

Speedwell Children's Centre

Speedwell Road, Speedwell, Bristol, BS5 7SY

Inspection dates	15–16 October 2014
Previous inspection date	23–24 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	Previous inspection:		
		Inadequate	4
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 many families are not making the most of the services available. Consequently, staff are not seeing some families often enough to help them and their children.
- Not enough of the youngest children are receiving their free early education place to which they are entitled. This means they are not getting the support they need early enough.
- There are not enough available places in the area for all two-year-olds to have a good quality early education experience through the free funding.
- The governing body is not always provided with sufficient support, training and information to enable it to challenge and monitor the centre's performance effectively.
- The arrangements for the combined advisory board are very new. It is too early to see how effective this new system will be and what difference it will make in the longer term.

It has the following strengths:

- Everyone involved with the centre is enthusiastic and has high aspirations for the centre and the families it serves. The number of families who are registered at the centre has radically increased. Suitable steps to continue to make improvements are firmly in place.
- Those families that regularly attend the centre's services get a good deal. They learn new parenting skills, develop self-confidence and gain a better understanding about their children's needs. They are successfully supported to become volunteers, gain employment, and to set up their own support groups.
- Families are made to feel welcome. Differences are respected and celebrated, as seen in the beautiful 'welcome' embroidery in the entrance hall. The artist in residence has also helped provide a rich and exciting outdoor area for families to play and learn in.
- Safeguarding is given a high priority. Family support workers know the families they work with very well. All staff work closely with a good range of partners to help keep children safe and reduce the risk of harm to their families.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Increase the engagement of families so that a large majority regularly uses the centre's services.
- Work with the local authority and other education partners to provide more good or better places for free nursery education for eligible two-year-olds so that more children are well prepared to start school.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by providing the governing body with support, training and precise information so that governors can challenge the centre's performance more easily and effectively.
- Ensure that the advisory board builds on the work already started by the centre to gain an even better knowledge about the families in the areas served by each centre.

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.

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, representatives from the local authority, the centre manager and a member of the advisory board. They also met with parents and representatives of organisations who work in partnership with the centre.

The inspectors visited activities taking place in the centre, such as the nurture group, Little Dragons, and a crèche.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centre's self-evaluation, action and development plans. In addition, they reviewed reports from the local authority and the minutes from the governing body. Parent satisfaction surveys, a sample of case studies and case files, along with safeguarding policies and procedures, were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Steffi Penny, Lead Inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sue Pepper

Additional Inspector

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Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

The centre opened in 2010 as a stand-alone centre. It is integrated with Speedwell Nursery School and Children's Centre Childcare and Speedwell Nursery School, which are both subject to separate inspections.

The centre delivers or supports access to a range of services. These include family support, adult and family learning, early education and health services. Activities are run at Speedwell Nursery School, St Aidan's church hall and a community building. The centre works closely with the three other children's centres in the local area: Hillfields, Little Hayes and The Limes. These centres work collaboratively and are subject to separate inspections. Following the last inspection, they now share an advisory board.

There are 1,523 children under five years of age living in the community the centre serves. This area was extended in April 2014, increasing the number of children by 337. There is a broad social mix. Most children live in the top 50% of the most deprived areas of the country.

Around one in five children aged from birth to four live in households dependent on workless benefits. A similar proportion of families benefit from the Child Tax Credit element of Working Tax Credit. Children enter early years provision at levels typically below those expected for their age. The large majority of families are of White British heritage, with an increasing a wide range of minority ethnic groups, including those new to Britain.

The governing body of the nursery school and children's centre manages the centre on behalf of the local authority.

The centre has identified a number of families with high levels of needs. They are workless households, children or parents who are disabled, mothers suffering from postnatal depression or attachment issues, lone parents on a low income and fathers who are not living with their children. Other high levels of need include families who speak English as an additional language who are not registered or accessing services, victims of domestic abuse, and two-year-olds entitled to free early education.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Access to services requires improvement because not enough families are using children's centre services. Too many children are not getting the support they need at an early enough stage in their lives. In addition, there are not enough vacant places in the area for all two-year-olds who are entitled to a funded place to have one.
- Since the last inspection, a large majority of children are now registered with the children's centre. Considerable efforts have been made to ensure this dramatic increase. All families who have recently had a baby or moved into the area are directly contacted by the centre. They are offered the opportunity to have a home visit by a member of the centre's staff. During the visit, they are encouraged to register with the centre and are able to learn about the help and support the centre and its partners have to offer.
- Only a minority of the children in the new areas allocated to the centre in April 2014 were previously registered with a children's centre. Through home visits and close working with partners, the large majority of children in these areas are now registered at Speedwell Children's Centre.
- Through partnership work, with other education providers and Jobcentre Plus, much more is known about most families in the local areas supported by the centre. Consequently, the centre staff know which families would most benefit from additional support. This includes those registered with the centre but choosing to attend another one. It also applies to those in the geographical area

assigned to the centre but who choose to register and attend services elsewhere.

