

Arun East Children's Centre Group

Clun Road, Littlehampton, West Sussex, BN17 7DZ

Inspection dates

1–2 October 2014

	This inspection:	Good	2
Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	The group has not been previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Good	2
The quality of practice and services		Good	2
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for children and families

This children's centre group is good.

- The group has registered most of the children under five in the three areas covered by the centres, and the large majority access services. Many families access child health clinics.
- Staff have an excellent understanding of the local area. This has enabled them to accurately identify the families who need most support. The majority of those groups engage regularly with centre services. Teenage parents and children who are under social care supervision or need additional support engage particularly well.
- A strong focus on children's early development, especially for those who need most support, has had a positive outcome for a large proportion of children. Parents feel particularly happy with the impact the centres have on their children.
- There are wide-ranging, well-established partnerships with other services such as health, social care, schools and early years settings. This, coupled with detailed exchange of information, ensures families receive outstanding levels of care, guidance and support.
- The group has good capacity to continue to improve. Leaders, governors and managers at all levels provide very effective leadership.

It is not outstanding because

- Some priority groups living in the Littlehampton area do not sustain their engagement as well as in other parts of the group. This is especially the case for families living in some of the relatively disadvantaged areas and those with young children with a disability.
- Not enough adults are being supported to access English and mathematics courses and English language groups. Where adults are signposted to employment or training advice, the long-term impact is not being followed up consistently.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that more children from the group's relatively disadvantaged areas and young children with a disability use the services at the Littlehampton centre more frequently by:
 - analysing the information that is now available to establish why some families attend more frequently than others
 - identifying the specific needs of those families, especially in the Littlehampton area and adapting services to meet those needs
 - ensuring staff are consistent across the group in recording information about families' use of the centres.
- Support more adults who wish to develop their skills, employability or training by:
 - working with partner agencies to identify the specific needs of adults wishing to return to work or to retrain
 - providing clearer guidance for adults in relation to courses and employment opportunities that are available locally
 - tracking outcomes for adults in the longer term to encourage more to progress on to higher levels of education and into employment, especially for those living in the least advantaged areas.

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.

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the team leader, centre coordinators and other staff as well as representatives from the local authority and members of the Centre Partnership Group. They spoke to a wide range of partners, including those from health services, social care, schools and early years settings.

The inspection covered the following centres: Littlehampton Children and Family Centre; Angmering Children and Family Centre and East Preston Children and Family Centre.

The inspectors visited all three centres as well as the community venue based at Georgian Gardens Primary School in Rustington. They observed several sessions taking place, including the 'Young Parents Play and Learn' group, 'Bumps to Babes', a parenting class and an English group for adults. A joint observation of an activity was undertaken with one of the centre coordinators.

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

Inspection team

Joan Lindsay, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Helen Astley	Additional inspector
Marinette Bazin	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the group

The Arun East group was created in 2011 with the merging of Littlehampton, Angmering and East Preston Children and Family Centres. The three centres are managed by one team leader on behalf of the local authority. There are three centre coordinators. The group provides family support, adult learning and health services. There is a single advisory board for Arun East, the Centre Partnership Group (CPG). The Littlehampton Centre was designated in 2004 and is sited in a purpose-built, church-owned building. The church runs a day-care nursery, The Play Centre, as well as breakfast and after-school clubs from the same building. All of those facilities are subject to separate inspections. Their reports can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk. The Angmering Centre opened in 2008 and is situated in the library. It offers only a limited number of sessions as most of the activities in this part of the group's area take place in the community, for example, from Georgian Gardens Primary School in Rustington. The East Preston Centre opened in 2010 and is based in a local authority building adjacent to East Preston Infant and Junior School. The schools are also subject to separate inspections and their reports can also be found on the Ofsted website. Littlehampton Children and Family Centre was inspected in November 2010 when it was judged to have a good overall effectiveness. The other two centres and the group as a whole have not been inspected previously.

There are 3,010 children aged under five in the area served by the group. There are 34 separate defined localities in this area, nine of which are considered to be in the top 30% least advantaged in the country. A further six score under 50%. River and Ham wards, located in the Littlehampton area, are amongst the 10 least advantaged wards in England. The area served by East Preston Centre is the most advantaged within the group. Most families are of White British heritage. The percentage of children under five living in workless households is 24% overall, which is above national averages. There are 12% of families claiming Working Tax Credit in the area served by the group, below that found nationally. Children generally enter the Early Years Foundation Stage at levels in line with those expected for their age, although there are wide variations across the area served by the group.

