

# Solihull - Shirley

Mill Lodge Primary School, Aquaduct Road, Solihull, B90 1BT

<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 March 2015
<b>Previous inspection date</b>	Not Previously Inspected

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
	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 children's centre group requires improvement. It is not good because:

- In the locality, the gap between the achievement of boys and girls is too wide.
- A quarter of all two-year-olds who are eligible for early education funding do not take up their entitlement.
- Systems to track children's progress through to the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage do not enable leaders to demonstrate the impact of the centre.
- The assessments of children's learning and development are not moderated to ensure they are accurate and robust.
- Some important information is not provided to centre leaders in a helpful format; and health and adult learning partners do not routinely share information regarding the impact of their work.

### This children's centre group has the following strengths:

- At the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage the proportion of children achieving a good level of development is significantly higher than seen nationally.
- Leaders and centre staff demonstrate positive attitudes to their work. They are resilient and committed to improving outcomes for children and families.
- Outreach and family support work is a key strength of the group. This has resulted in an increase in the levels of participation in activities and services and improved sustained engagement with target families.
- Volunteers play a vital role in the delivery of services. Leaders provide all volunteers with good quality training, supervision and support to ensure all services delivered are of good quality.
- Leaders rigorously monitor all groups and activities to ensure there are improving levels of participation and engagement with children and families. They carefully consider the impact of the activities and take bold steps to change activities to meet the evolving needs of the families.

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

- Focus on narrowing the gap in achievement between boys and girls by:
  - increasing the number of children accessing the two-year-old free education entitlement
  - undertaking training on how to effectively engage boys in learning and implement agreed strategies to improve their attainment
  - working with partners who also deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage to develop a robust moderation process for assessments of children’s learning and achievement
  - developing overarching reporting systems to monitor trends in progress, as well as identify individual children’s achievement.
  
- Improve the effectiveness and of how leaders judge the impact of children’s centre services and plan for improvement more robustly by:
  - ensuring data from health, local colleges and the local authority is provided to the centres in an analysed format demonstrating progression, trends and gaps
  - developing mechanisms to track children to the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage profile to demonstrate the impact of children’s centre services on the attainment of children over time.

## Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children’s centre group was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. The centres that form part of this children’s centre group are Ulverley Children’s Centre, Mill Lodge Children’s Centre and Shirley Heath Children’s Centre.

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty’s Inspectors and an Additional inspector.

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

The inspectors visited a range of services offered, including ‘Stay and Play’ sessions, ‘Friends and Fun’ family drop-in group, Playing with Language, ‘ICAN’ toddler talk, and a self-support group for families with children with special educational needs and disabilities. The inspectors visited each of the children’s centres and spent time meeting children and families.

They observed the centre’s work, and conducted joint observations with leaders. They looked at a range of relevant documentation, including case files.

## Inspection team

Lead inspector, Deborah Udakis	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Maxine Mayer	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Geoffrey Dorrity	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the group

The Solihull Shirley Group comprises of three children's centres. The centres were established as a group in April 2014. One staff team delivers services and activities across the three centres and in venues out in the community. Each of the centres are co-located on school sites. The schools are subject to different inspection arrangements. Reports can be found at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>. There is no onsite childcare provision managed by the centres. The centres serve communities in which there are pockets of disadvantage interspersed with high levels of affluence.

Barnardo's took over the governance of the group in April 2012 on behalf of the local authority and is supported by a partnership advisory board, made up of key partners. Major changes took place after the last inspection resulting in the reduced cluster of centres and a review of the leadership arrangements. Significant restructuring and re-organisation is underway to return the leadership and governance of the centres back to the local authority in July 2015.

The group 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 centres' work.

There are 5,961 children under five years of age living in the area served by the centres. Very few children live in low-income households. There are approximately 300 children aged under five years living in households with parents claiming unemployment benefit, of which 180 are lone parents. The locality has a small proportion of teenage and young mothers. 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.

The levels at which children enter early years provision vary across the area. The centres' target groups are minority ethnic families, children with disabilities, lone 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

- Almost all three- and four-year-old children make use of their free nursery entitlement in good and outstanding early years settings. However, only 74% of two-year-olds who are eligible for early education funded provision are accessing their entitlement. Leaders have put in place a range of positive strategies to engage with those families whose two-year-old children are not making use of the available funding.
- The leaders have taken effective steps to increase the numbers of children and families who regularly attend children's centre services. A large majority of children who are registered with the centres regularly attend, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, children with special educational needs and children of lone parents.
- Only 57% of the families living in the locality are formally registered with the group. However, this shows a considerable increase in membership during the last year and membership is continuing to improve.

