

# Slough Children's Centres

Cambridge Education working with Slough Borough Council, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor West, St Martin's Place, Bath Road, Slough, SL1 3UF

<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–19 March 2015
Previous inspection dates	25–28 March 2014

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 group of centres requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Information sharing with health partners continues to require improvement so that the centres can reach all expectant and new parents in the local area.
- In two of the centres not enough families from priority groups are regularly using the services.
- Parents and partners on the advisory board are not yet effectively challenging the group's performance.
- Not enough vulnerable two-year-olds are taking up funded places with early education providers.
- The progress made by adult learners is not being tracked effectively.
- Information and data to demonstrate the impact of the group's work are not always pulled together effectively to show how the centre is making a difference to families.

### It has the following strengths:

- The capable and experienced leadership team has brought about some major improvements, such as the significant increase in the number of families registered with the centres.
- The appropriate actions in the group's improvement plan are closely monitored and reported to senior managers, leaders and council members.
- Information sharing and joint work with children's social care are now effective. Good outcomes can be seen in individual family files. Staff provide sensitive and effective family support.
- Partnerships have developed strongly over the last year. The role of the children's centres is now better understood and valued, which means work with priority families is better coordinated.
- Children's learning and development are at the centre of the group's work. The quality of the early years provision linked to the centres is at least good, and expertise is shared in order to improve the overall quality of provision across the borough.
- Parents praise the staff and their work highly. Centres are warm and inclusive hubs of their communities, where families feel welcome and safe.

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

- Develop strategic information sharing protocols with health partners to ensure:
  - information is shared regarding all expectant mothers in the borough
  - information is shared regarding new births in the borough
  - information regarding health outcomes is shared at a children's centre level.
- Ensure that all members of the new advisory board, including parent representatives, receive the support, training and information they need to challenge the group's performance effectively.
- Ensure the large majority of priority families use services regularly in all of the children's centres.
- Ensure that tracking of adult learners, especially those from priority groups, is systematic so that the group can clearly demonstrate the impact of their learning on family outcomes.
- Increase the proportion of two-year-olds that take up their entitlement to free early education in good quality early years provision.
- Continue to develop ways in which the group can effectively demonstrate the impact of services by collating the information held on individual children, adult learners and families more effectively.

## 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, a Seconded Inspector and two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders and managers from Slough Borough Council and Cambridge Education. They spoke to partners from across a wide range of services and agencies, including education, health, social care, the early help team and the voluntary sector. Many staff and parents across all 10 centres also met with inspectors and contributed their views.

The inspectors visited all 10 centres within this group. The inspection covered the following children's centres: Orchard Avenue; St Andrew's Way; Penn Road; Wexham Road; Chalvey Grove; Elliman Avenue; Romsey Close; Vicarage Way; Yew Tree Road; and Monksfield Way.

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

## Inspection team

Penny Fisher, Lead Inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Christine Davies, Assistant Lead Inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Fiona Bridger-Wilkinson	Seconded Inspector
Tricia Collis	Additional Inspector
Graham Saltmarsh	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the group

Slough Children's Centre Group consists of 10 children's centres serving 12,651 children under the age of five across the borough. All of the centres, with the exception of Vicarage Way, are on primary or nursery school sites. The 10 centres have been managed as a single group by Mott Macdonald (trading as Cambridge Education) on behalf of Slough Borough Council since September 2013. Centres are organised into four clusters covering the whole of the borough. All centres offer early education in registered provision which is inspected separately. Linked school and inspection reports can be found at [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted). The centres also provide a range of health services, adult learning, family learning, information, advice and guidance and targeted and specialist services.

Governance arrangements have changed since the last inspection. A single Slough-wide advisory board, currently chaired by the local authority, reports to the children and young people's partnership board, which in turn reports to the Slough well-being board. Each of the four clusters has a local service partner network, which reports to the advisory board. Following the last inspection, an improvement steering group was formed. An improvement plan was drafted, which has been monitored by the improvement board.

Slough has significant deprivation, especially around central Slough, and four of the 10 children's centre areas fall into the 30% most deprived in the country. These are Monksfield Way, Penn Road, Chalvey Grove and Elliman Avenue. There are pockets of significant deprivation in almost all of the other children's centre areas, such as Foxborough ward, which falls within the Romsey Close area. Slough has a highly diverse community, with over half of the population being from minority ethnic groups. A very large number of languages are spoken across the borough. Children's skills and knowledge on entry to early education and school are variable, but generally below those expected for their age.

