

Green Lane Children's Centre

Leverstock Green CE Primary School, Green Lane, Hemel Hempstead, HP2 4SA

Inspection dates		1-2 October 2014	
Previous inspection date		Not previously inspected	
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	Previous inspection:	Not applicable	
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 is a centre that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Links with adult learning providers and employment organisations are underdeveloped.
- Not enough parents have the chance to gain qualifications in basic literacy, numeracy and computing skills or receive enough help to improve their chances of getting jobs.
- There are not enough English language courses for local minority ethnic families to improve their spoken and written English.
- The centre is not sufficiently involved in the checking of children's progress with pre-school settings and schools to identify local early learning issues and how to address these.
- Leaders are not using data effectively to measure the impact of activities, services and courses and set challenging targets for improvement.

It has the following strengths:

- Large numbers of families from priority groups attend the popular baby and toddler activities, and many have taken part in parenting classes which improve the quality of family life.
- Close working with health colleagues has helped families attend many useful health and well-being activities resulting in high breastfeeding rates and a significant decrease in child obesity.
- Most of the two-year-olds who are entitled to free pre-school education have been placed with good-quality nurseries and childminders
- Safeguarding is given a high priority and families benefit from well coordinated support

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Develop tracking and monitoring systems to measure and demonstrate the quality of impact of all activities and ensure that services are meeting the needs of families from priority groups.
- Provide more opportunities for those adults who have no qualifications and those seeking employment to prepare for work by:
 - developing better relationships with local adult learning providers and employment organisations to help parents seek careers advice, sign up for courses and look for work
 - increasing participation rates in adult learning programmes, especially basic literacy, numeracy and computing courses, and suitable vocational courses
 - providing more courses for developing the English language skills of recently arrived immigrants and those in the Asian community who are still at an early stage of learning how to speak English
 - providing a crèche to allow parents to attend courses.
- Work with the local authority to develop and improve links with pre-school settings and schools and, in particular:
 - become more involved in monitoring children's progress
 - address any identified early learning issues, such as the wide gap in achievement between disadvantaged children and others.

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 three Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with representatives from the local authority, health partners, linked social workers, adult learning and training services groups, children's centre staff, parents and members of the advisory board.

The inspectors visited a range of activities and sessions, local outreach centres, Tiny Toes, Little Angels and Mini-Monsters Nurseries, and Leverstock Green Playgroup. Senior centre staff attended all team meetings.

The inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the self-evaluation form, action plans, a sample of case files, parents' satisfaction surveys, safeguarding policies and procedures, and a variety of files for the range of activities delivered.

Inspection team

Additional inspector (Lead inspector)	Catherine Stormonth
Additional inspector	Michael Miller
Additional inspector	Peter Towner

Full report

Information about the centre

Green Lane Children's Centre opened in 2007 and operates from small purpose-built premises attached to Tiny Toes Nursery (URN EY511406) situated on the grounds of the lead agency which is Leverstock Green Primary School (URN 117416) both of which are both subject to separate inspection arrangements. The reports can be found on the Ofsted website, www.ofsted.gov.uk. The centre shares a room with the adjacent lead agency, and a nearby Girl Guide hut is used daily for delivering activities. The centre uses a variety of outreach centres based in church halls and community centres in the wider reach area.

The centre serves the families of Leverstock Green and Bennetts End in the town of Hemel Hempstead. It is governed by an advisory board of key partners and a parent. The headteacher of the lead agency line manages the centre manager. The centre meets its core purpose by providing early education, childcare and health services, family support and adult learning courses. Most children enter early education with skills that are slightly lower than those expected for their age, especially in communication and language development.

The centre's reach area includes 1222 children under five years of age, the majority of whom are White British. The largest minority ethnic groups are from Pakistan, Bangladesh and India, and there are smaller numbers of African and Eastern European families. The area is very mixed socially and economically, and there are pockets of deprivation. For example, one of the lower super output areas in the Reddings area is among the 20% most deprived in England. There is a high proportion of workless households and 18% of families are in receipt of housing benefit in the Bennetts End district. The centre's key priority groups include vulnerable children and mothers, victims of domestic abuse, and families with adults who have mental health issues and those where there is substance abuse. A particular characteristic of the area is that a fifth of parents have no qualifications at all.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families requires improvement

- Although the centre has recognised that over a fifth of the adult population in the reach area have no qualifications, insufficient action has been taken to provide relevant courses to help parents become more employable. Only small numbers are signposted to other centres and little is known as to whether this training or advice is taken up or leads to a job. The lack of crèche facilities makes access to some of the parenting and healthy living courses difficult.
- In the last year, staff took effective action which successfully increased the number of families registered with the centre. As a result, a large majority of families are now registered. Engagement levels with key priority groups such as lone parents, the Asian community and households where there is domestic violence and mental health issues have increased markedly in the same period
- Just over a third of families living in the reach area use the services of other local centres which are geographically easier to access by foot and offer specialist services such as antenatal classes for pregnant teenagers. As a result, all of the pregnant teenagers and

