

Denham and Gerrards Cross Children's Centre

Tilehouse Combined School, Tilehouse School, Nightingale Way, Denham, UB9 5JL

Inspection dates	14–16 July 2015
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
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:

- Not enough children and families from all target groups sustain their engagement in centre services. Information provided by the local authority and Barnardo's about target groups does not align consistently; this inhibits the otherwise robust checks on the centre's performance.
- Unresolved issues concerning the use of neighbouring authorities' children's centres by local families has a negative impact on some of the data captured about registration and reach.
- The planning of activities that promote the learning and development of target children, and the systems to track the progress they make over time, are at an early stage of development.
- The take-up of courses that are provided to enhance parents' learning and skills is currently too low.
- Too few parents are involved in the work of the advisory board or in supporting strategic decision-making.

This children's centre has the following strengths:

- Good support is provided for children and families with the greatest needs, including those subject to 'early help' procedures.
- Families enjoy coming to the centre and like the safe and welcoming atmosphere.
- Staff work sensitively with families, especially the most vulnerable, to ensure they benefit from the services and stay engaged until their needs are fully met. Staff have developed good relationships with Traveller families and activities have a positive impact on their children's development.
- The new coordinator provides effective leadership, has set the centre on an improving course and is managing staff changes well. Governance is supportive and challenging and plays an important role in helping the centre move forward.
- The current contractual changes are being sensitively managed and, as a result, staff are upbeat and show strong dedication to meeting local needs.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Increase and sustain the engagement of all target groups so that the large majority of children and families access appropriate services until their needs are met by:
 - ensuring that the information about the engagement of target groups provided by the local authority and Barnardo's aligns and reliably informs their checks on the centre's performance
 - ensuring live birth data are available and used to identify families who give birth outside the county
 - continue to work closely with other children centres and health visitors across the reach area's borders to ensure services are well promoted and the data being captured are accurate and reliable.
- Sharpen the planning of centre activities to promote the specific learning and development needs of target children, extend the systems for tracking their progress and work with partners to see how well they achieve over time.
- Increase the take-up of opportunities so that the large majority of parents most in need enhance their education, skills and economic well-being and track their progress.
- Enhance governance by involving more parents, especially those from target groups, in decision making and in the work of the advisory board

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. It was carried out at the same time as other children's centres, which were Beaconsfield Children's Centre and Amersham Children's Centre.

This inspection was carried out by two Additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre area manager, staff, Barnardo's senior managers, local authority officers, partners, volunteers, parents and members of the advisory board. The children's centre coordinator who took up post six months ago, and oversees all three centres in the collaboration, was not present until the last day of the inspection.

The inspectors visited Denham Traveller site at Wapsey Woods and Denham Woodland Nursery as well as a number of activities held in the centre, such as the baby clinic and Baby Sensory session. Safeguarding policy, procedures and practice were examined in depth. Inspectors also looked at a range of relevant documentation. This included the centre's self-evaluation and action planning, a survey of parents' views and a sample of cases files.

The children's area manager, a colleague area manager and a coordinator of another cluster supporting the inspection in the absence of the centre coordinator attended all lead and team inspectors' meetings.

Inspection team

Penny Mathers, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Peter Towner

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Denham and Gerrards Cross Children's Centre is situated on the site of Denham Green E-ACT Academy (URN 139679) and registered childcare Denham Woodlands Nursery School (URN 456935). They are inspected under separate arrangements and their reports can be found at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>. Barnado's manages the centre on behalf of the local authority, along with 15 others in the county. The management team consists of the assistant director, the area manager and the local services coordinator who is responsible for overseeing the team of staff who work across the areas served by a collaboration of three children's centres that include Denham and Gerrards Cross, Beaconsfield and Amersham. Each centre has its own advisory board that oversees the governance.

Beaconsfield Children's Centre and Amersham Children's Centre were inspected at the same time as Denham and Gerrards Cross Children's Centre.

There are 838 children under the age of five years living in the area served by the centre. The area is mainly affluent, with small pockets of deprivation. The reach area includes the wards of Denham North, South and South West and Gerrards Cross North, South and East. Some families living in the area have high levels of educational achievement and others have few qualifications. There are two Traveller sites in the area at Wapsey's Woods and Pinstone Way. The large majority of families own their own home but there are a few social housing estates, including Tilehouse and New Denham. A few children live in homes where no one is in paid work and a few live in lone parent households.

Most of the population is White British, with small percentages of families from minority ethnic groups. Most children start school with skill levels above the level typical for their age.

Services provided by the centre and in partnership with other centres include activities to promote early learning, family support, parenting workshops, breastfeeding support, child and family health clinics, adult learning and volunteering.

The following are the identified priority groups of children and families: Children from families in need of early help, two-year-old children eligible for funding for early education, Traveller families and children who are under one year of age living in the New Denham area.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Overall, a large majority of the families are registered with the centre. The numbers of children registered is increasing but data shows it is not yet the large majority of children under the age of one who are signed up for services.
- Not enough families participate in activities. Currently, less than a third of families identified as needing early help have visited the centre more than five times or more in the last year. As a result, some families are not getting the support they need to improve their lives.
- Effective work with health visitors and midwives ensures the centre is aware when babies are born in Buckinghamshire, but information on live births is not received from other health authorities. These mothers do not get information about the centre and what it can offer as quickly as others.
- Staff have tried a range of ways, with limited success, to attract more families with children under the age of one-year from New Denham, including delivering leaflets and providing a play session. However, a bounce and rhyme session at Gerrards Cross library has proved a good way to introduce families to the centre. The numbers participating have improved, but it is still too few families who participate.
- Outreach work with Travellers and those families referred for early help, including children who are subject to a care or child protection plan, is successful in engaging families by taking activities and family support to where the families live. Staff are good at maintaining contact with families who are

referred to them and work well with these families until their needs are met.