Priority groups identified include vulnerable two-year-olds, children under the age of five with an early help assessment, children under five known to children's social care, lone parents, families with children under five where there is reported domestic abuse, and children under five living in families on low income. Analysis of Early Years Foundation Stage outcomes in 2014 has also led to a focus on Panjabi, Urdu and Polish speaking children and White British boys' achievement in some children's centre areas.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

### Requires improvement

- There has been a significant increase in the number of families that are known to the centres, from 56% in March 2014 to 83% in March 2015. Effective strategies mean that most children under the age of five and their families are now registered at nine out of the 10 centres. Outreach work to increase registrations has proved successful.
- Improved partnerships, for example with schools in the Chalvey Grove area, are ensuring the centres reach more priority families. However, not enough lone parents are yet registered.
- Priority groups are now clearly identified for each of the 10 centres. These are relevant and have been drawn from available data as well as local knowledge. The group is engaging with the large majority of families with children under the age of five living on low incomes. Most families with children under the age of five where there is reported domestic abuse are also accessing services. However, a lack of information sharing with health services remains a barrier to precise targeting of expectant mothers and new parents.
- Data collection has improved since the last inspection. The centres now know how many families are attending each of the services provided. Some delays in installing IT systems have not helped the centres with this area for development identified at the last inspection. Despite this, the group can show that, overall, the large majority of families from target groups are engaging with early childhood services regularly. However, this is variable across the centres. Some centres, such as

Yew Tree Close and Elliman Avenue, are not doing as well as the others.

- The children's centres have extended their registered early years provision in order to accommodate more vulnerable two-year-olds. However, despite strenuous efforts, there are not enough places across the borough as a whole. Some parents are reluctant to attend provision that is not linked to children's centres. This means that only 56% of those that are eligible are currently taking up a place. Over 100 children are currently waiting for a place in the children's centres. In response, the children's centres are holding open days to introduce parents to early years providers that can currently offer places.
- Information sharing regarding the most vulnerable families has improved. For example, the centres are now aware of all children known to children's social care and those that have an early help assessment. The children's centres are regularly engaging with most of these children. The early years provision linked to each children's centre is strongly integrated. This ensures that children's needs are identified and assessed early. Around one fifth of referrals for additional support come via the health visiting clinics which are held in the children's centres.
- Data show that overall attendance at the centres has increased. Services are now better matched to the needs of families in the area. For example, in the Vicarage Way area, obesity is identified as a concern. In response, healthy eating activities are now incorporated into universal 'stay and play' sessions. In the Wexham Road area, Urdu speaking children are identified as being at risk of under achievement. A communication and language 'play and learn' now provides additional effective support to targeted families.

### The quality of practice and services

### Requires improvement

- Around half of all parents from priority groups attend activities which are specifically targeted at meeting the needs of the family. The range of parenting programmes continues to grow and parents' evaluations are positive. However, more effective ways to measure the longer term impact of family learning on both the child and parent are being introduced.
- Adults have good opportunities to attend a wide range of good quality adult learning courses. Achievements and progress by learners are good. However, the long term impact for learners and their families is not currently tracked as this information is not systematically shared by partners. This continues to be an area for development for the centres.
- The delivery of health visitor clinics within the children's centres ensures that there is good collaboration between children's centre staff and health visitors. Health visitors refer families identified as needing some additional support into children's centres services, thereby ensuring they receive help at an early stage. However, piloted work with midwifery services to provide antenatal support from the centres is in the early stages of development.
- The work of the centres supports children's health and well-being. For example, the good quality cookery school programme, delivered at Elliman Avenue, is supporting work to reduce obesity. However, a lack of data regarding health outcomes at a local level means that the centre's contribution to health targets cannot currently be effectively measured.
- The impact of family support work can be seen in individual cases. Intensive support secures good improvement in families' lives, with a clear focus on supporting children's long term development and learning. Management oversight of case files is now clearly recorded. The introduction of a panel effectively supports the management of the work and is ensuring that cases are allocated, transferred and closed appropriately.
- The quality of record keeping has been a focus for improvement, and quality is now at an acceptable level. Information is being transferred from paper records on to an electronic database system to ensure consistency and enable more robust management of the work. Recording is generally up to date and includes chronologies and detail of vulnerabilities and risks. Close work with children's social care, paediatricians, therapists, housing, and domestic abuse support partners is evident. But, records lack a clear summary overview. Audits seen on files identify this appropriately, but findings from audited cases are not collated in order to identify themes.
- There is a good range of programmes and activities available. The child's safety, development and

learning are at the heart of all the centres' work with families. Staff are adept at identifying those families that need more intensive support and engage them in appropriate groups and services. The large majority of referrals for additional family support come via the early years provision linked to centres and the universal sessions.

