

Cambridgeshire - Cottenham & Swavesey

Daisy Children's Centre, Varrier Jones Drive, Papworth Everard, CB23 3XQ

Inspection dates	11–13 November 2014
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected as a group

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	Previous inspection:	Not applicable	
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 children's centre group requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Staff do not have sufficient access to all relevant information held on families that they work with. They do not have access to records of work carried by other agencies which has the potential to hinder their work with the families and their own safety.
- Not enough children and families are benefiting from the centres' services. Likewise, not enough two-year-olds are taking up their entitlement to free early education.
- Too few opportunities are available for adults to enhance their education and employability.
- Data supplied by the local authority and systems to demonstrate the impact of the centres' work are fit for purpose. However, these systems are too new, and have not yet had time to be embedded. Staff have yet to receive all the required training to be able to fully utilise them.

It has the following strengths:

- There is a strong forward looking partnership between the children's centre, early years providers and schools, focused on sharing best practice and working effectively with families.
- Children benefit from activities which help to prepare them for school, and parents make new friends and develop confidence in their parenting skills.
- Despite significant reductions in resources, management and staff remain positive and committed to improving the lives of families across the district they serve.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of families using the centres' services, particularly those in most need.
- Ensure more families to take up their entitlement to free early education places for two-year-old children.
- Develop stronger partnerships with adult education and training services to engage more parents in relevant education, further learning and skills training; and establish a system for measuring the take up and impact of these experiences on their economic well-being.
- The Local Authority should ensure data are used well, by ensuring the group manager receive timely training and on-going support on how to effectively use the database system.
- The local authority should ensure that staff working with families have access to all relevant, and related, information about the family, in an accessible and easily updated format, including:
 - overall summary of the family group
 - visibility of any concerns or alerts.

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 of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager and the staff at the centres 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 all three children's centre buildings. They observed the centres' work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Susan Smith Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Derrick Baughan	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ann Taylor	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the group

The Cottenham and Swavesey Group of children's centres comprises Daisy, Dolphin, and Starship children's centres. The three centres are managed as a group, with a full-time children's centre manager, supported by a senior family worker. All three centres are on school sites; the Daisy centre at Pendragon Primary School in Papworth Everard, the Dolphin centre at Waterbeach Community Primary School in Waterbeach and the Starship at Bar Hill Primary School in Bar Hill. All schools are subject to a separate inspection and their report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk. The group has recently gone through a twelve month period of instability whilst the local authority has reviewed and restructured its services.

The local authority directly governs and manages the group of centres. The children's centre group 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. The locality team supports children and families in the 0-19 age group and is located in the enhanced and preventative services arm of the children, families and adults directorate of Cambridgeshire County Council. The group has a single advisory board, which includes a range of partners including statutory partners such as health, a local councillor, childcare provider, local schools and parents using the children's centres.

The Cottenham and Swavesey Children's Centres group covers the northern part of the district of South Cambridgeshire, to the north and west of the City of Cambridge. The area is mainly rural, predominantly home to people who commute to Cambridge and other towns. Approximately 2476 children under five years of age live in the reach area. The very large majority of families are of White British heritage with a small but ethnically diverse population. Children's skills on entry to the early years provision are varied but mostly typical for their age. The majority of families are fairly affluent with some pockets of deprivation. Most health services are delivered through Cambridge based teams, but in the Papworth area, midwifery services are provided from Hinchingbrooke Hospital in Huntingdon.

