

Cambridgeshire - Sawston & Linton

Bellbird Primary School, Link Road, Sawston, CB22 3GB

Inspection dates

Previous inspection date

2–3 October 2014

Not Previously Inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
		Not Previously Inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Inadequate	4
The quality of practice and services		Inadequate	4
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a centre that is inadequate.

- The local authority does not ensure the centre has precise, easily accessible and timely information in order for it to plan, target and monitor the impact of its services. As a result, monitoring by all those responsible for governance lacks rigour. Priorities are not clearly identified and targets to improve the provision lack challenge and are not adequately followed up.
- Resources are insufficient and not used efficiently to meet the needs of priority families.
- Systems to monitor and track the progress of children and adults who access the centre's services are insufficiently developed. As a result, the centre cannot adequately demonstrate the difference it is making to the lives of families.
- Too few families are known to the centre or use the centre services regularly, particularly those from priority groups.
- There is not a broad enough range of groups and activities on offer to identify, engage and sustain the engagement of those who need them most.
- A low proportion of two-year-olds take up their entitlement to funded early education and the centre does not adequately follow up those who do not take this funding up to ensure they get the early support they may need.
- There are not enough opportunities for workless adults to access courses, training or volunteering that help to improve their long-term employability.
- Leaders and managers do not receive timely information about health outcomes. The proportion of mothers breastfeeding their babies at six-to-eight weeks is low.

It has the following strengths:

- The staff are passionate about their work and work hard to provide support for families.
- Effective partnerships help provide targeted prevention for those children subject to child protection plans or Common Assessment Framework processes.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Improve governance, leadership and management arrangements by:
 - ensuring the centre has sufficient resources to meet the needs of priority groups
 - ensuring the centre has access to all the information it needs, including local health data, so that targets for improvement can be clearly identified
 - sharpening the improvement plan to focus on improving specific outcomes, particularly for priority families, which clearly shows specific, measurable and achievable targets that all staff and partners understand and jointly deliver
 - ensuring issues identified through monitoring such as the annual conversation are followed up to ensure that actions are taken.

- Improve access to services for children and families so that the very large majority of those identified as priority groups by the centre access relevant services until their needs are met by:
 - continuing to increase registration rates and ensuring that the very large majority of families have been seen by the centre and their needs accurately assessed
 - ensuring the timetable of activities is substantially increased and matched to identified needs, and that there is an appropriate balance of well located services open to everyone with specifically targeted services across the reach area
 - working with the local authority to ensure that most two-year-olds who are eligible for free early education have access to good or better early years learning provision.

- Improve the quality of services so that they are good by:
 - tracking the progress that target children make when they access children's centre services, to clearly demonstrate the impact of the centres work
 - working with partners to ensure that health data is up-to-date and enables the centre to see whether outcomes are improving or not
 - ensuring adults have access to a range of training and support to help them improve their employability and track the impact of these services.

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 the staff at the centre and senior staff and managers from the local authority. They also met with representatives from partner agencies, parents, and members of the advisory board.

The inspectors visited the centre's Sawston and Linton sites and observed the 'New Beginnings' baby group.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a wide range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Jean-Marie Blakeley	Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Ann Taylor		Additional inspector
Karen Cooper		Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Sawston and Linton Children's Centre covers a rural area bordering south Cambridge city to the north-east, and the border with Suffolk and Essex in the south-west. The centre has recently gone through a twelve month period of instability whilst the local authority has reviewed and restructured its services.

The Sawston venue is in a building adjoining The Bellbird Primary School (URN 135132). The school is subject to a separate inspection and its report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk. The Linton venue is in the Cathodeon Centre, a building owned by Linton Parish council and managed by the Cathodeon Trust.

The local authority directly governs and manages the centre supported by an advisory board comprising key stakeholders, including parents, partners and community members. The children's centre forms part of a 'locality team', and works with other services for children aged 0-19 in the enhanced and preventative services of Cambridgeshire County Council. The locality manager line manages the children's centre manager.

Approximately 1687 children under five years of age live in the reach area. The very large majority of families are of White British heritage. Around 139 children live in families that have no adult in work. Children's skills on entry to early years provision are below those typical for their age.

The majority of families are fairly affluent with some pockets of deprivation. A distinctive feature being that the poorest and the richest families live side by side. There are no lower super output areas identified as being in the 20% most deprived in the county.

Leaders have identified the children in most need of support as: children with additional needs; children who are not achieving a good level of development; young parents; children affected by economic disadvantage, particularly children eligible for funded two year nursery provision; children subject to child protection plans, those deemed to be children in need and those subject to common assessment framework processes(CAF); families affected by domestic abuse; families affected by homelessness; and families affected by isolation.

The centre aims to provide family support, universal health services, and some activity sessions held at the Sawston and Linton sites.

