

# Dunstable South Children's Centre

Oakwood Avenue, Dunstable, LU5 4AS

<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 July 2015
<b>Previous inspection date</b>	Not Previously Inspected

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
	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 is a good centre.

- The centre leader provides rigorous and ambitious leadership. She is well supported by centre staff and partners who continuously seek to improve the quality of services to fully meet the needs of all families.
- Good leadership, governance and management ensures that the large majority of families, including those identified as most in need of its services and support, access to a wide range of the centre's activities.
- Parents, especially those in most need of the centre's support, appreciate the help they receive from the centre staff and their professional partners. 'They are fantastic. The centre is a wonderful resource,' is typical of their views.
- Relationships between the children's centres and other services and organisations, including health and education, are good. Families are safer and healthier and their children are increasingly well prepared for school as a result of this.
- Almost every child in the area who is eligible for two-year-old free early education takes up the offer and is provided with good quality learning opportunities.
- Staff are skilled and well qualified because of the centre's strong commitment to their ongoing professional development.

### It is not outstanding because:

- The centre does not yet make full use of all the data now available to fully identify and analyse - patterns of attendance and improvement to families' lives overtime.
- Procedures to promote and signpost vocational studies for adults are not well established.

### What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Build on the already good procedures for gathering data to analyse and review patterns of attendance and involvement in centre activities to fully assess the centre's impact and further improve its effectiveness.
- Work with partners in employment and adult education to identify and promote vocational training, including literacy and numeracy, to help families into employment.

### 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 leaders, managers and other centre staff. They met with representatives of the local authority, the YMCA and the local advisory board. They also held meetings with health service partners including health visitors and speech and language therapist, early years providers, early help providers, a representative of volunteer organisations and adult learning representatives. The inspectors spoke to several parents throughout the inspection.

The inspectors visited the centre's crèche and 'The Freedom Group'.

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

### Inspection team

Lead inspector Andrew Clark	Additional inspector
Janet Dinsmore	Additional inspector
David Baber	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Dunstable South Children's Centre is led and managed by a centre manager. Governance of the centre is provided by the YMCA which was commissioned by the local authority in April 2015. The centre is in the grounds of St Augustine's Academy (URN 138558). It is co-located with Downside Pre-School (URN EY363763). The academy and pre-school are subject to separate inspections and the reports are available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The area served by the centre consists of urban and rural areas. The centre provides a range of family support services, play and learning activities, adult learning and employment, health promotion activities and crèche facilities. The centre also signpost families to other relevant services.

The proportion of children living in households where no one works is above national and local average as is the proportion of families in receipt of benefits. A significant proportion of these families are in one area. The large majority of children are of white British backgrounds.

There are approximately 1250 children served by the centre. They generally enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with a range of skills and knowledge which are generally typical for their age.

The centre has identified the following families most in need of support: children and families in workless households; children under five in the most deprived area; children on child protection, child in need plans or early help assessments; vulnerable two year olds eligible for free education and families experiencing domestic violence.

### Inspection judgements

#### Access to services by young children and families **Good**

- Strong involvement in the local community, including partnership work with health professionals, social care and schools ensure that the staff are increasingly well-informed about families with young children, including those expecting children. As a result, most families with young children in the area are registered with the centre and access the wide range of services that are offered, including the large majority of those considered most in need of the centre's support.
- Families' needs are accurately assessed. Multi-agency meetings and the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) ensure there is joined up thinking between the centre's different partners and this is used well to ensure support is matched carefully to meet families' needs. In particular, for example, all children with protection plans and early help plans in the area are known and supported by the centre.
- Staff work hard to involve families who do not follow up from the initial contact or who do not participate regularly. In particular, the development of new systems to record and share information with the centre's partners is increasing numbers of families receiving effective support.
- The centre recognises the need to make more effective use of new data management systems, including recently improved information on new births, in order to even more effectively meet families' needs.
- All staff are well trained and vigilant in supporting families who are suffering from domestic

violence and this is reinforced by messages through parenting courses and signage around the centre. Parents comment that, 'The centre has changed my life.'

