

East Staffordshire Children's Centre

Waterloo Street, Burton-on-Trent, DE14 2NJ

Inspection dates	25–26 June 2015
Previous inspection date	26 May 2010

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 attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers is too wide and not enough children achieve a good level of development at the end of Reception.
- Systems to track the progress that children and adults make and their achievements do not enable leaders to demonstrate the impact of the centre on improving outcomes over time.
- There are too few opportunities for parents to improve their employability through volunteering programmes.
- The centre's self-evaluation, its annual conversations with the local authority and action plans are not rigorous enough to support the drive for continuous improvement.
- Senior leaders do not always make the best use of data to inform the centre leaders and other key partners of their successes.
- Parents are not well enough represented in the leadership, management and governance of the centre.
- Too few families participate in services and activities on a regular basis.

This centre has the following strengths:

- Strong inter-agency partnership working and the co-location of key partners is leading to all services making a positive difference to the lives of children and families.
- The centre and commissioned partners play a vital role in tackling radicalisation. The Prevent guidance document, produced by the local authority with input from key centre professionals, is an example of good practice. Centre leaders and staff focus on the promotion of 'tolerance' as a universal (as well as British) value.
- Parents enjoy a wide range of opportunities which improve their parenting and enhance their self-esteem and confidence.
- The new leadership, management and governance of the centre is ambitious for success and is already having an positive impact on improving the lives of children.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Improve the services offered by:
 - ensuring that self-evaluation is more robust and clearly outlines the strengths and areas for improvement
 - using all available evidence, such as the self-evaluation findings and inspection reports, to measure the effectiveness and progress being made by the centre.
- Strategic leaders should provide the centre with accurate analysis and feedback, so that it, and its partners, can better assess the impact of their work.
- Increase user involvement in the governance and decision making within the children's centre. Explore innovative ways, such as the use of social media, to ensure that the views of most centre users and non-users are taken into consideration to support the design and development of provision and contribute to management decision-making.
- Increase the numbers of children and families engaged in activities, groups and services to improve the life chances and outcomes for even more families.
- Demonstrate that outcomes are improving for the large majority of families by:
 - tracking adults to show qualifications achieved and employment gained and to demonstrate the impact of learning on their longer term economic well-being
 - narrowing the gap in the attainment of the least disadvantaged children and their peers by monitoring more closely the progress that children make at the centre and by making sure that they are all able to achieve a good level of development.

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 two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre leader, senior leaders from the local authority, members of the centre group leadership team, and the chair of the district advisory board. They met with education leaders and health professionals, early intervention and family support workers, early childhood providers, health and social care professionals, community partners, adult education and commissioned services, parents and centre users.

The inspectors visited a range of activities including, a breastfeeding support group, 'Stay and Play', 'Small Talk' and 'Twinkle Toes' sessions. The inspectors spent time meeting children and families.

Inspectors conducted a joint observation with a quality liaison officer. They observed the centre's work, reviewed health and safety arrangements and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Lead inspector, Deborah Udakis	Her Majesty's Inspector
Michael Miller	Additional inspector
Michael White	Her Majesty's Inspector
Qaisra Shahraz	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

East Staffordshire Children's Centre was inspected as part of East Staffordshire Children's Centre group in July 2014 and was judged to be inadequate. Major changes took place after the group inspection resulting in the centre reverting to a standalone centre. Significant restructuring and re-organisation has taken place including the appointment of a new leadership team. The Pre-School Learning Alliance took over the governance of the centre in April 2015 on behalf of the local authority and is supported by a district advisory board, made up of key partners.

The centre serves an area with 7298 children aged under five years of age. The Borough of East Staffordshire covers a predominantly rural land area with many villages and two main towns, Burton upon Trent and Uttoxeter. Almost three-quarters of the population (73%) live in the two main towns of Burton upon Trent and Uttoxeter. The large majority of families living in the area served by the centres are White British, and the remaining families are from a range of minority ethnic groups. In around 4% of households, English is spoken as an additional language.

A privately owned nursery is co-located within the centre. The nursery is subject to different inspection arrangements. Reports can be found at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>. The centre serves communities in which there are pockets of significant disadvantage interspersed with high levels of affluence. The centre offers a range of services including early learning, family support, adult learning and health services. Services are also delivered directly in the community. Outreach work within families' homes is a key feature of the centre's work.

Around a quarter of the children live in low-income households. Almost a fifth of children aged under five years live in households with parents claiming unemployment benefit, of which a good proportion are lone parents. The locality has a small proportion of teenage and young mothers.

