establishing an outreach venue so that families from more deprived areas can better access services.
- Increase the influence of parents by:
  - involving more parents in the parents' forum
  - clarifying and expanding the remit and purpose of the current parents' forum
  - ensuring parents are represented on the advisory board/school board of governors.

## 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 senior leaders and managers in the local authority; health, education and social care partners; parents; outreach workers; early years practitioners; volunteers; and representatives from the governing board.

Inspectors observed the centre's work, such as 'numeracy for adults', and looked at a range of documentation. The inspectors looked at the centre's self-evaluation, action plan, a sample of case files, safeguarding practice, policy and procedures, and a range of other relevant documentation.

## Inspection team

Alan Comerford-Dunbar, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Sarah McDermott	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Spelthorne Children's Centre is a recently formed stand-alone centre. It is located in Ashford in the county of Surrey. The centre was formally part of a small group of centres. However, in April 2014, the local authority, after consultation with the local community, established Spelthorne as a stand-alone centre.

The centre forms part of Spelthorne School (URN: 125095), which is subject to separate inspection arrangements. The report can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). Governance is provided by the school board of governors, on behalf of the Surrey County Council. The advisory board is separate to the school board. It is made up of members of the community and other local professionals.

A range of activities and services take place including family support, work in the community, 'Stay and Play' groups, and adult literacy and numeracy advice sessions. There are also breastfeeding support, child health clinics and outdoor activities offered by the centre.

Spelthorne has the highest number of children aged 0–4 living in poverty in Surrey. The centre is located on the borders of Surrey and the London Borough of Hounslow.

Currently, 679 children under the age of five years live in the reach area. The largest group of families is of White British heritage. Other minority groups are Black Caribbean, Black African, Asian and Eastern European heritage families. Approximately 15% of children registered at the centre live in workless households. Most children enter Reception classes with a range of skills and knowledge that are below the expected level for their age.

The centre has identified its priority groups as being lone parents of children aged 0–4 in workless households and families with vulnerable two-year-olds.

### Inspection judgements

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

#### Requires improvement

- Strategies for encouraging families to attend the centre regularly are not fully effective. Despite significant recent improvements, too few families, especially lone parents of children aged 0–4 living in workless households and families with vulnerable two-year-olds, attend services frequently. However, since becoming a stand-alone centre, leaders have a clear and appropriate plan to improve this situation.
- Targeted work in the community and effective marketing of services ensure that a large majority (70%) of children and families are registered with the centre. However, although appropriate service level agreements are in place, health colleagues are sporadic in their commitment to helping centre staff to register new users of the centre, including those expecting children. This has severely hampered the centre's efforts to inform still more families about the support available at the centre.
- Most eligible two-year-olds and three- and four-year-olds take up their free entitlement to early education. Health clinics are popular with parents, who receive good advice to improve their family's health.
- Centre staff have been very successful in engaging with Polish and other Eastern European heritage communities living in the area. The number of families that are now accessing centre services on a regular basis has increased rapidly over the past 12 months. A 'Stay

and Play' run by Polish volunteers is particularly well attended.

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

### **Requires improvement**

- The impact of practice and services requires improvement because not enough families make use of the good provision. As a result, inequalities are not narrowing quickly enough for some of the families most in need.
- Families benefit from a good balance of services and activities open to everyone and those aimed at specific groups. The quality of activities is good and valued by those who attend. However, too few courses are run to meet the needs of the local community and attendance at sessions is often low.
- Families who use the centre are supportive and happy with the quality of provision. The most popular services talked about by parents are the 'drop-in' sessions and numeracy classes for adults. Parents spoke positively about how attendance on these courses had a positive impact, and increased their confidence and improved their parenting skills.
- Families who have greater needs are well supported via links with other agencies. Case files are well kept and appropriately monitored by senior managers. Adults receive a very good service to improve their parenting skills and grow in confidence following difficult times.
- Good support for early learning means children who regularly attend the centre are well prepared for school life. They perform better than children who do not attend the centre and attain well at the end of the Reception Year. The centre works closely with staff from the linked primary school to ensure they exchange useful information to improve early years provision in both venues.
- Adults receive good advice and guidance from a range of commissioned services as well as centre staff. They receive good support to improve their work readiness via the popular 'Work Club' sessions run at a nearby children's centre. Progress and the impact of services are carefully monitored; for example, following a recent level one childcare course, eight adults progressed onto a higher level course.
- Staff are confident when dealing with the complex needs of families and work well with a variety of partners to support families in most need. Users spoke positively about the broad range of individual support they received. As one mother said, 'I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the staff at this place. They're brilliant.'

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

### **Requires improvement**

- The leadership and management of the children's centre require improvement. Although leaders and managers ensure a good quality of provision, they are not being innovative and creative enough in finding ways to attract more families to make regular use of services.
- Space at the centre is limited and too few courses are run to meet demand. Since the forming of the new stand-alone centre, no outreach venues are being used, thus further restricting the centre's capacity to increase the number of courses and activities delivered. However, the centre has identified an appropriate outreach venue and is planning to run courses there in the very near future.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Parents understand the importance of adopting safe practices. The good knowledge of staff and detailed record keeping play an important role in meetings with other professionals. As a result, children who are looked after, subject to child protection plans, and those deemed to be children in need are well supported.

- Partnership working, especially with the local college, social care and linked primary school, is good. Courses aimed at improving literacy and numeracy for adults are a particular strength of the centre, although health colleagues have been slow to respond to previously agreed requests to 'sign-up' new users of the centre.
- Governance arrangements are clear, and effective performance management ensures staff are well supported and that training links to the centre's priorities. The advisory board is well established with a range of partners attending; however, none of them is a parent from the centre's reach area. In addition, few parents attend the parents' forum so they have insufficient opportunities to be involved in decision making at a more formal level.
- The centre manager provides good leadership for staff. Staff are well qualified and passionate about reducing inequalities for families. They come from a range of professional backgrounds and training ensures that they deal with issues in a professional, yet caring, way. All users feel safe and valued when visiting the centre.

## 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.

## Group details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	23754
<b>Local authority</b>	Surrey County Council
<b>Inspection number</b>	451704
<b>Managed by</b>	Spelthorne School and Children's Centre on behalf of the county council

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	679
<b>Centre leader</b>	Georgina Holloway
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