

Wing Children's Centre

Overstone Combined School, Church Street, Wing, Leighton Buzzard LU7 0NY

Inspection dates	14–16 October 2014
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
		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 is a centre that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Too few workless families are benefiting from centre activities, and services to help families into adult learning and employment are under developed.
- The children's centre's plans lack precision, and links between plans, priorities, targets and training for staff are not always clear.
- The advisory board does not have all the information it needs to contribute fully to plans to drive improvement in the centre.
- Partnerships with children's social care, the family resilience service and some primary schools require further development.
- Systems to track children's learning and development are new and it is too soon to know whether all children are making good progress.
- Monitoring and observation of sessions by leaders and managers are too infrequent.

It has the following strengths:

- The majority of families in the area are registered with the centre.
- Staff are very skilled at communicating with families, who value their services highly.
- All two-year-olds eligible for free nursery education in the area take up their places.
- Support for disabled children and those with additional needs is good.
- The centre provides good volunteering opportunities.
- Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the centre. They take note of families' views when changes are needed and use external reviews well to improve services.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring plans are precise and indicate clear links between setting targets for staff and their training and development
 - providing detailed financial information to the advisory board so that checks on future plans, resources and staffing are matched to key priorities
 - monitoring more frequently the quality of group sessions to improve practice and inform future activities
 - embedding the emerging links with professionals in social care.
- Increase the number of families registered and engaging with centre services, including families from unemployed households.
- Embed systems to observe, assess and track children's progress and further develop work in partnership with schools to ensure all children are well prepared for school and make good progress.
- Ensure that eligible parents regularly access adult learning and employability services, and track how these services improve their lives.

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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors, working in conjunction with the inspectors leading on each of the other two simultaneous inspections.

The inspectors held meetings with Barnardo's managers and staff; parents and volunteers; partners in health, education, social care and community services; advisory board members and representatives from the local authority.

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

Inspection team

Penny Fisher, Lead Inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Shagufta Shahin	Additional Inspector
Rob Mottram	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Wing Children's Centre serves a rural population. It was designated in November 2009. There are approximately 583 children under the age of five years living in the centre's reach area. Most families are White British, with those of mixed heritage being the next largest ethnic group. Children enter school with skills, knowledge and abilities that match those typical for their age. There is no on-site childcare or pre-school provision.

The centre is governed and managed by Barnardo's on behalf of the local authority. The advisory board has a local parent-chair. The day-to-day running of the centre is carried out by a service coordinator, supported by the Barnardo's area manager and a national team. The centre works in a cluster with Waddesdon and Whitchurch, and Ivinghoe and Pitstone Children's Centres to provide a range of services at the centres and in the community. These include activities for everyone and those from priority groups. It has its own advisory board. The inspections of Waddesdon and Whitchurch Children's Centre, and Ivinghoe and Pitstone Children's Centre took place at the same time and their inspection reports can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

The children's centre in Wing serves the wards of Wing, Wingrave, Stewkley and Great Brickhill. There are good bus links between Wing and the local towns of Aylesbury and Leighton Buzzard, but no public transport to link Wing to the surrounding villages. The rural area covered by the centre is predominantly affluent, although villages do contain pockets of deprivation and some unemployment. Owner occupancy rates are high, mixed with some areas of social housing.

The centre has identified its target groups as families with two-year-olds entitled to funded early education, children from referred families and those at risk of being in greatest need, children under five years from multiple birth families and children living in workless households.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Engagement figures for families and those expecting children are too low overall at 37%. The centre is in a rural area and transport links to some of the local villages are poor. To overcome this and reduce social isolation, the centre staff attend community groups and the mobile children's centre bus visits Stewkley.
- Overall registration rates, although improving, require improvement; they currently stand at 54%. The very recent sharing of new birth data by health partners is helping the centre to improve this figure. However, the centre staff are not taking every opportunity to register families, for example when families attend the baby clinics run by health partners.
- Priority families are provided with transport if needed so that they can access services. Engagement with families that have been referred to the centre, and those at risk of being in greatest need, is good. However, information on workless families and children from multiple birth families shows only the minority engage with the centre's services.
- All families of eligible two-year-olds are taking up their entitlement to free early education. The community the centre serves has access to good or better early years education. Almost all three- and four-year-olds take up their entitlement to early education.
- Previously some families have been turned away from the popular Stay and Play sessions at the centre. However, this has been well managed to ensure that families from the local community and those most in need are given priority access to places.