The centre has identified priority groups needing most support as: families living in the nine least advantaged areas, located mainly around the Littlehampton centre; families living in the six other areas considered to be between 30% and 50% least advantaged in the country; teenage parents; children with a disability; young children from minority ethnic groups; and children who are under social care supervision or need additional support.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- Very strong links with health services, including specialists such as the Family Nurse Practitioner, means most local new-born babies are registered. Staff attend child health clinics wherever they are held in the three centres' areas. Antenatal and postnatal groups, including specifically for teenage parents, ensure that expectant mothers and those with young children have good access to centre services.
- The group has particularly high levels of engagement with teenage mothers, families living in the nine least advantaged areas, children from minority ethnic families and children who are under supervision of social care. This is because sessions are targeted to meet their needs, such as the 'Young Parents' Drop-in' and 'Play and Learn' groups held at the Littlehampton centre. In addition, there are excellent links with social care so that the large majority of families who are subject to additional levels of supervision are known to and engage very effectively with centre staff.
- However, recently available data show that families living in the six areas considered to be between 30% and 50% least advantaged, as well as young disabled children, are not using the services at the Littlehampton centre as often as at the other centres.
- Several different community venues are used effectively to ensure as many families as possible who need most support have easy access to services. The relatively new drop-in held at Georgian Gardens Primary School in Rustington and several sessions held in community or church halls provide good opportunities for families to get advice and guidance, especially in relation to their children's health and development.
- Most children, including eligible two-year-olds, take up their entitlement to free early education. The group's close working relationships with early years settings, including childminders, and the work of the early years advisor ensure that the vast majority of young children access good-quality provision.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- Services are of a high quality. There is a good balance of those open to all and those targeted at specific groups, such as the 'Skylarks' session held at the East Preston Centre, for children with additional needs.
- There is a very strong focus on developing parenting skills. This has had a positive impact on families, and 90% of parents completing courses made progress and felt better equipped to support their children and keep them safe. Parents typically describe the outcomes as 'life changing'.
- Unvalidated Early Years Foundation Stage profile results for 2014 show that the percentage of children achieving a good level of development has improved since 2013. These results are analysed in detail to highlight weaker areas such as mathematics. Session plans for activities such as 'Play and Learn Together' then focus on those aspects. This has had a significant impact on improving outcomes.
- Four weekly sessions held in the summer support priority children well before they move on to school. Close links with early years settings, for example through the 'Beach Explorers' initiative to develop children's communication skills, have ensured that children who need most support make good or better progress.
- The levels of individual care, support and guidance that priority families receive are exemplary. Family outreach workers, who are exceptionally well trained, have established very effective links with a multitude of other agencies that can be called upon to ensure families' often highly complex needs are met. Parents state that 'they care so much' and 'they made a huge difference to my life'.
- Health outcomes are mixed across the group. Breastfeeding support such as the 'Milk!' session at East Preston Centre has led to improving numbers of mothers breastfeeding at around six weeks. However, some immunisation rates are relatively low and there are high numbers of families who smoke in the Littlehampton area. Recent training for staff has yet to have an impact on those numbers.

- A well-established parent volunteer programme gives parents, including young mothers, good opportunities to develop their skills and confidence. In several cases, volunteers have moved on to employment.
- Some courses are provided for adults to extend their basic skills, such as in English and mathematics. However, families' needs have not been assessed to a high degree and they are not always clear about what is available locally. There are links with employment agencies but not enough families from priority groups are accessing help that is available. When they do, the centres are not consistently following up the longer-term outcomes.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The team leader provides very effective leadership across the group. All staff have regular and thorough reviews and targets set for their professional development; they are exceptionally well trained. The staff team is highly committed to improving the lives of families who need most support and consequently is effective in reducing inequalities for many of those children.
- The local authority provides a high level of effective monitoring and support for the group. There is a clear link between the annual review, the centres' accurate self-evaluation and the service delivery plan with appropriate and challenging targets set.
- The advisory group has a very wide range of members who regularly attend meetings. This includes a good number of parents from a range of families who ensure that views voiced at the well-attended Parents' Forum are passed on. The advisory group has a clear understanding of the group's work. Members challenge the group well in relation to improving the lives of those in the local community who most need support.
- However, leadership, governance and management are not outstanding overall because some priority families are not engaging as frequently as others, especially at the Littlehampton centre, and improvements are needed in the way adults are supported to extend their learning and employability.
- Resources are excellent and are used very well to ensure the needs of the large majority of priority groups are met. The group provides many opportunities for families to borrow books and toys at several locations. The centres are very clean and bright. Family information and support assistants ensure everyone receives a warm welcome so that families typically say, 'It's like my second home.'
- Safeguarding children is at the core of all the group's work. Staff are very quick to respond to any child protection concerns; policies and procedures are constantly updated and reviewed. Staff are fully involved in any meetings with other agencies where children are subject to child protection plans, are looked after, considered to be a child in need or are supported through the early help assessments.
- Parents are unanimous in their positive views. They feel they play a full part in developing services and that their needs, such as support with children's sleep problems, are met wherever possible.

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

Unique reference number	80206
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	451659
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	3,010
Team leader	Debbie Cullern
Date of previous inspection	The group has not been inspected previously
Telephone number	01903 276840
Email address	debbie.cullern@westsussex.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- Littlehampton Children and Family Centre
- Angmering Children and Family Centre
- East Preston Children and Family Centre

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