

Poole Children's Centre Group

c/o Ted Webster Children's Centre, 519a Ashley Road, Poole. BH14 0BD

Inspection dates	15–18 July 2014
Previous inspection date	24–25 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
Access to services by young children and families		Good	2
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:

- Leaders and managers do not have access to health information to help them plan suitable services and be aware of local health priorities.
- Systems to track the quality and impact of children's centre services on families who need them the most are too new. This means it is too early to assess how effective they are.
- Although a small number of parents sign up to complete adult learning courses, the numbers who finish the course are low.
- The advisory boards have not been fully effective in helping the centres to improve at a faster pace. A new management system is now in place, but this structure is still at an early stage of development.

This children's centre group has the following strengths:

- Staff have worked tirelessly to increase the numbers of families who are registered with the centre and regularly use its services. As a result, the registration and engagement rates have significantly improved.
- Senior managers from the local authority have made major changes to the way in which children's centres are organised. This has resulted in significant improvements in the way services are delivered. Most information is now readily available to staff, which helps them to prioritise services.
- The new management structure has involved the appointment of senior managers who have an excellent awareness of how to improve services. The children's centre services manager has only been in post since March 2014, but already improvements are being seen at a rapid rate.
- The local authority has recently developed its own programme to help children be ready to start school. This has worked very well and the positive results are already beginning to be

seen.

- Parents are becoming increasingly involved in the organisation of the centres. The parent forums are effective in ensuring parents' views are taken into account.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Ensure health information is regularly obtained from health partners and is used effectively to identify local need and shape relevant services.
- Develop the systems for monitoring and checking the centres' work to:
 - clearly identify the individual starting points of families in most need of support
 - ensure all activities, such as the Let's Play Together groups and the toy library, are utilised well to support children's learning
 - provide evidence to demonstrate the long term impact of the centres' work over time.
- Improve the opportunities for adult learning to:
 - ensure a greater number of parents enrol on courses, especially in English and mathematics
 - ensure closer monitoring arrangements are in place to identify when parents fail to attend and completion rates for courses are low
 - enable a greater number of parents, especially those from low income families and lone parents, to be supported back into training and employment.
- Strengthen the new arrangements for governance to ensure the advisory board consistently challenges the centres' leaders and drives the centres' improvement.

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: Branksome Children's Centre, Canford Heath Children's Centre, Hamworthy and Turlin Moor Children's Centre, Old Town Children's Centre, Rossmore Children's Centre and Ted Webster Children's Centre.

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 services manager; senior leaders and managers from the local authority; the two cluster lead managers, family outreach workers; volunteers; early years advisory teachers, senior managers from children's services; representatives from commissioned services; local headteachers and managers of pre-school settings; parents and centre users, a local councillor, and representatives of the group's advisory boards.

The inspectors visited a range of services taking place at each of the centres, including Let's Play Together sessions, a music and movement group, observations of parenting courses, visits to child health clinics, observations of groups for children with special educational needs and a visit to the Living in the United Kingdom group.

Inspectors observed the centres' work, spoke informally with parents and looked at a range of relevant documentation. This included the group's development plan and the individual improvement plans for each centre, the group's self-evaluation form and information reports on the centres' performance.

Jo Caswell, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Janet Rodgers	Her Majesty's Inspector
Marinette Bazin	Additional Inspector
Jameel Hassan	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the group

The Poole Children's Centre Group consists of six centres serving the town of Poole. All centres are managed by the children's centre services manager. This group working arrangement is new. Since April 2014, eight centres across Poole have been merged into one group, although the centres are divided into two clusters – the East cluster and the West cluster. Each has their own cluster lead who takes responsibility for the coordination of services and leading teams of family outreach workers. Up until May 2014, each centre had its own advisory board. Following the re-structure, there is now one strategic advisory board for the group and two stakeholder groups – one for each cluster. The centres are governed by the local authority. The group offers a range of activities and services including family support, adult learning, outreach work, stay and play groups, child health clinics and parenting programmes. The centres in the West cluster were previously inspected in 2013.

