

North Barnes Children's Centre

Lowther Primary School, Stillingfleet Road, London, SW13 9AE

Inspection dates	10–11 June 2015
Previous inspection date	29–30 April 2014

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:

- The centre is just beginning to show signs of improvement following two years of unacceptably low use of the centre's services. The number of families registered is rising steadily but has not yet reached a good level. The centre does not have direct access to live birth data to ensure it knows about all the families in the area and can follow up contacts.
- Too few families in priority groups have been attending regularly, particularly from the most isolated areas of Kew Riverside.
- Processes for recording and tracking children's and adults' progress are at a very early stage of development. Little use is made of the information gathered to evaluate services. Precise targets are not in place to drive further improvement, for example to measure the level of participation by target families in 'Stay and Play' sessions.
- Provision to help parents develop their basic skills and prepare them for work has not been a centre priority and is not improving fast enough.

This centre has the following strengths:

- The new leadership team has successfully committed expertise and resources to strengthen the advisory board, parents' representation on the board and the staff team.
- The centre uses data effectively to understand the needs of the area. All partners agree on the priorities and are focusing efforts in order to reach more families who most need support.
- Partnerships with health professionals are highly effective. Parents praise the expert guidance available to them to keep their children safe and healthy.
- Take-up rates of early education in the area are high and children are prepared well for moving on to school.
- The manager and staff have already built good relationships with families. Parents are unanimous in their feedback that the centre makes them feel safe, valued and treated with respect. They praise the centre staff for 'going the extra mile for them', especially in a crisis.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Work with partners to increase registrations by:
 - making sure the centre receives timely information about new born children and families new to the area to make each family is aware of the centre's services
 - ensuring most families in the area sign up for services and that all families in priority groups, particularly from Kew Riverside, know about and take up appropriate services regularly.
- Work with partners to improve the evaluation of the centre's overall impact to drive improvement by:
 - setting precise and measurable targets, particularly for ensuring the good engagement of the large majority of children and families from priority groups
 - improving the recording and tracking of children's and adults' progress
 - making use of tracking information and other assessments in the evaluation of services.
- Raise the priority of adult learning and set out a clear plan of action. Work with partners to increase the range of provision to help parents, particularly from the most deprived areas, to improve skills and prepare for work. Identify and work with partner organisations that are already successfully reaching out to communities to provide basic skills and work-related training, for example those offering information technology training.

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 in person and by telephone with the centre manager, representatives of Achieving for Children, including the Children's Centre Services Manager for Kingston & Richmond, the Associate Director for early help and the Deputy Director. They also held meetings with head teachers of linked schools, midwifery, health, speech and language, and education professionals and consultants, providers of adult learning, representatives from the advisory board, and parents.

They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including children's records, case studies and parents' satisfaction surveys.

The inspectors observed the centre's activities taking place at the Lowther Primary School site (the adjoining school has its own Ofsted identification number, URN 102892), at Windham Croft (the linked Windham Nursery School has its own Ofsted identification number, URN 102882) and the Power Station. The schools are subject to separate inspections and the reports can be found on the Ofsted website.

Inspection team

Christine Davies, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Fiona Bridger-Wilkinson	Additional inspector
Alan Comerford-Dunbar	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

The main administrative hub of North Barnes Children's Centre – known as Barnes Children's Centre – is located within the grounds of Lowther Primary School. It opened at this site in 2012. It incorporates the communities of Kew, Mortlake, Barnes and East Sheen. The centre delivers services including midwifery and child health clinics, stay and play groups, family support and adult learning from the main site and at three outreach venues.

Since the last inspection, the transfer of leadership and management from the local authority to Achieving for Children, which began in 1 April 2014, has become fully established and a new manager came into post from August 2014. Achieving for Children is a social enterprise established by the adjoining borough councils of Richmond upon Thames and Kingston upon Thames to provide early years services, early intervention and children's services. The Kingston and Richmond joint Children's Centre Partnership Board has responsibility for monitoring the performance of the centre. An independent advisory board, with representatives from all statutory partners and parents, and a parents' forum have been put in place. The centre manager is supported by a team of five staff. Achieving for Children provides consultancy and advice to the manager.

