

Bath and North East Somerset Somer Valley children's centre group

Radstock Children's Centre, Church Street, Radstock BA3 3QG

Inspection dates	4-6 March 2015
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
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 children's centre group is good.

- Leadership and management are good. The group has registered almost all children under the age of five and the large majority access services including families living in areas of least advantage, lone and isolated parents and workless households.
- Staff work well in partnership with different services and the exchange of information is good. Early childhood allocation meetings are highly effective in allocating matching families to the services they need. As a result the group has sustained contact with three quarters of families from priority groups including those affected by domestic violence, substance misuse and mental ill-health.
- The group focuses well on early childhood development and, in partnership with the local authority early years service, schools and early years settings, is having a positive impact on children's development particularly boys in the most deprived areas.
- The quality of practice is good with some aspects outstanding. Staff plan activities well to meet the needs of individual children from their initial starting points and this helps children develop well. Managers encourage staff to try new things and sessions are constantly evaluated by staff to identify ways to improve.
- The local authority and advisory board support the group well and help them ensure their work is effective in supporting families. Resources are used well and managers are successful in encouraging volunteers to lead universal groups which enables more families to attend.

It is not outstanding because:

- Not enough children achieve a good level of development by the end of Reception.
- Adults do not have sufficient opportunities to improve their education or receive careers guidance locally.
- Breastfeeding and obesity rates need to be improved further across the area.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is at least in line with national levels by:
 - supporting families to ensure full take up of two year-old funding
 - working with early years practitioners across the area to share good practice in supporting children least likely to achieve their potential
 - working with the local authority to ensure Early Years Foundation Stage data for individual children are available to enable managers to optimise the services offered and evaluate the impact of their work.
- Work with adults to raise their aspiration and encourage more to improve their skills and employability by:
 - ensuring access to careers advice and guidance for adults is readily available locally
 - working with providers of education and training to develop a range of courses to help parents progress to further education and training.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children's centre group 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 three additional inspectors. Inspectors held meetings with representative of the local authority, health services, social care, Bath and Norton Radstock Colleges and the group's advisory board. They spoke with parents, staff and managers, including the centre co-ordinators and the group manager. Inspectors also met partner organisations which provide health services and support for families subjected to domestic violence as well as teams supporting early years providers.

Inspectors visited the four centres, examined eight case files and reviewed documentation used for monitoring and assessing the impact of services. They reviewed the group's policies and procedures, self evaluation, action plans for improvement and governance documents.

Inspectors observed 'HARRY' (Helping Adults to Read with the Really Young), a speech and language group, nursery 1:1 time, early support for children with special educational needs and disabilities, 'Incredible Years', 'Infant Feeding Hub', 'Messy Play' including a volunteer led session, well being and confidence work with parents and work with children in the Children's Group (Crèche).

Inspection team

Kenneth Jones, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Patricia Collis	Additional inspector
Graham Saltmarsh	Additional inspector
Rob Mottram	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the group

The Somer Valley Children's Centre Group consists of four children's centres: Peasedown, Radstock, Midsomer Norton and Paulton Children's Centres. There are 2,698 children under the age of five years living in the reach. The group is governed by Bath and North East Somerset Council and supported by an advisory group whose membership includes multi-agency partners, local council and voluntary organisation representatives and users of the centres. The group is managed by a locality service manager and part-time co-ordinators are responsible for individual centres.

The group works closely with the local authority early years team and health visiting service; health visitors are co-located within the Radstock centre. Independently managed early years settings are located at Radstock, Paulton and Westfield and are subject to separate inspections. The reports are available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>

The area served by the group has a contrasting mix of economically disadvantaged and more affluent households. By far the majority of families who live within the catchment area of the group are of White British heritage with only 6% of minority ethnic heritage, mostly Eastern European and Asian.

The proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage varies considerably across the catchment area being above the average for England in Peasedown and Paulton and below in Radstock and Midsomer Norton.

Those identified by the group as most in need of support are young and lone parents, workless households, boys in the Radstock area and families with children with special educational needs and disabilities. Underpinning the work of the group is a focus on families from the most deprived area and those families most in need of support.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The group works very closely with health visitors and midwives. Almost all new born babies are registered and the group is in contact with over three quarters of children in the area under the age of five. Families expecting children are equally well engaged.
- Services which are open to all such as 'messy play' together with very effective partnership working with health and social care enable staff to identify families in need of support early. The group is consequently in contact with the large majority of priority families such as those living in workless households and lone parents. The group works with the very large majority of families living in the most deprived areas and most families with disabled children make regular use of what the centres have to offer.
- Home-based outreach work is effective in helping families access services and families are encouraged to attend centres as their confidence improves.
- Managers monitor attendance and participation carefully and families who do not participate are contacted. As a result of careful monitoring, support and encouragement, attendance at courses such as 'Catching Confidence' is high.
- The very large majority of eligible two-year-olds take up their entitlement to free early education. Through close working with early years' settings, children are placed in registered settings graded good or better at their most recent inspections and a significant number of children with additional needs are supported to access appropriate places.
- Recent surveys conducted by the group indicated that almost all families find centres easy to access. Parents who spoke to inspectors were very positive about the accessibility of support and the actions of staff to maintain contact and parents involvement with the centre, for example using social media.