The centre group serves a community of 8,688 children aged under five years. Three of the centres in the group – Hamworthy and Turlin Moor, Old Town and Rossmore, are situated in areas ranked as being some of the poorest in the country. Approximately 11% of young children live in households where no one is working. Data demonstrate that the population is mainly White British, with a small proportion of families from a range of minority ethnic groups. The centre group has identified the families who are in most need of support to include: children known to social care; teenage parents; children identified as being at risk of low achievement; and children living with domestic abuse and/or adults with mental health issues.

The Old Town Children's Centre is linked to Old Town Infant School and Nursery (131694). This school is subject to separate inspection arrangements. Hamworthy and Turlin Moor is linked to Postman Pat Pre-School (EY419505). This was not inspected as part of this inspection; the early years inspection report is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk. As well as the six centres, there are additional community venues providing children's centre services at Bearwood School, Creekmoor library, Hillbourne School, Hamworthy community library, Stanley Green, and Parkstone United Reformed Church.

Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early education are generally below those typical for their age.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families **Good**

- The large majority (70%) of families living in the local community are registered with the centres. Seventy five per cent of families living in the most disadvantaged areas are registered and the majority (52%) regularly access services.
- The numbers of children from identified priority groups using services is good. Seventy four per cent of families identified as being in most need of support are regularly engaged. Seventy three per cent of children identified as being at risk of low achievement are regularly involved in activities to help them become ready for school.
- The centres are particularly successful in providing support to families experiencing domestic abuse and/or violence, and mental health issues. In total, 71% of these families are supported through centre services and many confirmed to inspectors the positive

impact it has on their emotional well-being.

- At the time of inspection 22 teenage parents were living in the communities served by the centres. Of these, 68% were registered with the centre, regularly accessing services, many with sustained engagement. For example, 80% of parents have been attending the Young Parents group for over a year and acknowledge the strong levels of support they receive.
- In total, 82% of two-year-olds eligible for funded early years education access pre-school provision. The numbers of three- and four-year-olds accessing funded education are slightly below national average, although all children subject to child protection arrangements access funded provision.
- Good working arrangements with social care colleagues mean the majority of children known to social care, and subject to child protection arrangements, regularly access services.
- Cluster leads and centre staff who work in the community know the children's centre areas exceptionally well. They regularly monitor data and identify when some families do not engage. Sensitive support is offered to families who are less confident to attend services. This results in improved attendance.
- Informal links with health colleagues ensure all prospective parents are made aware of the centres' activities and the support programme available. This means many parents start using services soon after their baby is born.
- There is very good support in place for children with special educational needs. Specialist groups and strong working relationships with organisations, such as Portage, mean 89% of children with additional needs are supported through children's centre services.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The children's centre group offers a wide range of services open to everyone and those aimed at specific groups. Most of these are well attended and support the needs of local families. Procedures to monitor the quality and impact of these groups are still in the early stages of development. As a result, it is too early to see evidence of long term impact on families over time.
- The lack of available health information means the centres cannot be sure they are targeting services in response to local health needs. For example, centre leaders cannot identify if obesity levels in children are a local priority, or whether there is a need for increased breastfeeding support.
- Although a good number of parents begin adult learning programmes, the number of those completing the entire course is low. A literacy course at the Hamworthy and Turlin Moor centre only had a 43% attendance and completion rate. Systems to monitor this have now been established, although it is too early to measure improvement. Progression rates for some parents into further education are often low.
- Some centre activities, such as the Let's Play Together, do not make full use of helping all parents understand how to support their children's learning and development. The toy library is an under-used resource, especially in helping to promote language and learning for children identified as being at risk of low achievement.
- The local authority has developed its own programme to help children develop the skills they need for starting school. The Starting Out programme has been widely welcomed by local schools, early years settings and parents. One parent told inspectors, 'Starting Out has given me quality time with my child.'
- Although the Starting Out programme has only been established for a year, significant

improvements are already being seen in children's learning at the end of Reception year. As a result, the gap between the most disadvantaged children and the rest is starting to close.