The levels at which children enter early years provision vary across the area. The centres' target groups are minority ethnic families, young parents and families eligible for nursery education funding for two-year-old children.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- East Staffordshire Children's Centre is highly valued by the families benefiting from its services. However, there remains a large proportion of families who are not actively engaged with the range of activities and services.
- Almost all families identified for targeted support are registered with the centre; but just over half of these families regularly engage with services.
- Leaders make increasingly good use of available data to target families in need. The family support team uses the live birth data to help new mums access good quality ante- and post-natal care guidance and support from skilled and experienced health professionals.
- The centre provides a welcoming environment. Staff know the local community and target groups well. They provide good quality holistic support to workless and vulnerable families, those requiring additional support and those entitled to free early years' education for their two-year-old children.

- In partnership with many providers, the centre provides a good range of services, activities and courses, to meet the needs of priority families, often tailored to suit users in their home. For instance, young parents and dads thrive as a result of the support they receive by sensitive, non-judgemental and effective support workers and health professionals.
- Almost all three-and four-year-olds access their early education entitlement. Most attend settings that were judged good or better at their most recent Ofsted inspection.
- The number of two-year-old children eligible for free education who have taken up their entitlement has increased significantly over the last year; most notably, in areas of higher levels of deprivation and by children from minority ethnic families. However, almost a quarter of two-year-olds have yet to secure a place at an early years setting.
- Unemployed adults have good access to advice and guidance relating to employment via the JobCentre Plus advisor. They access education through effective and strong partnerships with Burton Football Club charity and the 'Troubled Families' partnerships. Volunteering opportunities to help individuals get back to work are, however, limited as is access to accredited adult learning courses and training programmes.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The centre provides a balance of universal and targeted provision. Leaders have reduced activities open to all in the move to target families in greatest need.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has increased but remains below the national average. The gap between the most and least advantaged children, while narrowing, remains too wide at 22%.
- Commissioned early years improvement partners provide bespoke packages of good quality training and support to meet the specific needs of individual early years settings and childminders. This is leading to improved outcomes for children.
- Staff successfully remove barriers to enable the most vulnerable families access services, including outreach support in the families' homes.
- Children with disabilities and special educational needs access good quality support at the centre. The good network of additional services, such as speech and language, physiotherapy and occupational therapy, at the centre provide vital support and is helping to improve the health and well-being of children.
- Parental confidence in the centre and its staff is high. One parent said, 'my child keeps reminding me that she wants to come here. She enjoys it very much and has improved her language skills.'
- Learning journeys completed by staff do not provide an accurate picture of the progress children make while at the centre, from their starting points. Leaders have identified the need to develop a robust tracking system to show the impact that services, groups and intervention have made on the achievements of children and adult learners over time.
- Key health partners provide immediate support and information about available services to families in their homes. Those families that are making good use of centre services are improving their life chances and those of their children.

- Parents are encouraged to develop their knowledge of healthy eating through informal guidance, cooking and baking sessions and growing vegetables. One parent commented, 'the healthy eating course was really good. I am now eating healthier meals. I cook meals from scratch and buy food which is cost effective.'

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- Following a period of significant re-organisation, leaders at all levels have successfully restructured the provision to target resources in areas of greatest need through effective use of commissioned services.
- Increasingly, the shared vision and determination of leaders, managers and governors, have helped the centre to become more effective and well-established within the community.
- Parents provide routine evaluations of the services but they have no role on the district advisory board. They make little contribution to the management of the centre and decision making processes.
- Leaders' close monitoring of the commissioned provision ensures that services are well-resourced, relevant and of good quality. They take swift action to deal with any underperforming service.
- Leaders at all levels have responded positively and have taken appropriate action to improve the provision since the previous inspection. However, their self-evaluation, annual conversation with the local authority and action plans are not key drivers for continuous improvement. Although the improved use of data provided by key partners has led to a better understanding of the community and the needs of targeted families, strategic leaders do not make best use of the information to inform the centre of its achievements and successes.
- The success of the group is due in part to the highly effective partnerships with key agencies. Timely early help and support for children and families is significantly enhanced as a result of the very positive multi-agency timetable of activities, groups and services.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effective, including good quality case recording and the safe recruitment of staff. Positive use of multi-agency approaches, including the effective use of the Early Help Assessment and Team Around the Child processes, support well children on child protection plans, vulnerable families and those at times of crises. The early help team is a particular strength and is having a positive impact on families at risk of harm.
- Leaders and staff share a strong commitment to celebrating diversity. The use of translated leaflets, notices and bilingual staff helps the centre to improve communication with parents and outcomes for families of speakers of other languages.

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	21038
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	464220
Managed by	The Pre-School Learning Alliance on behalf of the local authority.
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	7298
Centre leader	Suzanne Barratt
Date of previous inspection	26 May 2010
Telephone number	01283 233400
Email address	Suzanne.barratt@staffordshire.gov.uk

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