Inspection judgements

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

- Access is inadequate overall because only a very small minority of children are known to the centre and too few engage in centre activities or services. The centre does not have data on the engagement of some of its priority groups.
- Most groups currently identified by the centre as in need of support are not sufficiently well engaged. For example, there are over 139 children living in workless households and only a very small minority regularly access services.
- Although the centre is aware that children with additional needs have access to support through the early support team, it does not closely monitor their engagement.
- The centre has not fully identified the needs of priority families most in need of support. As a result, the centre does not effectively target or support all of the families most in need of its services, including those who may be less likely to access them. .
- Not enough of the work of the centre is focused on early identification of need and intervention, as the small part-time staff resource is mostly focused on responding and providing long term support for those families that may be in crisis.
- There are too few services and activities provided in locally accessible venues. Recent funding and staffing cuts have significantly reduced the opening times of both of the centre's venues. The range of activities is too narrow and not enough is done to provide activities and services for those families affected by rural isolation and poor public transport.
- The centre is aware of 77 two-year-old children who are eligible for free early education. However, a shortage of places in locally accessible early years provision and the centre's lack of contact with families mean that only 41 are accessing their entitlement. In addition, the percentage of three and four-year-olds accessing their funded early education places is below the average for the local authority.
- Insufficient help is provided to reduce the number of children living in workless households. Only a very low number of parents have had access to or been supported through adult learning, training or volunteering. Links with employability services have recently been strengthened but it is too early to judge the impact.
- Young parents have good access to support through a commissioned service and their engagement is good. Effective sharing of information and transition arrangements ensures that many of the young families continue to access support through the centre.

The quality of practice and services **Inadequate**

- The centre does not provide a balance between activities open to all and those aimed at specific groups and the range available is inadequate. As a result, inequalities for priority families are not reducing quickly enough.

- Following budget and staffing cuts, services are now infrequent and poorly located, and some parents do not know what the children's centre can offer. It is difficult for staff and partners to refer families to the centre because the range of activities is so limited that there is little available to refer them to.
- The lack of timely and routine checks on information means that the centre does not always know which of its families from priority groups have accessed services and continue to do so. Data provided indicates that attendance at sessions by priority groups is too low.
- Numbers of families attending parenting courses are also low and the centre does not ensure that priority families needing parenting support access these courses. This reduces the potential impact on priority families.
- The centre does not receive accurate and timely data from health in order to plan and monitor the impact of its services. Data provided indicates that the proportion of mothers who continue breastfeeding at six-to-eight weeks is well below national averages.
- The referral of adults for employment advice and volunteering opportunities is at an early stage of development. Very few adult learning or training opportunities are provided which restricts opportunities for adults to gain qualifications or progress into further education or employment. Systems to track the longer-term impact of adult learning and employment opportunities are not in place.
- The centre does not evaluate how well children's access to the services helps them in their readiness for school. Systems such as 'learning journeys' introduced to record how well children progress during their time at the centre's activities and to plan next steps are under-developed.
- Schools report that children who have accessed support from the centre are well prepared to engage with teachers. However, the majority of children start school with skills below those expected for their age, particularly in communication, literacy and language.
- The centre does not analyse data related to the percentage of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. This means that the centre does not know if children that have accessed its services are sufficiently helped to be ready for school or how it can plan and target its services to improve areas of underperformance.
- Case files demonstrate that the high numbers of children subject to a CAF and the small number of children subject to a child protection plan receive well co-ordinated support from the centre and its partners that helps keep them safe. Parents said 'The staff are great and they have supported us at every stage of our children's development. They have helped with establishing routines and managing their behaviour.'

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Inadequate

- The local authority recognises that data collection and analysis is underdeveloped.

Information on the engagement of priority groups provided by its data system is not always up-to-date, easily accessible or checked in sufficient detail. This reduces centre leaders', and the keen, committed and supportive advisory board's, ability to measure the impact of services to support priority families. As a result, leaders and managers do not accurately evaluate the impact of services.

- The local authority conducts annual reviews and monitors the work of the centre. However, with limited data, it recognises that although targets are set they are not sufficiently challenging across all areas of performance. Progress towards achieving the targets is not checked sufficiently thoroughly. This restricts their usefulness in bringing about rapid improvement.
- Some information that the centre needs is not made available to leaders and managers. In particular, they do not routinely receive a detailed breakdown of the achievement of children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and health data is neither specific to the reach area nor timely.
- Funding and staffing cuts have resulted in the centre having insufficient capacity to provide adequate services to meet the needs of its priority groups. Existing resources are used to provide a service that responds to families in crisis leaving too few services and activities that are informative and preventative. As a result, resources are not used efficiently to provide early identification and intervention.
- Safeguarding recruitment practices meet current requirements and staff receive appropriate training and supervision. Families identified as in need are referred appropriately to the centre by partners. As a result of good inter-agency working with partners, the dedicated staff provide effective support for families.
- Case files demonstrate that children who are looked after, subject to child protection plans or CAF processes, and those deemed to be children in need engage well with the centre. A free voucher system enables some of these families to access chargeable activities provided by private and voluntary groups.
- The very recently appointed centre manager is aware of the lack of available data and information on the impact of the centre's services and recognises the impact of recent funding cuts on the range and quality of available services. However, it is too early for her to have had an effect on improving the provision.

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	80736
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	447587
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1687
Centre manager	Tara Hebditch
Telephone number	01223 706373
Email address	tara.hebditch@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- 21799 Conkers Children's Centre
- 22635 Seedlings Children's Centre

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