

BAS11 Sunnyside Children's Centre

Rosebay Avenue, Billericay, CM12 0GH

Inspection dates	21–22 January 2015
Previous inspection date	Not Previously Inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
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:

- Some vulnerable families are not known and cannot be supported because local information is not shared adequately by all partner agencies. This includes children with a range of complex disabilities and those known to children's social care.
- Not enough parents are taking up courses to gain qualifications in literacy, numeracy, computer and other vocational skills or receive enough help to improve their chances of getting jobs.
- A third of two-year-olds entitled to free early education have not yet been placed in pre-school settings.
- Some safeguarding systems require improvement. Electronic case file records and information are not always complete or up to date; the local children's services are not sharing sufficient information about priority families and the new health and safety management system is not yet fully in place.
- Many activities are new and it is too early to judge how good they are and the impact they are making. The new outreach centre at Langham Hall with a new programme for families in the more deprived South Green area has only just started to operate.
- Leaders and managers are starting to evaluate activities but tracking systems to measure how well the centre is performing are in early stages of development.

This centre has the following strengths:

- Services are delivered by a dedicated staff team who are determined to help those families in most need but are often frustrated by a lack of local information. Team spirit is high with motivated staff.
- Large numbers of families from both universal and priority families attend the popular baby clinics, baby and toddler activities and parenting classes.
- By the end of their school Reception year the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was above national levels in 2014, a significant improvement on the year before.
- Governance is effective, well led and well established with good parent representation

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Improve safeguarding arrangements by:
 - making sure the electronic recording system for priority family case files effectively records whole family information fully, accurately and is up to date.
 - working with local children's services to make sure information about vulnerable families is shared so that centre staff can help and support those families more effectively.
- Provide more opportunities for those adults who lack qualifications and those seeking employment to prepare for work by:
 - increasing participation rates in adult learning programmes, especially basic literacy, numeracy computing courses and suitable vocational courses.
 - working with local adult learning providers and employment organisations to help parents seek careers advice, sign up for courses and look for work.
 - tracking those parents who are signposted to training programmes at other children's centres, local colleges and community learning centres to ensure their employability is improving.
- Increase the engagement of families with disabilities to support the variety of complex needs.

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 representatives from the local authority, the management organisation Barnardo's, health partners, local schools and pre-school settings, adult learning and training services groups, children's centre staff, parents and members of the advisory board. Inspectors also spoke by telephone to the social care team, other members of Essex Children's Services and Jobcentre Plus.

The inspectors visited a range of activities and sessions at the local library and the outreach centre at Langham Hall in the South Green area. Senior centre staff attended all team meetings.

The inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the self-evaluation form, service plans, a sample of case files, parents' satisfaction surveys, safeguarding policies and procedures, and a variety of files for the range of activities delivered.

Inspection team

Additional inspector, Lead inspector	Catherine Stormonth
Additional inspector	Ann Taylor
Additional inspector	Deborah Sanders

Full report

Information about the centre

Sunnyside Children's Centre was opened in 2007 and operates from a purpose-built premises attached to Gooseberry Green Preschool (URN EY427581) and is on the same site as Brightside Primary School (URN 132164) both of which are subject to separate inspection arrangements. The reports can be found at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>. Essex County Council commissioned Barnardo's to take over as the lead agency management organisation from April 2012.

The centre serves the families of Billericay East, Billericay West and Burstead. It is governed by an advisory board of key partners and a parent. The Barnardo's regional manager line manages the centre manager. The centre provides early education, childcare and health services, family support and adult learning courses. Most children enter early education with skills that are slightly lower than those expected for their age, especially in communication and language development.

The centre's reach area includes 1800 children under five years of age, the majority of whom are White British. The largest minority ethnic group is of Eastern European background and there are smaller numbers of Asian and Black Caribbean families. The area is very mixed socially and economically and there are pockets of deprivation. For example, the Sunnyside and Queen's Park area is among the 18% most deprived in England. There are a high proportion of low-income households, lone parents and children with additional needs or disabilities.

The centre's key priority groups include vulnerable children and mothers including those with additional needs or a disability and newly arrived immigrants who have limited spoken English language.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Information is not always shared between partners and some families with young children in the reach area are not known to the centre; the centre is therefore not able to support them. The Whole Essex Information Sharing Framework is about to be launched to provide this critical information but in the meantime the centre is struggling to get accurate information about the most vulnerable families.
- A very small number of families with disabled children are currently well supported by the 'Next Steps' programme but these are only a fraction of the disabled children living in the area.
- Access to early childhood services and antenatal services for those expecting children is improving as more services are run from the centre. As a result, the number of families known to the centre is increasing and a large majority are now registered.
- Priority families are generally well engaged with the centre, including lone parents, families of minority ethnic backgrounds and those living in low-income households.
- There is a full and busy timetable of activities both at the centre and the town library. Library activities are open to all and large numbers attend sessions such as the arts and craft sessions which are run twice weekly.
- Families who live in the South Green area have started using Langham Hall since it opened as a new outreach centre. Staff confirmed that several identified priority families had attended the new sessions such as 'Movers and Shakers' and were clearly enjoying the benefits of these.