Some 3,653 children under five years of age live in the area served by the centre, which is mainly residential and predominantly affluent, with high levels of home ownership. A very small minority of children, 10%, live in two areas among the 30% most deprived nationally in the areas immediately surrounding Lowther Primary School and at Kew Riverside. The level of worklessness in these areas is above the borough average. The large majority of families living in the locality are of White British origin and other families represent a very wide range of Black, Asian and Other White heritage. Approximately 19% of the primary school population speak English as an additional language. Children's skill levels on entry to early years provision are broadly in line with those expected for their age.

The centre's priority groups are identified as follows: children and families living in the two most deprived areas and children aged under one year.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Leaders, managers, staff and partners have rightly focused on improving registrations at the centre as only 49% of families were registered in 2013/14. Their determination to improve has been hampered by gaps in staffing, resulting in the centre having no effective outreach worker in post for four months until May 2015, and access still requires improvement. Nevertheless, the centre reached its interim target of 65% of children to be registered by July 2015, six weeks early and the figure is rising steadily.
- Achieving for Children has improved the accuracy of the data on registration and attendance held by the centre. This helps the centre to identify the areas in which it needs to improve registrations further. Rates are improving much slower in Kew Riverside than in the rest of the area, with 61% of families registered and 37% accessing services. Outreach services are now in place in community venues and are supporting the centre's increased reach.
- The centre has surveyed existing users and listened carefully to comments in order to plan more accessible services. 'Stay and Play' sessions have been moved to times that suit the majority of families, for example avoiding babies' sleep times. Sessions are held in easy walking distance of Kew Riverside at Windham Nursery School and Kew Riverside School. Sessions supported by the speech and language therapist at the nearby Power Station, Mortlake are well attended.
- Increasing registrations of children under one year, which have been low, is a high priority as a means of inducting families to the centre's services early in children's lives. This strategy is slowly taking effect. The centre is tapping into very strong partnerships with midwives and health visitors to make contact with expectant and new parents and provide an integrated introduction to

children's centre services through effective outreach at clinics.

- The centre has been highly successful in registering and engaging families with services in the Lowther area. The number of children in the area is under 100 but a highly encouraging 95% of these children are registered at the centre and 89% are accessing services. This is due to the active promotion of the centre by the nursery unit of the Lowther school and the popularity of the midwife and health visitor clinic sessions, for which families must register with the centre before attending.
- The strong links with health professionals and speech therapists give families good, prompt access to specialist health and development services. The take-up rate of health checks for two-year-olds is high and information is shared by multi-agency teams to secure children's centre family support for families needing to access services. Readily available information on a comprehensive range of family health and well-being matters provides good guidance and advice.
- The take-up rate of the free early education places is very high in Richmond and particularly high in the North Barnes reach area. All three- and four-year-olds and most two-year-olds have taken up their entitlement, and most are in good or outstanding provision. Close partnerships with Lowther school provide sessions for parents and children to prepare successfully for moving on to school.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The play and learning programme has a sufficient range of sessions to suit different ages and needs of children, and the quality is improving. The balance of the programme lacks a focus on parenting and adults' learning for basic employment skills, and this requires improvement. There are too few opportunities for parents to access local job clubs or information technology classes or to get advice and guidance to help increase employability.
- Activities to help adults to improve their life chances, gain employment and educate themselves are insufficient to meet the needs of the most vulnerable families. The lack is most evident in the Kew Riverside area. Too few courses take place and too few people attend and complete them. The quality of courses delivered is good. Attendees tell the centre that they enjoy their learning and are able to speak about the positive impact that courses, such as the English conversation group for speakers of English as an additional language and paediatric first aid, have had on their lives.
- The centre provides a few parents with volunteering opportunities. Their development is supported by a high quality course provided by Richmond Adult Community College. Helping in the office or play sessions provides a small number of parents with work experience that they value highly and they make great strides in their personal development. They make an impressive contribution to the centre through the parents' forum and some move on to the advisory board.
- The centre's tracking of adults' progress is currently underdeveloped. Course providers and the centre are beginning to track the impact of adults taking part in courses and providers give some attention to 'progression routes' for adults. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of this development.
- Children over three are well served with part-time free nursery education. Outcomes for children in the area at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, with 71.6% achieving a good level of development, are very good and well above the national and borough averages.
- The centre's play provision focuses strongly on reducing inequalities, for example on communication and language, stories, singing and rhymes and on promoting children's independent self-help skills. The centre focusses on provision for babies under one year and provides progression through 'Ways to Play' sessions that parents find invaluable for learning about their children's unique development.
- Improvement in play and learning is well supported with input from an Achieving for Children Early Years Consultant. This in-house support is in addition to focused local authority support from the Achieving for Children Children's Centre Central Team. The quality of provision is being closely monitored as new staff become accustomed to their roles. The number of families attending regularly is rising.
- A few families help to compile learning journals. These form part of the Centre's assessment system 'Moving On', which is being used to track children's progress and feeds in to ongoing evaluation of play and learning. Embedding this practice remains a focus for the team.
- A small number of families benefit from healthy lifestyle courses throughout the year. HENRY services (Health, Exercise and Nutrition for the Really Young) will bring the focus on a healthy start

