

Uxbridge Children's Centre

Whitehall Road, Uxbridge, UB8 2DQ

Inspection dates		21–22 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:

- Not enough children and families from some of the priority groups needing the most support make regular use of its services.
- Approximately only half of all two-year-olds who could benefit from free early education take up their place.
- The local authority is not providing the centre with enough reliable information about the children and families who need support the most. Other partners are not sharing information readily enough, such as local new births or where there is social care involvement.
- Opportunities for adults to improve their learning, skills and employability are limited. Where families have been supported by the centre or their partners, systems to track the longer term benefits are under developed. This is also the case with regard to tracking children.
- The local authority, leaders and managers are not setting targets that are focused specifically enough on the centre's impact on priority groups. The local authority's monitoring is not robust and reviews do not provide an accurate picture of the centre's effectiveness. This limits the centre's capacity to improve.
- The locality advisory board members are not provided well enough with information about the centre's impact on groups who need most support in order to challenge centre staff effectively. There are too few parent representatives on the board.

This centre has the following strengths:

- The centre provides families with easy access to early health services with daily midwifery clinics and some health visitor services run from the building.
- Children are prepared well for moving on to school. Coming to the centre gives them confidence because staff are very welcoming and there is an effective emphasis on their early development, starting with sessions such as Busy Babies. Children who require additional support have their needs met well.
- The centre has a strong focus on improving children's health and well-being. As a result, health outcomes are good or improving.
- The centre manager provides effective leadership for the small team of staff who take on several roles with enthusiasm. Parents are very appreciative of the support they and their children receive.
- Good use is made of the attractive and well-resourced centre. The well-planned outdoor area provides a wealth of opportunities for children to explore and learn.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Increase the attendance of all children, especially those living in poverty, so that the large majority regularly access the centre and its partners' services until their needs are met.
- Increase the take up of free early education by eligible two-year-olds so that most get off to the best start.
- Work with the local authority and partners to improve the quality, accuracy and timeliness of data. Establish how many children and families from priority groups live locally and to identify their specific needs. Ensure that information about young children in the local area who are subject to any form of supervision from social care, plus new birth information, is shared regularly.
- Improve outcomes for parents, especially those where children are living in poverty, by working with partners to provide more, relevant opportunities to extend learning, skills and employability. Establish an effective system with partners, including local schools, to enable the longer term impact of the centre's work with priority children and families to be measured consistently.
- Ensure that data about the regular attendance of priority children and families are used as an effective tool by leaders and managers at all levels to set challenging targets that are consistent across all documentation. The local authority should ensure that quarterly reviews are thorough and provide a more accurate assessment of the centre's impact on priority children and families to support its drive for improvement.
- Support members of the locality advisory board to be better equipped with information about the centre's impact on groups needing most support to enable them to challenge the centre effectively. Increase parent representation on the 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 Oak Farm Children's Centre.

This inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre manager, staff, local authority officers and members of the advisory board. They also spoke to several partners including those from health and adult education. They took into account the views of parents from discussions during the inspection and also from surveys and evaluations.

The inspectors visited a number of activities taking place at the centre including a Come and Play session held in the outdoor area. The Busy Babies session was observed jointly with the early years teacher.

A wide range of documentation was looked at, including the centre's action plan and local authority reviews. Safeguarding policies, procedures and practice, as well as case studies, were examined in depth.

The centre managers from both centres, the headteacher of Oak Farm Infant School, as well as a local authority officer, attended all team meetings which were held jointly with lead and team inspectors.

Inspection team

Joan Lindsay, Lead Inspector

Additional Inspector

Graham Saltmarsh

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Uxbridge Children's Centre opened fully in 2011 as a stand-alone centre in the heart of Uxbridge. It is managed directly by the local authority as part of the borough's South West locality of six children's centres. The centre manager has additional management oversight of the four other children's centres managed directly by the local authority that are spread across the borough's three locality areas. Oak Farm Children's Centre, part of the South West collaboration, but managed separately, was inspected at the same time as this centre. Its report, as well as those of the other centres, can be found at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

The centre provides early years experiences, family support, adult learning and health services through partnership work. There is a locality advisory board in place to assist governance.

There are 871 children under the age of five years living in the area served by the centre. This includes parts of two council wards of South Uxbridge and Brunel. Approximately one in seven young children in the area is living in a home where no one is in paid work, and over a quarter of the children are considered to be living in poverty. Almost three quarters of families are White British, with the next largest ethnic group being Asian/Asian British. Children enter early education provision at levels slightly below those typical for their age.

