

Lanterns Children's Centre

Bereweke Road, Winchester, SO22 6AJ

Inspection date	7–8 July 2015		
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
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 level of engagement of children and families from most priority groups is too low.
- Only a third of eligible two-year-olds living in the area of St Barnabas served by the centre take up their entitlement to free early education.
- Not enough parents, particularly those on low incomes or who are workless, are taking up the opportunities available to enhance their education and employability skills. The system in place to track the progress of those who do is at an early stage of development.
- Governance is well established and supportive but lacks challenge. A limited range of partners serve on the partnership advisory board. Records of local authority meetings show that data on access by families are not being used well enough to inform the checks on the centre's performance.

It has the following strengths:

- Good quality services and highly skilled practice ensure that children and families who use the centre derive great benefit in improving their health and well-being.
- Children achieve successfully over time. The proportion of Reception-aged children who reached a good level of development in 2014 was well above the national and county average. The gap in achievement between those from the poorest backgrounds and others is narrowing.
- Parents are helped to manage children's behaviour positively by centre staff who facilitate the well-attended programmes or work one-to-one with families successfully in their homes.
- The centre is a busy and vibrant place which attracts a large number of families. Parents who use the centre hold it in very high regard. Well-conceived plans are in hand to ensure that the engagement of all target groups improves, and the centre has secure capacity to achieve this.

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

- Increase the engagement of children and families living in the least advantaged community served by the centre and that of low income and workless families, so that at least the large majority sustain contact with appropriate services.
- Improve the take-up of free early education places by eligible two-year-old children living in the St Barnabas area, so that most take up their places at a good or better quality setting.
- Increase the take-up of adult learning and skills training, particularly by low income and workless parents. Establish a robust system for tracking progress and planning the next steps for individuals.
- Strengthen governance by:
 - increasing the use of data by those responsible for governance in order to inform rigorous target setting, and ensuring that there is a reliable and objective evaluation of the centre's performance
 - widening membership of the partnership advisory board to ensure that education, adult learning, Jobcentre Plus, and health and social care partners are represented
 - making sure that constructive challenge by those responsible for governance is recorded appropriately in meeting minutes and followed up as appropriate.

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 the children's centre manager, the head of centre, staff, local authority officers, partners, volunteers, parents, childminders, representatives of the governing body and members of the partnership advisory board.

The inspectors visited activities, including 'Together Enjoying Language and Learning' (TELL), 'Come and Play', 'Mini Marvels', 'Rhyme Time at St Barnabas', the breastfeeding support group, first aid training for parents and tracking two-year-olds in the 'Bumblebee' session. The 'Stories and Rhymes' group was observed jointly with the centre leader.

Safeguarding policy, procedures and practice were examined in depth, and case files and supervision records were sampled. Inspectors also looked at a wide range of other documentation.

Inspectors took into account parents' views as expressed directly to them during the inspection as well as through survey responses and their recorded evaluations about the group's work.

The centre manager, head of centre and local authority link officer attended all team meetings.

Inspection team

Christine Field, Lead Inspector	Additional Inspector
Graham Saltmarsh	Additional Inspector
Debbie Farley	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Lanterns opened in 2005 as a standalone children's centre. It is managed on behalf of Hampshire County Council by the governing body of Lanterns Nursery School. A partnership advisory board is in place to assist governance. The school is inspected under separate arrangements and its report can be found at: <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

There are 1,036 children under the age of five years living in the large and diverse geographic area served by the centre. There are 11 distinct areas covered by the centre, including a part of Winchester city centre. The area is mainly affluent, but with pockets of social and economic disadvantage, particularly in the St Barnabas community, where a large council estate is located.

Most families are White British, with approximately 6% of children living in homes where no one is in paid work. Some 15% of families are in receipt of the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. Most children start nursery with skills and abilities at or above the level typical for their age.

The headteacher of the nursery school line-manages the work of the centre manager, who leads the small team of three staff. Services provided include activities to promote early learning, family support, child and family health, careers, adult learning and volunteering. The centre works in a collaborative partnership with a neighbouring children's centre cluster to help meet the needs of families from Winchester city centre who are able to easily access services at both centres.

Target groups identified by the centre are: families living in the least advantaged community; workless and low income families; and two-year-old children eligible for free early education.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Access to services requires improvement because, despite the high level of registrations, not enough children and families from the centre's target groups use services repeatedly. For example, only a third of children living in the least advantaged community have used the centre more than five times in the last year. Currently, only four in ten workless parents engage in services that will help improve their economic well-being.
- Overall, the large majority of eligible two-year-olds living in the area covered by the centre access their free early education entitlement. However, only three in ten children living in the least advantaged community, known as St Barnabas, take up their place. The centre has recently been provided with detailed information to enable it to follow up non-take-up and provide effective support and guidance to families to ensure their children get off to the very best start in education.
- The strong partnership with health visitors underpins the good contact which the centre has with expectant parents, young parents and those who are experiencing problems following the birth of their babies. Ante-natal clinics held at the centre are well timed to take place before the breastfeeding support group. The very positive impact of the centre's and partners' support for breastfeeding is seen in the much better-than-average level achieved locally.
- The 'Bumps to Babes' provides high-quality services and advice about child health topics suggested by participants, such as sleeping patterns and feeding problems, and stops potentially more serious concerns from arising. Family support work is effective in helping families to overcome the complex problems they face and to access services independently when they are ready to do so.
- The centre offers services that a large number of families who do not live in its designated catchment area find appealing. Leaders and staff struggle with this as they show total commitment to helping any family who needs support but are aware that their reach into their own community is being compromised.
- Cluster arrangements are in place to enable a shared approach to meeting local needs, but these have been adversely affected by the high level of staff turnover at the neighbouring centre, which