- Outreach work is effective in supporting more vulnerable families who would otherwise be unlikely to participate including those referred mainly by health partners.
- The number of adults attending learning courses is low and a third of these drop out and do not complete programmes. Small numbers are signposted to other centres, colleges and training centres. Little is known about whether this training or advice is taken up or leads to a job. The new English for Speakers of Other Languages classes have been successful and the crèche facilities make access to some of the new parenting and healthy living courses possible.
- Development checks for two-year-old children held at the centre help to identify children in need of early help. More than sixty children have been referred to the speech and language drop-ins such as 'Chatterbox' and other clinics with good results.
- Nearly all three- and four-year-old children who are entitled to free early education have been successfully placed in pre-school settings and are making good progress. The local authority is working effectively to make sure there are enough places at good quality nurseries and childminders for the third of two-year-olds who have not yet taken up their places.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The quality and range of services require improvement to provide more opportunities for adults who are seeking qualifications to prepare for work. Links with local adult learning providers and employment organisations are underdeveloped to help parents seek careers advice, sign up for courses and look for work. The small number of parents who are attending courses or who are signposted elsewhere are not monitored to ensure their employability is improving.
- Volunteers play an important role to the work of the centre such as helping with the crèche, office administration and breastfeeding support. There are both formal and informal networks of voluntary support locally used to good effect.
- There is a good range of activities for families with babies and toddlers to guide new parents about early child development such as the 'Breast Friends Cafe', 'Baby Signing' and 'Baby Massage'. Parents confirmed that they have made friends, feel less isolated and say the centre has been 'a life saver' for them.
- In 2014, the percentage of children who achieved a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) was well above the national average. The gap between the lowest-achieving fifth of children and their peers has improved markedly. Data indicates that boys have significantly improved on the previous year. Links with pre-school settings and schools are improving but are still at an early stage.
- Although the centre clearly improves families' lives, the centre is not yet tracking and measuring the impact of the work with both children and adults. For example, written evaluations of activity sessions do not always evaluate learning outcomes to measure the benefits for families. Comments are mainly about coverage and enjoyment.
- The 'Multi-cultural Group' which is delivered by a volunteer teacher, demonstrates the best practice for planning activities based on the EYFS framework and making observations to measure progress.
- Good quality learning journals are produced to reflect each family's experiences and learning outcomes are assessed and show that the bi-lingual families are making good progress in improving a variety of communications.

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

- Leadership and management require improvement because of safeguarding issues linked to communication with other agencies, the very small numbers of adults participating in activities to improve their employability and the low engagement of families with disabilities. The monitoring of the quality and impact of services for priority families to show how the centre reducing inequalities and is improving family life and children's life chances requires improvement.
- Barnardo's policies and procedures are used consistently and contribute to the smooth running of the centre. There are however two main issues. The vulnerable families' case files which use an electronic system still need further improvement to make sure the information about families is accurate, detailed and up to date. Barnardo's confirmed that staff training is planned to make sure this system is a robust and effective way of recording good quality family information. The new health and safety audit programme does not give enough attention to the immediate need for risk assessments for lone working in the community.
- The local authority has put in some good support recently to support the new centre manager during her first six months in her new post. Recent checks of the centre's performance have as yet, not identified specific key priorities for improvement. The low adult learning participation is an example of this.
- The links with the social care team require improvement because the working agreement, made four months ago, to have a named social worker and provide the centre with good information about priority families has not been met. This causes obvious concerns for managers about possible safeguarding issues that have not been shared with the centre. The new Whole Essex Information Sharing Framework has been agreed but has not been implemented yet. A local authority director and senior managers confirmed the imminent launch of these sharing arrangements to improve the safety of local children.
- There are currently no children subject to child protection plans, or looked after, accessing centre services. No child is currently subject to support through the Common Assessment Framework (CAF).
- The advisory board provides good governance. It is formed from key partners from local community groups who work together well and use the information they are provided with to holding the centre to account.
- The centre manager oversees the centre's staff and resources effectively. She monitors staff performance, including observing them working with families. Staff receive good training and professional development opportunities which they use well when supporting families in most need and delivering activities. The centre provides good accommodation which is well maintained with attractive displays and good quality resources, including toys and equipment.
- Parents can channel their views in many different ways so that their voice is heard and their opinion does influence decision making at both management and advisory board levels. There is an active parents' forum locally and the centre 'Friends Group' and ideas are collected and acted upon.

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.

Children's centre

Unique reference number	20201
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	454029
Managed by	Barnardo's on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1800
Centre leader	Jane Masters
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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