Target groups identified by the centre are: two-year-old children eligible for free education; young children living in poverty and children who have additional needs.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Registrations have increased substantially in the last 12 months, so that now the large majority of young children are registered. However, the information that the local authority produces in relation to the number of children in each priority group is not always reliable or up to date. Furthermore, arrangements for sharing information are not robust enough to ensure centre staff are aware, for example, of which children are subject to social care supervision. This makes it difficult for the centre to have an accurate picture about the groups using this centre or others in the borough.
- The centre has not fully assessed the needs of families where children are living in poverty and so not enough are engaging regularly.
- All three- and four-year-olds take up their early education places, but only approximately half of the two-year-olds who could be taking up a free place do so. Some of this is due to a shortage of suitable spaces locally, but the centre has not fully established the reasons for the low take up. A specific open session for two-year-olds has been set up, Toddlerific, but the number of children attending from priority families is relatively low.
- There is a good range of services to meet the needs of children who require extra help. Consequently, the majority now engage regularly with centre's services, such as through Language For Life sessions, and regular visits from the speech and language therapist.
- Midwifery clinics are run every day from the centre. Child health reviews, as well as a weekly baby clinic, increase the opportunities for families to access early health services, including those who are expecting babies. This has had a positive impact on the number of families who know about the centre. However, systems to pass on information about new births in the local area are not fully effective, which is preventing registrations from being even higher.

The quality of practice and services**Requires improvement**

- The quality of practice and services requires improvement because services have not been developed to fully meet the needs of some of the priority groups. Opportunities for adults to extend their learning, skills and employability are limited. There are some adult learning courses that take place, such as a Functioning Skills course; but, the numbers who attend overall are relatively low. At present, there are no active volunteers in the centre, although some are currently undergoing the appropriate induction and checks.
- There is no consistent way for the centre to track the longer term impact of any support it or its partners provide for families. Arrangements for sharing information with partners are not effective enough to ensure the centre is aware of families who may be taking courses at other establishments and what their progression is.
- The early years teacher and practitioner are good role models and ensure that sessions have a strong focus on early childhood development. Parents are supported well before their children move on to school, through sessions such as the Transition Come and Play. The progress of a small number of children is tracked thoroughly, for example if they attend the respite crèche. However, this has not been extended widely enough to other priority children. Furthermore, evidence of the longer term impact on children, for example when they move on to school, is only anecdotal as there are no consistent methods to track this.
- Although the percentage of children who achieve a good level of development when they are five is below that seen nationally, it is improving strongly and represents steady progress. Indications are that this improvement has continued for the latest group of children. In addition, there is no gap between the achievement of children eligible for free school meals and the rest, showing that inequalities in this regard are reducing.
- The proportion of babies still being breastfed at around two months is well above the national average. This has been due to centre staff being trained to deliver support, plus easy access to health services at the centre. Although the level of young children who are very overweight is slightly higher than national figures, it is reducing. The centre has a strong focus on encouraging active, healthy lifestyles through sessions such as Feed My Family, Active Babies, and making effective use of the extensive and exciting outdoor space.
- There are no specific family outreach workers at any of the children's centres directly managed by the local authority. Where possible, the senior early years practitioner will support families and does so effectively, as reflected by comments such as, 'Sometimes I feel like I want to cry because they have helped me so much.' Those with more complex needs are referred to key workers in the early help team via early help assessments. There are limitations on the support the centre can provide to families subject to social care supervision, as arrangements for sharing information are not yet allowing staff to receive the details of those families.
- Sessions at the centre are popular and often fully booked. Parents have very positive views of the staff and how welcoming they are. They typically say, 'Staff are always the same, always bubbly and helpful.'

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management**Requires improvement**

- Due to a lack of reliable information relating to priority children and families and their regular use of services, the impact of centre staff has been reduced.
- Arrangements for sharing information with health and social care are not robust enough, making it harder for the centre to be aware of all the priority children and families in its area.
- The local authority conducts quarterly reviews. However, they are not thorough enough to ensure centre staff have an accurate understanding of the impact of their work on children and families who need most support. Targets set are not focused clearly enough on this aspect and this reduces the centre's capacity to improve and to reduce inequalities in the local area.
- The locality advisory board is relatively new in its current form. Members are enthusiastic and supportive but have not yet got a clear enough understanding of the data to measure the centre's

impact on groups who need most support. Consequently, their ability to challenge the centre effectively is compromised.

- Parent representation on the locality advisory board is not yet wide enough. However, parents do feel that they have a voice in developing services as staff are very approachable. In addition, regular coffee mornings that give parents the opportunity to discuss services are well attended. The centre does listen to parents views, for example changing the times of sessions and putting on a music and movement group. Consequently, parents have positive views of the centre and staff.
- The centre's safeguarding policies are all up to date; practices and procedures are robust. Staff are well trained and quick to act on any concerns. The centre provides effective support for children subject to child protection plans, those who are children in need or who are looked after, when it knows who they are.
- The centre manager has an accurate understanding of the centre's strengths and barriers to improvement. There have been long-term difficulties in recruiting permanent staff because of the local authority's review of Children's Services. In addition, the staff team is very small and the centre manager also has restrictions on her time because of overseeing the work of four other children's centres. Nevertheless, staff have maintained the good quality of services they provide, as well as parents' positive views, and generally staff morale is high.
- Arrangements for setting targets for staff performance reviews are thorough and regular, and staff feel well supported.
- Resources are of a high quality. The outdoor area includes some wooded grounds that are used well to encourage children to explore and find natural 'treasures'. Parents make good use of crèches to give them some respite and also to support some of the courses that are run, such as the Functioning Skills session.

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	23578
Local authority	The London Borough of Hillingdon
Inspection number	455095
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	871
Centre manager	Lorraine Penson
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01895 558190
Email address	lpenson@hillingdon.gov.uk

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