- The centre provides well focused support to families in workless households, especially those with children under one. Carefully targeted baby and parenting courses and the work of community and family support workers have helped these families build relationships and develop confidence.
- Arrangements for two-year old children to take up their free early education places in the locality are good and the very large majority do so. This is above national and local averages. Parents are signposted to local provision and staff work hard to assist families to manage their time and other issues which sometimes make attendance difficult. The success in engaging these children contributes to children's good achievement by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Assessment at the age of two is used well to identify children and families who need additional support. Staff work well as a team to make sure that parents are aware of all the help which may be available to them including their children's entitlement to free early education when relevant.

### The quality of practice and services

**Good**

- Families, who find themselves in complex and chaotic situations, especially those living in the most deprived areas, receive very positive attention from centre staff. Family support workers work closely with key agencies and organisations to effectively provide early help and support to families in times of need.
- The centre provides a good range of training and guidance on health issues. Positive messages about breastfeeding are reinforced through regular groups, health visits and the work of volunteers. As a result, the proportion of mothers who continue breastfeeding at six-to-eight weeks is at least similar to the national average. Courses such as 'Healthy eating for under fives' and 'mini movers' promote healthy lifestyle choices. The proportion of children who are overweight or obese is below the national average. Improving data from partner services is building the centre's capacity to provide further support.
- Case files are well maintained and the centre staff keep detailed records of their work with families. The development of electronic systems to share information with partners such as health mean that the centre's work is increasingly effective in, for example, supporting victims of domestic abuse and families in workless households.
- The centre provides good support and guidance to local early years providers. It acts as a hub for development through the employment of an early years teacher and other dedicated staff. The centre provides effective training for childminders and good support through regular drop-in sessions. This contributes to rapidly improving proportions of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception which is now above the national average. The achievement gap between children who receive free school meals and other children is narrowing.
- Parents and children play together in enjoyable and well-planned sessions such as 'New Look Baby Monday' and 'Bumps, Births and Baby Stuff' co delivered with midwives and health services. The centre monitors children's progress in detail even if they only attend very occasionally. As a result, children make good progress overall.
- A good proportion of adults undertake a range of courses to improve parenting and some early literacy and numeracy skills. Almost all those who begin courses complete them because of the support they receive from the centre. However, the centre does not promote other aspects of vocational training and higher levels of literacy and numeracy. This is partly because there are limited opportunities in the immediate locality. The centre has identified this as an aspect for improvement in partnership with Job Centre Plus.

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

- The centre leader provides clear and determined leadership. She has led a rigorous drive for improvement since her appointment in 2013 which has seen the proportions of families registered and using the centre almost double, especially those from the most deprived communities. She leads by example. As a result, there is strong team work and shared ambition. This has underpinned increasing effectiveness in meeting the particular needs of the community they serve.
- The centre receive effective support from the YMCA, recently commissioned by the local authority to run local children's centres. It is increasingly robust in the data and information it provides. Consequently, all the centre's resources are used well to meet the priorities of the local authority and the centre itself.
- Performance management and supervision are rigorous and well-established. They include direct observation of sessions, feedback to all staff and regular training days linked to the centre's priorities. The leadership team, with effective support from the local advisory board, robustly challenges any under performance. Staff are well qualified and their roles are closely matched to their skills and experience. A particular strength is that many staff have an excellent local knowledge, including those who started work as volunteers at the centre.
- Safeguarding procedures are thorough and the Common Assessment Framework process is used well to assess need and to reduce levels of risk to children. The centre provides good support to children looked after by the local authority and their carers, as well as those who are subject to a child protection or early help plan and others in need.
- The centre effectively focuses efforts on reducing inequalities, tackling discrimination and improving the well being of the whole community, but especially those families identified as most in need of support. They celebrate diversity through the use of resources and special festival and play days.
- Members of the advisory board have a clear view of centre priorities and where improvement is needed. Meetings are well attended and the chair provides clear leadership. The board takes good advantage of training, particularly that provided by the centre manager. As a result, they are making increasingly sharp use of data to challenge leaders and ensure the centre meets the needs of all its community.
- Leaders are well aware of the areas for further development. They work well with the local authority to set ambitious goals and this has resulted in increased proportions of families most in need of support access services in recent years.

**What inspection judgements mean**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
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**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	20978
<b>Local authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	455033
<b>Managed by</b>	The YMCA on behalf of the local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	1250
<b>Centre leader</b>	Kama Langham
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not Previously Inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01582 666403/666418
<b>Email address</b>	kama.langham@oneymca.org

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