

3R6 Chorleywood and Loudwater Children's Centre

Chorleywood Library, Lower Road, Chorleywood, WD3 5LB

Inspection dates	5–6 November 2014
Previous inspection date	Not Previously Inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Not applicable	
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 is a good centre.

- Leaders have been successful at increasing the number of families so that most are registered and the large majority access children's services regularly.
- Health outcomes for families are good because of high quality provision and effective partnerships with health workers that support improvement.
- Strong partnerships are effective in ensuring that the centre offers a good range of services, both at the centre and in community venues. These meet the needs of local families well.
- Families are safeguarded well through their contact with the centre. Staff work closely with partners to provide relevant services for children and families most in need of help and protection.
- The local authority, governors and the Pre-school Learning Alliance provide good support and challenge. They are committed to meeting the needs of children and families, especially those most in need. As a result there is a strong capacity to sustain improvement.

It is not outstanding because:

- Relatively few fathers take part in the regular activities of the centre.
- Systems for checking information on the progress made by children who attend activities at the centre are not sufficiently developed. This limits leader's ability to demonstrate fully the impact of the centre's work to reduce inequalities.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of fathers so that the large majority use the centre's services regularly.
- Strengthen systems for tracking children's learning and development at centre services. Make sure that the centre leaders can show the progress that children make and how well they are prepared for school.

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 two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with: centre staff; representatives of the local authority and the Pre-school Learning Alliance group; the children's centre manager; two members of the advisory board; parents and users of the centre; and representatives of organisations who work in partnership with the centre.

The inspectors visited activities taking place in the centre and in the community. Inspectors jointly observed one activity with the centre manager and one with the senior coordinator.

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

Inspection team

Steve Nelson, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Michael Miller	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Chorleywood and Loudwater Children's Centre operates in the Chorleywood South and Chorleywood North wards. It is located on the same site as the Chorleywood Library and delivers outreach services to the community. The centre provides services for families by commissioning them from a range of partners and by working in partnership with health visitors, midwives and speech therapists in the shared delivery of services. The range of activities offered by the centre includes support at the local community baby clinic, antenatal birth clinic, breastfeeding support and baby massage. The centre signposts families to a range of providers that offer adult education, volunteering opportunities, and activities designed to support parents and carers back into employment and training. Activities are planned with other children's centres in the locality to ensure a full range of services is available to families.

The centre is run by the Pre-school Learning Alliance on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council. It has a single advisory body consisting of representatives from partner organisations, parents and key stakeholders that work with the children's centre and the local authority.

The children's centre has 652 children under the age of five living in its area. The large majority of the families living in the area are White British. A growing number of families using the centre are from minority ethnic groups. The centre serves a largely affluent area, and the proportions of children living in households reliant on benefits, or where their parents are out of work, are relatively low. When they start early years education, children's levels of skills and knowledge are broadly typical or better for their age.

The main priority groups assessed in need of the centre's services are children under one years of age, expectant mothers, disadvantaged children, disabled children and those who have special educational needs, children subject to a child protection plan, children in need plan or supported by the Common Assessment Framework procedures.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- Most families with young children including the growing number of minority ethnic families are registered with the centre. The number of families taking advantage of the centre's services, support and advice is improving steadily. As a result, the large majority of families are regularly using the centre's services.
- The centre works well with its key partners to identify expectant families and children under one year of age. The information enables leaders to plan precisely services such as the 'Baby on the Way' sessions in the evening and the weekly 'Baby and Movers' group. As a result, staff are successfully supporting most of these families prepare for birth through to their children's first steps.
- The centre is very good at reaching families most in need of help. All of the most vulnerable children in the area benefit from the centre's services. Case files show that family outreach workers attend core and family group meetings, provide timely support for families and work effectively to keep children safe from harm.
- Leaders have good links with community partners in the area and this has enabled them to

establish good quality outreach services in the community. For example, the regular 'Messy Play' sessions provided at the Mill End Baptist Church are well attended by families from priority groups. However, relatively few fathers engage with the centre on a regular basis.