The quality of practice and services**Good**

- The group provides a wide range of services which are open to all families together with more specialist programmes such as the 'Incredible Years', 'HENRY' (Healthy Exercise and Nutrition For the Really Young), 'Bright Beginnings', 'HARRY' (Helping Adults to Read with the Really Young) and 'My Time My Space' which are targeted to families with particular needs. These are having a significant impact in helping almost all parents develop their understanding, confidence and parenting skills.
- Staff assess and monitor the progress made by children and families carefully both at centres and at home when outreach support is provided. Questionnaires, assessment tools and play diaries are, for example, used well and demonstrate that the large majority of families make good progress. Children are encouraged to express their views using methods appropriate to their ages. Managers are working to improve the monitoring of long term outcomes for families.
- The group is focused on improving children's achievement at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and is working well with early years settings and schools to improve the proportion of children achieving a good level of development. Sessions provided by the centres are planned carefully to provide exciting and interesting activities. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development, although still below the national average, is improving well with significant recent improvement in boys' development in Radstock.
- In partnership with the local authority's special educational needs and disability team the group supports children with additional needs and their families very well. Children have access to specialist sessions and ongoing formal and informal support for families which helps children's development.
- The group has developed good opportunities for parents to volunteer and they are supported well to take on responsibilities and develop employability skills. A successful volunteer led group has been established and is monitored by staff to ensure the work is of a good quality. Further volunteer led groups are planned to maintain opportunities for all parents to attend the centres as resources diminish.
- Case files are well-maintained and events and discussions are recorded along with management oversight and professional supervision. Staff are supported well by the group social worker.
- The group is working well with health professionals to increase breastfeeding rates and reduce the number of overweight children in the area. Regular clinics and an infant feeding hub are appreciated by families and breastfeeding rates are improving. Targeted work to encourage children's healthy eating and increase physical exercise are helping reduce obesity rates among young children.
- Not enough parents are taking up further education courses to improve their job prospects. The range of courses provided by the group is narrow and there are not enough opportunities for parents to access careers advice and guidance locally.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management**Good**

- The group manager provides strong leadership and centres are well managed. Partnership working with health services, social care and early years services is strong. Centre co-ordinators take responsibility for key aspects of the work of the group. Staff are well qualified and their work is carefully supervised. They continuously seek ways to improve the impact of the group on outcomes for children and families.
- The local authority views the group as an integral part of services to provide early help and support for families and supports the work of centres well. Annual monitoring visits review professional practice and its impact on children and families and identify clear measurable targets for improvement. These, together with comprehensive self-assessment and staff appraisal, underpin effective training and professional development for the group and its partners including regular workshops on safeguarding topics provided by the group social worker.
- The advisory board draws wide representation from the area and partner services and is committed to improving the lives of children and families. It has a good overview of both the work and impact of centres as well as priorities for different localities. The board pays particular attention to the views of users of the centres when considering developments and the impact of services.

- Information to plan and target services to families and localities with the greatest needs is shared well by the group and its partner services and resources are used effectively. The group does not however have access to data to enable them to monitor the impact of their work on individual children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Policies, procedures and practices for safeguarding children are well established. Appropriate safe recruitment checks are undertaken for staff and volunteers. Staff work closely with health services, social care and other services to identify and respond well to the needs of children and families including those subject to child protection plans, those in need and looked after children. The Common Assessment Framework is used well to identify need and provide early support.
- Parents are consistently very positive about the work of the group and the support provided. Parents who found themselves isolated, young mothers, those with children with special educational needs and disabilities and those who had suffered from post natal depression were particularly complimentary about the help and support they have received.

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/Children's centre group details

Unique reference number	80229
Local authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	453906
Managed by	The local authority.

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	2,698
Group manager	Heidi Limbert
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01225 39660
Email address	Heidi_Limbert@Bathnes.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- 22005 Midsomer Norton Children's Centre
- 22335 Paulton Children's Centre
- 109063 Peasedown Children's Centre
- 134238 Radstock Children's Centre

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