- Early years advisers and centre staff have played a key role in helping children to be ready for starting school. They work closely with local pre-schools, nurseries and childminders and are instrumental in ensuring high quality early years provision for children living in Poole.
- There is effective support in place to promote family well-being and a wide range of parenting programmes are delivered. Parents praise these courses and comment how beneficial they have found them in reducing their feelings of social isolation and low self-esteem. One parent told inspectors, 'My whole life has changed completely.' Another parent said, 'I don't know where I would be without this support.'
- Strong support is provided for families at times of crisis. Many parents who have been victims of domestic violence, or those who have suffered mental illness such as postnatal depression, receive good levels of care, guidance and support. Access to appropriate training programmes help to rebuild parents' confidence and enable them to make life-changing decisions to improve their own, and their children's, well-being.
- The centres have a very well-managed volunteer programme and apprentice scheme. A large number of volunteers benefit from developing their skills and confidence through a wide range of job roles, including support workers, administrative duties and organising groups for families. After completing the programme, a large majority of parents progress into work, adult learning or further education.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The local authority has made significant changes since the last inspection. This has included a major overhaul of organisational roles and responsibilities. The new structure was introduced in November 2013, and only implemented in April 2014. However, already significant improvements are being seen in the delivery of services.
- Since the last inspection, the local authority has developed a robust system for collating and checking information about priority family groups. This means new systems are now being implemented to track improvement trends and measure performance. However, as the systems are still very new, it is too early to make any comparisons. Local authority leaders also recognise the impact of not receiving health information and they are working hard to address this at senior management level.
- The local authority has made some crucial strategic appointments in staff to key roles. This has accelerated the rates of improvements and means the local authority's capacity to maintain and sustain this progress is good.
- Recent changes to the governance structure are too new to assess their impact as they are not fully operational yet. Until recently, advisory board members have not always provided rigorous challenge to the centres and held managers consistently to account.
- The new governance arrangements are just starting and senior board members now have significant strategic management experience and clearly understand their role in driving the centres' continual improvement. However, this is only in the early stages of development.
- With the new management and team structures now in place, work is beginning to monitor the quality and impact of the centres' services. However, these systems are very new and it is too early to assess how effective they are.
- Leaders and managers share a strong vision for the centres and high aspirations for local families. They have an extremely accurate view of the strengths and priority areas for

development. Challenging action plans and strategic targets are now in place to continue to improve the quality and range of services. However, as many of these are in the early stages, it is too soon to see evidence of impact of this yet.

- The local authority has deployed a good number of resources to meet the needs of local families. A wide range of services is delivered across the six centres. Staff are well trained and clear about their roles and responsibilities. Services are delivered in the areas where families need the most support. This means the centres successfully engage at least the majority of all families who are known to be in greatest need.
- The centres utilise every opportunity to safeguard children and vulnerable families. Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place to ensure the safety and security of adults and children. Strong support is given towards ensuring children who are looked after, subject to child protection plans, and those deemed to be children in need, benefit from centre services. This means prompt and effective support is put in place to keep children known to be at risk safe.
- Centre staff work extremely closely with colleagues from social care, resulting in fully integrated working. Senior managers and social work colleagues openly praised the work of the family outreach workers. This view was summarised by one social worker who said, 'Family outreach workers enabled me to have complete faith in a case that had the potential to be worrying.'
- Effective checking arrangements and swift early intervention strategies mean the numbers of children supported through child protection arrangements is reducing. The centres receive clear data to indicate how many children living in the areas served by the centres are known to social care. The majority of these families regularly engage in services and positive outcomes are consistently seen.
- A greater number of parents are now becoming increasingly involved in the decision-making process within the centres. The East cluster parent forum, known as Parent Power, is especially dynamic in expressing the views of parents and helping more parents to become aware of centre activities. Parents are now beginning to run their own groups and suggest their own ideas for improvement. The West cluster forums are developing at their own pace and beginning to engage with a larger number of local families.

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 group details

Unique reference number	80048
Local authority	Borough of Poole
Inspection number	446094
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	8,688
Children's Centre Services Manager	Alison Wray
Date of previous inspection	24–25 July 2013
Telephone number	01202 261963
Email address	a.wray@poole.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- Branksome Children's Centre (20402)
- Canford Heath Children's Centre (20555)
- Hamworthy and Turlin Moor Children's Centre (21364)
- Old Town Children's Centre (22250)
- Rossmore Children's Centre (22554)
- Ted Webster Children's Centre (23115)

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