- There are very few families in the area that are dependent on workless benefits. All of these families are now attending sessions run by the centre and benefitting from the advice of its partners. The Mill End Community Centre, for example, helps adults develop their work preparation and job search skills as well as offering advice on benefits.
- The centre approaches all of the very few families who are eligible for free early education. This ensures that they take up their places in mostly good early years settings. The vast majority of three-year-olds have taken up their free early years education.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- Families benefit from a good balance of services open to everyone and those aimed at priority groups. Sessions, such as 'Singing and Signing' and 'Hartbeeps', are designed to develop children's language through a range of fun nursery rhymes and action songs. One parent said: 'I am so happy with the nursery sessions. My son and I sing them at home together.'
- The centre works well with pre-schools in the area and promotes children's learning and development in the community, through the support and advice it offers at the early years settings throughout the area. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Early Year's Foundation Stage is above average, including disadvantaged children.
- Sessions such as 'Ready 2 Learn' for pre-school children with their parents help develop children's confidence and independence. However, the centre's systems for tracking children's progress are in the early stages of development. This means the centre is not yet able to fully demonstrate the impact of its work in preparing all children ready for school.
- Through sessions such as 'Run Around' and the 'Yoga for Active Babies' group are helping families live healthier life styles through increased physical activity. Partnership work with health visitors and midwifery are strong. As a consequence, health outcomes, such as the number of mothers continuing to breastfeed at six-to-eight weeks are well above average; while obesity levels in young children are lower than average.
- Children behave in ways that are safe for themselves and others. For example, they help tidy away toys in the play areas. They show an increasing awareness of the importance of being safe in all situations and using equipment safely. Adults that have completed the first aid qualification say that they are more confident about keeping their families safe at home and know what to do in an emergency.
- Families are highly satisfied with the quality of services at the centre. Parents from priority groups say how much they appreciate the very good support from family outreach workers. This helps parents engage in the centre and in the community, meet new friends and break down the barriers they feel in relation to isolation.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

are good

- The centre is well led and managed by a highly competent management team. The centre manager and senior coordinator are determined to do their best for families and lead by example. They are supported well by a committed staff in helping families and children the centre serves, particularly those most in need.

- The local authority and the Pre-school Learning Alliance, who work closely together, both support and challenge the centre by setting ambitious targets, regular visits and analysis of the centre's performance data. This has a positive impact on the centre's performance for example, as seen in the increasing number of families, other than fathers, registered and accessing the centre.
- The centre's advisory board is highly effective. By participating in activities such as having a linked advisory board champion for each of the centre's priorities, scrutiny of the self-evaluation report and regular reviews of the centre's performance, they are actively involved in driving improvements at the centre. Parents' views are regularly sought through the work of the advisory board and the 'Parent's Voice', a specific group set up to enable parents full involvement in shaping services.
- Centre staff are well trained and experienced in aspects that meet local needs. For example, staff co-facilitate healthy eating courses and have received domestic violence awareness training to help them with this aspect of their work. The centre's training plan and professional development targets reflect the links to supporting families who need it most. This is having a positive impact on reducing inequalities and bettering families' lives.
- Leaders work well with key partners and this enables them to respond effectively and with flexibility in meeting the needs of families. The partnership between the centre, local schools and early years providers is strong. As a result, children, including disabled children and those with special educational needs, are prepared well for the next steps in their learning. Leaders recognise that systems to check children's progress require strengthening.
- Safeguarding and safe recruiting arrangements are robust and staff have received relevant training. Policies and procedures to promote safeguarding meet requirements and are understood by staff. Children subject to a child protection plan, children in need plan or helped by the Common Assessment Framework procedures receive well-integrated support. E-safety is promoted well and parents are aware of the risks associated with using computers and social media.
- Resources, especially staff, are used effectively to meet the requirements of local families in particular those who need the support the most. The shared building is well maintained, bright and welcoming. Good collaboration with partners such as the community venue at The Bridge St Andrews Church and Bullsland Hall near The Swillett ensure that services are delivered where they are needed most.

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	20014
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	451922
Managed by	By the Pre-school Learning Alliance on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	652
Centre manager	Angela Welsh
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01923 484903
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