- The success of outreach work is enabling the centres to meet and engage with many more families living in the area. For instance, centre staff routinely engage with and provide support to all parent and toddler groups in the area.
- Health and adult learning partners play a major part in helping children and families to access services and to raise their aspirations and to improve their life chances. However, centre leaders are not provided with essential information on a sufficiently regular basis to enable them to effectively measure the impact of the services provided by health and adult education partners on outcomes for children and families.
- Good partnerships with health is helping expectant and new mothers to access a good range of services at the centres, including ante- and post-natal support. Expecting and new parents access healthy start vitamin programmes, breastfeeding cafes and peer support, and immunisations are provided for pregnant and feeding mums.
- The leaders and staff know the locality and the families that attend the centre's services well. Consequently, families identified as in need of additional support are quickly identified and are given priority access to appropriate universal and specialist services and groups.
- Improvements in the effectiveness of adult learning and access to work/benefit advice since the last inspection is supporting improving outcomes for families. Parents access an established and well-devised programme of taster courses supported by crèche facilities which is encouraging families to further their learning. The majority of families accessing these courses progress to further learning.

### **The quality of practice and services**

### **Requires improvement**

- Girls outperform boys in all aspects of their learning at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Centre leaders are aware of the significant gap between boys and girls attainment. However, no specific steps have yet been taken to reduce the achievement gap.
- Early years specialists effectively track the progress of children who access early years services at the centres. This assessment information is shared with schools and settings as the child moves on to the next stage in their education. However, there is no agreed moderation system in place to ensure that the assessments are robust. In addition, children are not tracked through to the end of Reception to enable the centre to determine the longer term impact of its services.
- In the locality, the numbers of children who achieve a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is considerably higher than seen nationally. The large majority of early years provision in the locality is of good quality. The centres work closely with early years settings to support improved practice and focus their support on the few settings which are inadequate or require improvement.
- Sessions delivered in and by the centre are of good quality. Robust planning identifies the needs of individual children and parents. Observations and assessments undertaken by parents of their children are a particular strength, developing their knowledge of child development and how children learn.

- Children who are disabled or have special educational needs, and their parents are particularly well supported through self-help groups and partners from the Inclusion service. Families receive focused support at the centres while awaiting access to additional services such as speech and language support. Once any additional needs are identified there is a swift and effective referral system to ensure all children make good progress in their development.
- The children who attend the centres access a positive range of targeted and universal services and groups. Staff provide high levels of good quality care, guidance and support to all families, and prioritise support for those identified as being in greatest need.
- While at the centres the children are safe and secure. Centre staff provide good quality advice and support to parents about keeping their child safe at home. Grants of financial support for essential household items and safety equipment, together with home safety assessment conducted by staff with parents, help parents to make their homes safe and secure for their child.

### **The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management**

### **Requires improvement**

- The leadership team was re-structured after the last inspection. The new leadership team has taken positive actions to secure the support and trust of senior leaders and staff; and to overcome weaknesses identified at the last inspection.
- Previous concerns regarding the lack of data have generally been tackled. However, some essential data such as health and adult learning outcomes are not routinely provided to the leadership team. In addition, some aspects of data are poorly presented and prove difficult to interpret.
- Under the watchful gaze and with the support of leaders from Barnardos and the local authority, the senior leadership team have devised, led and reviewed the progress of improvement plans throughout the last year. However, leaders at all levels recognise further improvements are required in respect of the achievement of boys, data management, the take-up of early education funding by eligible two-year-olds, and the monitoring of the impact of centre services on children and families over time.
- Leaders at all levels are working closely with centre staff and key partners, including parents, to secure a smooth and well-managed transfer of children's centre services back to local authority control.
- The group's self-evaluation lacks evidence of impact in some aspects but it accurately reflects the group's strengths and areas for improvement.
- Governance arrangements are much improved although the partnership advisory board has only recently been established with an independent chair. Parents are becoming increasingly involved in the governance and planning and design of centre services. However, it is too early to demonstrate the impact of the partnership advisory board on the performance of the centre group.

- Leaders make good use of performance management, supervision and appraisal processes to help to raise the achievements of staff. Induction, supervision and professional development activities all focus on ensuring that staff have the necessary skills and competencies to meet the organisations expectations in their work with children and families.
- Safeguarding arrangements are robust and well-thought out. Staff attend regular training events to keep up-to-date with current best practice. The common assessment and team around the family processes are rigorously applied. Case work shows how children on child protection plans, looked after children, families with very complex needs and those in times of crises receive timely and sensitive support. This leads to improved outcomes for children and families.
- Centre services are well-resourced and leaders closely monitors some aspects of service delivery to ensure they provide value for money and are meeting the needs of children and families. Each of the centres is warm, welcoming and child-friendly. Security arrangements are meticulous and all visitors are closely vetted and monitored during their time in the centres.

**What inspection judgements mean**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
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 group details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	80214
<b>Local authority</b>	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
<b>Inspection number</b>	454138
<b>Managed by</b>	Barnardos on behalf of the local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	5961
<b>Centre leader</b>	Cathy Hammond
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 2487646
<b>Email address</b>	cathy.hammond@barnardos.org.uk

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

- [21885] Ulverley Children's Centre
- [22013] Mill Lodge Children's Centre
- [22706] Shirley Heath Children's Centre

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