to families from June 2015 (HENRY). There are sufficient places on parenting courses to meet needs. The centre gives an additional layer of tailored care, advice and guidance to some families, with very good impact in increasing their parenting skills and confidence. Although suitable individual records are kept, these are not collated or tracked so that the centre can plan and adjust services.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The resolute leadership and ambitious vision of Achieving for Children are shared by partners so that the broad achievements of the centre, to engage more families in the right areas, are improving. Monitoring and governance arrangements through the Children's Centre Partnership Board have quickly become effective.
- A full team of staff and other resources are now in place. Venues from which to deliver centre services are secured in the areas where they are most needed. Members of the strengthened independent advisory board have been well trained in the use of data to provide effective support and challenge.
- Use of data provided by Achieving for Children has improved in the centre so that the manager has a clear idea of the needs of families in the area. Since the last inspection, the centre has implemented a new data base to record attendance and contact with families. A supplementary files system is used to record individual work, but this does not provide a ready tracker or useable management information, and this requires improvement. A new database is soon to be used which the centre is confident will address some of the gaps.
- Health services, schools and other partner organisations are becoming increasingly involved in evaluating the impact of services. The views of parents currently using services are now being taken into account. This feedback effectively shapes the programme to meet users' needs. Processes are not so strongly in place to look wider to identify successes and gaps to benefit more users.
- Safe recruitment and good induction procedures have been implemented during the recent period of staff changes. The manager and staff are well qualified for their roles and they have been helped to settle in to their roles through effective line management arrangements through Achieving for Children's, Children's Centre Central Team. Training needs are identified and staff training, for example in first aid and safeguarding, is refreshed as necessary.
- The centre is safe and secure at all premises and staff provide what parents say is an inclusive and non-judgemental atmosphere in which to meet the needs of the diverse community. Safeguarding procedures are paramount, with procedures in place to refer children, including those in need or subject to child protection plans, to specialist services as required. There are highly effective links with Homestart and health workers which ensure that families receive very good multi-agency support to meet their identified needs.
- Education partnerships are strong with the linked Lowther and Windham schools and are developing with other schools and pre-school providers. Links with adult learning providers are growing but are not yet broad enough. Developing partnerships further are key to the centre's understanding of local needs and increasing its reach.

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 details

Unique reference number	20579
Local authority	London Borough of Richmond
Inspection number	455015
Managed by	Achieving for Children
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	3,653
Centre leader	Rachel Lazarides
Date of previous inspection	29/04/2014 26/06/2013
Telephone number	020 3021 1990
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