has had five different managers in the last year or so. Stability has now been achieved and plans have been made to ensure that in the future, more children and parents from target groups living in the area served by Lanterns can readily access the services they need.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- Too few children and parents from the centre's target groups sustain engagement in services that fully meet their needs. Proactive work is taking shape to deliver more services from venues located on families' doorsteps, particularly in the St Barnabas community. The constraints of a small team of staff and high footfall at Lanterns are inhibiting factors that the centre is working hard to overcome, with the strong support of partners.
- A good partnership with adult and community learning ensures that a wide range of courses is available. However, too few parents on low incomes or who are workless are enabled to take up opportunities to enhance their education or employability skills. The system in place to track the progress of those that do is at an early stage of development.
- Nearly 200 parents have taken up opportunities to enhance their confidence as parents, learn about cooking healthy meals or use first aid techniques to ensure their children's well-being. Specific programmes are used skilfully to help parents to manage their children's behaviour positively. Staff are very positive role models and nurture trusting relationships with parents, many of whom are not living in the specific area served by the centre.
- Good quality sessions such as 'TELL' are planned to promote the prime aspects of children's learning, particularly self-care, communication, language and literacy. This is because these are the areas where some children's development falls short. Practitioners know the learning needs and capabilities of children very well and keep a close check on their age and stage of development. This clear focus on good quality early learning is paying dividends, as reflected in the high proportion (82.5%) of Reception-aged children who achieve a good level of development.
- At 62%, the proportion of mothers breastfeeding their babies for over two months is much higher than seen nationally. The centre leader chairs the meetings of partners who work in support of breastfeeding, and her determination to help children receive a healthy start to life is unequivocal. Sessions which promote the importance of exercise, such as 'Fun Fit', are well attended and effective in promoting children's physical health and positive well-being.
- Case files are well maintained and demonstrate the positive impact that one-to-one support has on helping those in greatest need. Social care thresholds are well understood by staff; step-up and step-down procedures work very effectively and ensure that families get the right support at the right time to meet their needs. Regular meetings with key partners enable the timely sharing of information, whilst new early help procedures become embedded.
- Parents who use Lanterns have high levels of satisfaction. They comment that 'the centre has been a life saver', 'It's a centre where families come first', and 'staff always go the extra mile'. Volunteers recognise that they feel empowered by the support they have received. Some have used their experiences at the centre to move into further education or to secure paid work.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and managers are effective in ensuring that families in greatest need, including children subject to child protection plans, in need or looked after, are well supported. They have not been so effective in making sure that the large majority of children and families from target groups use appropriate services regularly, and this requires improvement.
- There is a clear vision to which all staff are signed up: 'a nurturing inclusive environment for all'. Staff are reflective practitioners who work hard to reduce inequalities and improve families' well-being. The positive impact of their work is reflected in children's good progress over time and good health outcomes. Supervision arrangements and appraisal are well linked and underpinned by appropriate staff training. Staff identify that they feel valued, well supported and well led.
- Action plans are focused on the right priorities but the pace of change in increasing the centre's reach into the community has not been brisk enough. The targets set for increasing engagement have so far lacked challenge. This is because leaders and those responsible for governance are

not entirely clear about the difference between registrations or access by children and families as opposed to sustained engagement, and have used the high level of registrations as an indicator of success.

- The local authority keeps regular checks on the centre's effectiveness and provides good support. However, the most recent annual conversation review evaluated the centre's overall performance as 'good', despite the fact that most key performance indicators were not being met. There is recognition that monitoring is not yet sufficiently rigorous nor are data used well enough to hold the centre's performance fully to account.
- There are clear links between the governing body and partnership advisory board (PAB), which currently has three parent representatives. Other partners such as health, social care, early years education, adult education and training providers are not represented on the PAB. This restricts its ability to involve key partners in strategic decision-making. The centre leader provides a comprehensive report for each PAB meeting, but the subsequent minutes do not clearly show constructive challenges about its contents taking place
- Safeguarding policies, procedures and practice are robust. The vetting checks required to confirm the suitability of staff to work with young children and keep them safe are all in place. Staff act swiftly and effectively to raise any concerns they may have about the welfare of children.
- Resources are used effectively to provide good quality services but not yet efficiently enough to meet all target families' needs. Parents who use the centre hold it in very high regard and say that their views are listened to, appreciated and taken into account.

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	21745
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	455089
Managed by	The governing body of Lanterns Nursery School on behalf of the local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,036
Centre manager	Jocelyn King
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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