The quality of practice and services**Requires improvement**

- The family support workers and play leaders are welcoming and communicate effectively with parents and children, building good quality relationships. However, due to low overall registration and engagement rates, not enough families benefit from the activities and services. Those parents that access services are positive about the centre and feel that their views are listened to and acted upon.
- All staff have attended training to ensure that children's progress is tracked effectively in 'Learning Journeys'. However, it is early days and only eight children have had checks on their progress completed. The centre is, therefore, not yet able to show that all children are making good progress.
- Evaluations of all sessions run by the centre are carried out regularly by staff and those completed by parents are positive. Staff are beginning to use this information effectively to inform their planning. However, staff observations are not always sharply focused on children's learning and development.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the Reception year is above national and county averages, and improving. The centre has good working links with some pre-schools and primary schools in the area. However, checks and information sharing are not sufficiently thorough to ensure staff support children to be ready for school.
- The centre is not narrowing the achievement gap fast enough for those children from less affluent families and all children living in the area.
- Individual family files capture the impact of services on outcomes through the early help checks and the use of this is becoming embedded as more staff are trained. A tracking tool to help leaders and managers monitor the effectiveness of the work is just being implemented. This will enable the overall impact of the centre's work on families' outcomes to be collated.
- Family support work is of good quality and leads to positive outcomes for most families and children, including those with additional needs and disabilities. Staff refer families to children's social care appropriately when concerns escalate. However, case recording systems are currently unwieldy and time consuming. Action planning is completed and updated regularly, but is not currently tightly focused on outcomes and sometimes lacks timescales.
- Not enough families access adult education opportunities and support into employment. This is due to low engagement with workless families and under-developed links with agencies to support them. For those that do access these services, outcomes are not tracked. However, volunteering opportunities are good and well managed by the children's centre. Volunteers receive a comprehensive induction and useful training in safeguarding and understanding their role.
- Health outcomes in the reach area show improvement. Breastfeeding rates are better than those found nationally. However, obesity rates, although improving, are above the national average and remain a priority. The centre provides support in this area, for example through healthy eating and cookery workshops and healthy snacks served in all groups.
- Well established and effective joint working arrangements with health professionals, for example at baby clinics, are effective in supporting target families in need of additional support. This helps parents to ensure children are safe and improve their health and well-being. The small numbers that attend parenting programmes engage well and evaluate them positively. Courses are having a positive impact, for example in increasing parental confidence in understanding babies' communication skills and development. Parents are able to focus on their learning as community childminders care for their children.
- The centre is responsive to the needs of the area, for example running specialist groups for multiple birth families and young parents. Although the numbers attending sessions is small, these sessions meet identified needs. For example, young parents receive support with budgeting and multiple birth families can share experiences, which reduces potential social isolation.

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

- The advisory board is well established, with good parental representation and understanding of the needs of the local area. Members help the centre to identify priority groups of families that may benefit from services and challenge the centre on registration and engagement targets. However, members of the advisory board receive insufficient financial information to influence and contribute to their discussions and check the impact of their decisions.
- Partnership working with social care services and the family resilience team is developing. A named social worker has been recently linked with the centre to improve communication. Early intervention and prevention services are establishing new ways of working together, such as through the forum meetings, but these are in the very early stages of development. Professionals acknowledge there is a need for improved information sharing between children's social care, the family resilience team and the children's centre to ensure that families are provided with a fully coordinated approach.
- There is a lack of coherence between individual action plans and the overall plan for the centre to address key priorities. Timescales and success measures are not always precise. Staff attend training events, but these opportunities are not closely linked to the key priorities identified in the plans. The observation of direct practice is not sufficiently frequent.
- There are some well-established partnerships with pre-schools and the centre has hosted an early years network meeting. However, the effectiveness of partnerships with local primary schools is mixed. Partnerships with local community groups, such as the local National Childbirth Trust, enhance the work of the centre.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are comprehensive and staff know how to implement them in order to reduce the risk of harm to children and families in most need. All staff are trained regularly and safer recruitment processes are followed appropriately. There are currently no child protection or child in need cases with family support worker involvement in the area. The centre provides support to looked after children by providing a safe and comfortable environment for contact visits.
- Centre staff make best use of available resources to provide a wide range of services available to everyone and to support those families in greatest need. The centre is well resourced and provides a safe and welcoming environment. Good liaison is made with relevant professionals to ensure that children with disabilities access services through the Barnardo's Little Breaks service. The overstretched front-line staff are dedicated and hard working.
- Leaders know what they need to do to improve and self-evaluation is accurate. Managers are open to external advice and the system of reviews is used well to develop services further. Supportive professional supervisions and setting targets for staff are conducted regularly. These are appreciated by staff, stimulate their commitment and contribute to their training and development.

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	23621
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	447556
Managed by	Barnardo's on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	583
Centre leader	Sarah Elliott
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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