In conjunction with other organisations, services provided by the group include parenting support, employment support and advice, activities for children, adult learning, volunteering opportunities, family support and health services. The centres have identified a number of groups on which to focus services. These include: children with additional needs; 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); and traveller families.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- The overall proportion of families who use the centre is improving but not yet good. Not enough families from all priority groups, in particular, families living in Fenstanton, Milton and Willingham and traveller families are engaged with the group. However, this has been recognised as an area for improvement and an action plan to increase participation is being implemented. It is too soon to judge the effectiveness of this.
- The take up of funded early education places for eligible two-year-old children is low with only two thirds accessing their entitlement. There is a lack of accurate and reliable information for the take up of places for eligible three and four year old children. As a result the centre have not identified those children who are not accessing funding.
- Families, including those expecting children, have access to a range of services and activities to promote good health. Good working relationships with the health teams at Waterbeach and Bar Hill, ensure activities such as the baby essentials programme, well baby clinics and midwife discharge clinics are available at the centres. Relations with health teams in the Papworth area are not so well established but families are still able to access services.
- Centre staff work productively with a wide range of professionals, such as pre-schools, schools, health visitors and social care professionals, to identify and prioritise families in most need of support. They work closely with partners and share appropriate information through the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and locality allocation and review meetings (LARM) procedures to support families identified as needing specific help, particularly to reduce the risk of harm to children.
- Outreach work has been effective in making contact with some hard-to-reach groups. Family workers provide effective support for some families within their home when they are reluctant or unable to access services at centres.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The group delivers an appropriate range of services which are specifically designed for families in most need and some that are open to all. Although the quality of services and activities for both children and adults is good, not enough families regularly use the centres and systems to measure the impact of what the centres offer is limited.
- The centre can demonstrate the difference the good quality early years courses and sessions such as 'Play and Learn' are making in the short term on children's learning, especially evident through the attractive 'scrap book' style learning journals. However, they are unable to comprehensively demonstrate impact in the longer term, to see if these children are doing any better when they start school and to show that inequalities are narrowing.
- The group works well with families to help adults develop skills around parenting. Although specific parenting courses are not run frequently, other short courses, such as 'Bumps to Babies', engage parents well. They develop clear skills to help them support and play with their children. These activities also help parents develop support networks. Many continue to meet socially outside of the centre as a result of attending sessions.
- One-to-one support for those families in most need is good and often highly effective. Case file records are transferring from paper files to a computerised system. The computerised system limits staff access to all the relevant information held on the family. In particular, staff cannot access

records of work carried out with families by other agencies. Alerts about potential risks are in place but are linked to individuals and not family groups.

- A parent volunteer programme has recently been introduced and gives a few parents, good opportunities to develop their skills and confidence. There are links with employment agencies and some education providers but the centre does not provide enough opportunities for families to extend their basic and further skills. When they do, the centres are not consistently following up the longer-term outcomes.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The group has gone through a period of significant challenge over the past year. This has meant that the overall development of the centres has been too slow. In recent times a programme of support was introduced by the local authority that has helped the new centre manager to provide strong leadership and introduced new ways of working. However, many of these initiatives are in their infancy and it is too soon to measure impact.
- The information and data provided by the local authority is sufficient. However, this has only recently been the case and the centre manager has not had enough training or time to get familiar with the data systems and all the data that she now has access to. As a result those responsible for leadership have not been able to effectively measure the impact of services on priority families.
- Safeguarding and child protection policies and actions are effective in protecting children and families. The systems for referring families in need of support are clear, and procedures to reduce the risk of harm to children, including the use of the Common Assessment Framework, are implemented consistently.
- Staff report that supervision of the work they do with individual families is helpful, challenging and reflective. However, in some case files, the record keeping was not totally reflective of the work with the families.
- Appropriate performance management arrangements are in place. Staff feel well supported and have access to good training opportunities to enable them to further develop their skills and knowledge. This enhances the ability of staff to meet the needs of the community in which they work.
- The centre group has a realistic view of its strengths and areas for development. Governance arrangements through the local authority and the advisory board are well established. Through effective use of their local knowledge, members of the board work in conjunction with the centres to plan how best to respond to local priorities.
- Parents' views are sought regularly at the end of a series of activities and are used to adjust services. The centre is working hard to involve more parents in the decision-making process.
- Resources are of a good quality and used appropriately across the locality to meet the needs of families. However, the full effect of the recent reduction of staff across the locality has yet to be fully recognised as the management team strive to provide a high level of services with a reduced staffing team.

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	80651
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	447649
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	2476
Centre leader	Sally Stephenson
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Telephone number	01480 831423
Email address	sally.stephenson@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- 20001 The Starship Children's Centre
- 20905 Daisy Children's Centre
- 23456 Dolphin Children's Centre

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