- Parents are highly positive about the services received. They see the centres as safe, non-judgemental and inclusive places where they are treated with respect. Specialist 'stay and play' sessions for children with special educational needs and disabilities provide a very supportive environment in which to promote children's development. Staff work with parents and children, modelling interactions and giving helpful advice.
- The quality of early years provision linked to the children's centres is good, and centres are working well with other settings to improve the overall quality of provision. Cluster meetings and training delivered from the centres ensure good practice is shared effectively. The large majority of early years providers and most childminders in the borough are good or better.
- Careful analysis of Early Years Foundation Stage data has enabled the centres to identify groups of children that are at risk of under achievement. Activities provided in the centres target identified gaps in children's learning, such as boys' writing, through quality outdoor learning opportunities. This is contributing to a narrowing of the gap between the lowest performing children and the rest at age five. Overall, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development improved in 2014, but remains slightly below the national average.

### The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

### Requires improvement

- Governance arrangements have been strengthened following the last inspection, and there is now a clear structure in place to ensure accountability. Arrangements have been well supported since the inspection by the improvement board, which has overseen the implementation of the improvement plan. A new borough-wide advisory board, with a good range of partners and parent representation, is established. However, board members acknowledge they are still gathering the information and knowledge they need to drive further improvements.
- Some partnerships, such as those between the adult learning providers, the local college and the centres, are strong. Joint working with children's social care, early help and domestic abuse support services has improved and information to support the most vulnerable families is being shared appropriately. However, partnerships with midwifery services are still in the early stages of development; some antenatal services have been piloted within centres.
- Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the children's centres. Clear targets and priorities have been set which are regularly monitored to ensure progress. Targets are challenging and ambitious. They include good levels of engagement for all target groups, increased achievement for children by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and all eligible two-year-olds taking up free early years places. Not all have been met.
- Parents who spoke to inspectors were overwhelmingly positive in their praise for the centres' work. They value the sensitive and kind way in which the staff welcome and support them, including at times of crisis. The range of languages spoken by staff helps parents to feel included and understood. Parents are able to access translation and interpreter services if needed. Advice, information and guidance are published in a wide range of languages.
- Partners now view centres as hubs of the community. This demonstrates a clear shift in perceptions over the last year and reflects the tenacious work that has been done, at all levels, to raise the profile of the centres' work and build good working relationships. At a strategic level, the pivotal role of children's centres in early intervention is clearly identified in local authority plans and strategies.
- There are good opportunities for continuous professional development, which are carefully linked to meeting the needs of the children and families. For example, staff have attended training about how boys learn, how to support children with English as an additional language and how to create communication friendly spaces.
- Staff work flexibly across all 10 centres. The high level of staff vacancies that was affecting the

delivery of services at the last inspection has been addressed, and changes to the staffing structure now ensure better use of staff resources. However, few parents support the work of the group through volunteering.

- The development manager for the children's centres and the early years team have worked hard to drive the major improvements that were needed following the last inspection. They are highly ambitious for the centres, their staff and, most importantly, the families of Slough. Staff feel well supported. Supervision of staff is being conducted routinely and regularly. This is an improvement on last year and staff report that it has assisted team building and created a shared sense of ambition for the centres.
- Safeguarding policy and procedures are clear and comprehensive. The centres are meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for both early years and centre staff. Suitability checks and recruitment arrangements are robust. Effective security and safety measures are in place at all 10 centres. Each centre has a link social worker who provides advice, support and guidance. The centres support children in need of protection, those on early help assessment plans, those with disabilities and special educational needs well.
- Regular consultations and evaluations of services show that parents report a high level of satisfaction with services. There have been no complaints. Users' views have helped to shape the design and delivery of services. For example, parents' suggestions regarding activities being provided on a Saturday and at venues outside of the children's centres have been actioned.

## 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.

## Group details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	80341
<b>Local authority</b>	Slough Borough Council
<b>Inspection number</b>	453939
<b>Managed by</b>	Cambridge Education on behalf of the local authority.

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	12,651
<b>Development manager</b>	Jean Cameron
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	25–28 March 2015
<b>Telephone number</b>	01753 476566
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:Childrens.centres@slough.gov.uk">Childrens.centres@slough.gov.uk</a>

### This group consists of the following children's centres:

- Monksfield Way
- Orchard Avenue
- St Andrew's Way
- Penn Road
- Wexham Road
- Chalvey Grove
- Elliman Avenue
- Romsey Close
- Vicarage Way
- Yew Tree Road

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](http://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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (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](mailto: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.

This template is available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130186](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130186).

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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

No. 130186

© Crown copyright 2015