- Working closely with families, staff effectively identify needs and match families to the services they require. Timely checks of some children lead to early referral to specialist services, particularly for children with a disability or additional needs.
- The tracking of children taking up places, either at the centre or at private, voluntary or independent settings in the area the centre serves, is thorough.
- A large majority of children have three- and four-year-old funded nursery education places.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The quality of practice and services requires improvement. This is because, although the work that staff do with families who attend the centre is good, not enough families are accessing children's centre services. This means that some families who are most in need, due to their circumstances, may not be getting the help they require. This also reduces the centre's overall impact on improving the lives for children and families.
- Close work with speech and language therapists and other providers is helping to improve children's speaking skills and their personal, social and emotional development. As a result, most children getting early education as two-year-olds are ready for school when they are five. However, not enough children living in the community the centre serves are well prepared when they start school.
- The family support workers provide high levels of care, guidance and support for families, often in the own homes. Targets are set with families at the start of any support and the impact carefully recorded. Families report that they trust the staff and feel able to share any concerns, including issues around mental well-being and domestic violence.
- The centre offers a suitable balance of services open to all and services to support families who need additional help.
- The imaginative use of an artist in residence has resulted in highly creative outdoor play areas. This stimulates children's interest in nature; children experiment, for example, by making their own charcoal.
- Joint working with health visitors is very effective at identifying, contacting and providing priority families with essential health information and services.
- Parents regularly attending the centre's activities make significant progress in developing their parenting and communication skills. Their awareness of health issues affecting their children increases. They learn how to keep themselves and their children safe.
- Parents learn how to stimulate their children, use positive rewards to help them manage their own behaviour and help them learn through play. Parents often report that family relationships improve.
- Parents develop useful pre-work skills in all the groups they attend, including punctuation, teamwork and social skills, which lead to greater confidence. The centre regularly uses volunteering as a route into work with good success rates.
- The centre strongly supports and promotes equality and diversity. It does this through carefully designed courses and targeted programmes for parents. Examples include learning English as an additional language and supporting social cohesion through creative activity, such as the 'welcome' embroidery. The centre's artist in residence supports parent volunteers in setting up groups, for example a support group for Muslim women from different branches of Islam.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The governing body has found the amount and different types of information presented to it confusing. The governors know the centre's strengths and weaknesses. However, the support, training and information provided for them, and by them, do not always enable members to confidently challenge the centre's performance.
- The new advisory board has met once and it is too soon to judge its effectiveness. It contains a

reasonable range of representatives from each of the children's centres, agencies, other partners and parents, typically found working on such boards.

- The centre has not been successful at engaging enough families to access children's centre services. However, registrations have significantly increased, particularly the number of fathers.
- Safeguarding children and families is a high priority. Checks and the monitoring of progress with parents of children involved in the early help assessment are effective. Children who are looked after, subject to child protection plans, and those deemed to be children in need are well supported.
- Case files show how some priority families have been helped to tackle difficult circumstances, reducing inequalities and increasing family economic well-being. The new quality assurance audit of case files helps to maintain consistently high standards. This ensures cases are closed in a timely fashion when families no longer require help.
- Supervision of staff is effective. Clear procedures are in place to supervise staff regularly. Staff feel well supported and have access to good training opportunities which help them to develop their skills and knowledge. This enables them to meet successfully the needs of their local community.
- The centre manager has established a culture of continuous improvement among staff. Staff use clear systems including reflective practice and users' feedback to evaluate the quality of the services provided. Parents' views are sought after sessions and these show a high level of satisfaction.
- The centre is successfully working with other centres by sharing resources and information to avoid duplication, saving time and money. More of this partnership work is planned.
- By working closely with the other centres and health partners, the centre has ensured that the information it has about families is more up to date. This information is much more accurate than that provided by the local authority, which is often three years out of date. However, the centre presents its information in too many ways to be quickly and easily understood, particularly by partners who do not work in education.
- The centre manager is held to account and is supported effectively by the local authority. This is done through the annual review process, regular visits, analysis of the centre's performance information and challenging targets being set.

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	22807
Local authority	Bristol
Inspection number	447539
Managed by	The governing body of Speedwell Nursery School and Children's Centre on behalf of the local authority.

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,523
Centre manager	Lindsey Fuller
Date of previous inspection	23–24 October 2013
Telephone number	01179030329
Email address	Head.speedwell.n@bristol.gov.uk

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