- other expectant mothers in the reach area successfully use central local programmes.
- Outreach work is effective in establishing and maintaining contact with families in most need of intervention and in meeting their specific needs.
 - Development checks for two-year-old children held at the centre help to identify children in need of early intervention. More than two hundred children have been referred to the speech and language drop-ins and clinics, and three families with disabled children are currently well supported. The recent premature baby group pilot scheme ran at Green Lane and was highly appreciated by those families that attended.
 - Nearly all children who are entitled to free early education are placed in pre-school settings. The local authority is working effectively to make sure there are enough places at good-quality nurseries and childminders.
 - The centre runs some popular holiday activities like the 'Adventure Playground Emergency Vehicles' play session which attracts large numbers of families to learn about personal safety.

The quality of practice and services

requires improvement

- The centre offers too few opportunities to help parents develop their literacy, numeracy and computer skills to help them have a better chance to gain employment. Parents rarely have the chance to help as volunteers and get some work experience. Recently arrived immigrants and parents in the Asian community have limited access to English language courses to improve their spoken English and some are still using an interpreter.
- Good numbers of adults take parenting courses which help them manage their children's behaviour and sibling rivalry better. Parents attending courses about improving their emotional health feel more positive and confident about their future. This is a good starting point in most cases but there is little encouragement to build on these in order to improve their life chances.
- Although the centre clearly makes a discernible difference to families' lives, the centre is not yet tracking and measuring the impact of the work it is doing with children and adults. For example, written evaluations of activity sessions do not draw well enough on data to show the full effect on families and are mainly a collection of parents' positive comments.
- In 2014, the percentage of children who achieved a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage was broadly average. However, although the gap between the lowest-achieving 20% and their peers has improved, it is still too wide. Data indicate that deprived children are still those who are most likely to underachieve, especially White British boys. The early years transition project started last year but has met with mixed results. Despite some good efforts by the centre to develop links with local schools some events were poorly attended.
- The centre offers a good range of health and well-being clinics which contribute to the area's low obesity and high breastfeeding rates for children.
- Outreach workers offer highly effective early identification and support for families most in need of help. They assess needs using the Common Assessment Framework and make

good-quality decisions that fully involve partners and family members. Outreach workers demonstrate very clearly where their interventions have helped improve the lives and safety of young children.

- Parents receive good personal support, advice and guidance from staff. They value how this has helped them face problems, including debt management and family relationships. One parent confirmed, 'They always want the best for us,' and those parents who had experienced a variety of crises told how much they appreciated the 'non-judgemental life-line' they get from 'warm and welcoming staff'.
- The centre offers good-quality activities and services for families with babies and toddlers. They recognise that many local children have speech and language delay and offer sessions, such as 'Rhyme Challenge' to help promote communication skills. □

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

- Leadership and management require improvement because of the seriousness of the lack of action taken to provide opportunities for adults to participate in activities to improve their education and employability. There is also insufficient monitoring of priority groups to ensure the removal of any inequalities and improvement in their life chances. The centre uses many of the lead agency school policies and procedures and these are used consistently and contribute well to the smooth running of the centre.
- The recently reconstructed advisory board, formed from key partners from local community groups, is already proving how well members work together to drive agendas for improvement forward. They are starting to hold the centre to account. They went on 'learning walks' recently to observe the aspects they champion and are keen to get more training in how to use data to set targets for further improvement.
- The local authority has put in some good management support recently, and local centres judged as outstanding have helped to share good practice. The local authority has set enough specific and measurable targets to assess the impact of the centre's services and activities, but their checks of the centre's performance have at times not driven improvement sufficiently quickly. The lack of adult learning is a case in point.
- The centre manager oversees the centre's staff and resources effectively. Targets are set to improve the breadth of personal professional development aspects but are not directly aligned to the centre's action plan. She monitors their performance, including through observing them working with families. Staff receive good training and development opportunities which they use well when supporting families in most need and delivering activities.
- The centre has well-managed safeguarding arrangements, supported by many of the efficient lead agency's systems for child protection, safer recruitment and health and safety. Outreach workers have suitable supervision and close links with key agencies to provide good-quality support to families in most need, such as those subject to child protection plans, children in need and looked after children.
- Resources are used well to meet the needs of children and families. Community venues are

used imaginatively to extend the remit of the centre and to provide good access to activities and services. The Asian mother and toddler group in Bennetts End is a good example of successful targeted provision.

- Parents can channel their views in many different ways so that their voice is heard and their opinion does influence decision making. There is an active parents' forum and ideas are collected and acted upon.

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	20910
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	447488
Managed by	The Leverstock Green Primary School on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1222
Centre Manager	Joanna Moss
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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