- The health visiting team run a popular weekly clinic from the centre that provides post-natal services for parents. Those expecting children are signposted to other children's centres nearby to access antenatal classes and clinics. Close collaboration with the health visiting team ensures children's safety and families' well-being.
- The large majority of three- and four-year-olds living in the area served by the centre take up their free early education places in mainly good or better quality provision, as do the large majority of eligible two-year-olds. Staff have strong partnerships with early years settings and childminders that help to identify the families most in need.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The centre provides a good balance between those activities that are open to all and those that are planned for those most in need. It has been identified that outcomes for some children, from the poorest backgrounds, are less positive than those achieved by their peers. However, activities are not yet planned with sufficient focus to meet the learning needs of this group.
- The proportion of children who reach a good level of development at 72 per cent is above local authority and national averages. However, only a third of children eligible for free school meals achieved this. This means the gap is not closing quickly enough. Activities are planned to focus on the prime areas of learning and good support is given to promote language and communication but not enough attention is given to meeting target children's specific needs.
- Systems to track the progress target children make have been developed and staff are starting to assess and record progress, but it is not used for all target children or used to share information on their progress with early years settings when they move on.
- Staff provide good quality parenting programmes at the centre or, if necessary, in families' homes. Parents value the good quality 'Now I'm 2' parenting course and the post-natal support groups. Parents learn how to promote speech and language, how to teach good manners, promote good nutrition and better manage their children's behaviour. Staff create colourful and very informative displays, such as how to 'Bin the Bottle' and 'Ditch the Dummy', so that parents are kept well informed.
- Family support workers and volunteers provide a good level of care and support for families. Families and children feel relaxed and safe and look forward to attending the centre. Mothers who have been working full-time prior to having children find the support very valuable to help them adjust to having a family.
- Family support workers have gained the confidence of the mothers on the Traveller site; the children enjoy attending specific activities and are better prepared for school. The children have more confidence and their parents now see the value of early education.
- Opportunities for parents to improve their education, skills and economic well-being are limited. A few parents are helped to improve their life chances and are signposted to other centres to access English language skills and readiness for work; but numbers are low. Family learning, such as a popular first aid course, are valued by parents and they report they feel more confident should their child have an accident. Good systems are in place to recruit volunteers but currently there are very few who are active at the centre.
- Multi-agency work is effective; for example, staff work in good partnership with the Family Resilience team who have confidence in the family support workers' ability to work well with families, especially those experiencing domestic violence or mental health issues. Case files are maintained to a good standard and show good information-sharing and communication with a range of agencies.
- Health outcomes are good. Breastfeeding is promoted well, as reflected in the well-above average proportion (71%) of mothers who sustain breastfeeding their babies at six to eight weeks. Healthy eating is promoted throughout the work of the centre and children have healthy snacks.
- Childminders and early years providers appreciate the good support they receive with early years education, and a monthly support group is run at the centre, where childminders and nannies are

made welcome.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The centre has experienced major changes in staffing. Currently, staff are coming to terms with the outcomes of the re-commissioning of all Buckinghamshire's children's centres. The centre coordinator, in post since December 2014, has been driving improvements in registrations, rekindling partnerships and ensuring good quality practice is maintained. She has not yet been as effective in ensuring services meet the needs of all target groups, or in fully establishing systems to track some aspects of the centre's work, and these require improvement.
- The newly established team support one another and are very focused on meeting local needs and ensure all families are greeted with a smile. Induction arrangements are good; regular supervision and well-targeted staff training ensure that both individual needs and centre priorities are addressed.
- The local authority undertakes regular monitoring and a thorough annual review takes place that includes observations of practice and an audit of case files. However, the data used by the local authority to measure performance are not the same as the data used by the centre so that information held by the centre on priority groups is not shared fully with the local authority or used effectively to monitor progress.
- The advisory board is well run and the independent chair provides a good level of challenge. The board monitors the progress towards targets and is keen to reach out to more families. Although one or two parents attend the board regularly and make good suggestions for improvements, the centre is planning for more parents, especially those from target groups, to play a more active role in decision-making.
- Managers provide good quality supervision and staff performance is regularly monitored. Day-to-day management is good and managers take action when performance is a concern. Managers make regular checks on the quality of services and carry out detailed observations with clear feedback that helps staff to improve services further.
- Safeguarding is central to the work of the centre. Staff receive regular safeguarding training and are well supported by clear policies and procedures. Arrangements to safeguard users are good.
- The centre uses a good variety of ways to seek the views of families. Parents have opportunities to post their comments on a feedback board and to complete evaluations at the end of activities, and staff are quick to respond to their ideas and comments.

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	20941
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	455081
Managed by	Barnardo's on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	838
centre coordinator	Sarah Dunmur
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01895 835967
Email address	denhamcc@barnados.org.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

(Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2015

