

Thurrock - Lakeside

c/o Ockendon Children's Centre P1-2, Shaw Primary, South Ockendon, RM15 5PA

Inspection date 29–30 January 2014

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:

- Managers' data analysis and use of data is not effective enough in setting targets and raising achievement levels and to inform staff and service users of the impact of the centres' work.
- The centres are not doing enough to find out why some priority families are not attending activity sessions and events held by the centres.
- The quality of provision is variable. The managers do not routinely evaluate whether services are making the difference they should to families and children who attend groups provided by staff and some partners.
- The professional supervision of staff does not routinely ensure that leaders are sufficiently checking and, where appropriate, challenging case files. This results in a potential impact on the safeguarding of children and families.
- The advisory board are extremely supportive but recognise that they have yet to be sufficiently challenging in their decision-making.

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

- Parents value highly the care, guidance and support they receive and feel welcome when accessing services. Parents comment on the trusting relationships they build with staff and how they are supported to make difficult changes in their lives.
- The group provides a range of good quality services for parents to complete adult learning courses, improve their literacy and numeracy skills and gain qualifications to help them back into employment.
- The work with the Traveller community and teenage parents is extremely successful. The play session provides an excellent opportunity for children and parents to play and learn together.
- Childminders are very pleased with the support they receive from the local authority and the group. They say this helps them to improve their work with children in their care.

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. The centres that form part of this children’s centre group are Aveley Children’s Centre and Ockendon Children’s Centre.

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

The inspectors held meetings with members of the advisory board, the senior leadership team, centre staff, parent outreach workers and officers from the local authority. They also met health, social care, schools and early years partners and representatives from adult learning. They looked at the self-evaluation report and development plan, a sample of case files, safeguarding procedures and a range of other relevant documentation.

The inspectors visited two main children’s centre sites and visited a range of activities on offer. The two deputy managers and the strategic lead officer from the local authority also attended all the inspection team meetings.

Inspection team

Susan Smith	Her Majesty’s Inspector Lead Inspector
Georgina Beasley	Additional inspector
Ann Taylor	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the group

Lakeside Children's Centre Group is a group of children's centres in the west of Thurrock. It is run by the local authority with leadership and management through a senior locality manager and two deputy children's centre coordinators who have responsibility for each of the two centres in the group.

The group is made up of two phase one centres: Aveley and Ockendon. Half of the area covered by the centre falls into the 30% most deprived in England.

The group has an advisory board chaired by a local parent which includes provider, delivery partners, local schools and voluntary sector organisations. There is also an active parents forum. The children's centre group offers a range of services to meet its core purpose at the centres and at outreach venues. The centres share a staff team comprising two full time parent outreach workers, one full time crèche co-ordinator and three administration support.

Aveley Children's Centre shares a site with Aveley Primary School and the building is shared with a full daycare provider, Little Angels and a sessional preschool, Aveley Preschool both are operated independently from the local authority.

Ockendon Children's Centre shares a site with Shaw Primary Academy and the building is shared with a voluntary run full day care nursery Surestart Where Kids Come First.

The geographical area is densely populated. There are 2134 children under five years of age living in the area the centres serve.

The majority of families are of white British origin with an increasing number of black African, black British families and Eastern European families. The percentage of children eligible for free school meals is higher than the average for Thurrock and children generally enter the Early Years Foundation Stage at levels in line with those expected for their age.

Registered early years providers are subject to separate inspection arrangements. Reports can be found at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>

What does the centre/group need to do to improve further?

- Improve the impact of leadership, governance and management by ensuring:
 - the efficient collection and use of data and information enables the group to evaluate and measure the success of the broad range of services on offer
 - groups and services are targeted where they are needed most thus making the best use of valuable resources
 - that families and children receive provision that meets their needs and that makes a significant difference to their lives for the better
 - the advisory board provides more effective challenge to improve the centre.

- The local authority and centre leaders must improve safeguarding arrangements by ensuring:
 - sufficient staffing resource is in place to robustly manage the supervision of staff and their case files
 - all case files are sufficiently moderated and audited, and staff challenged accordingly to ensure they are of good quality.

- Increase the engagement of families by carrying out a detailed needs analysis to find out why some priority families are not using services particularly lone parents and those from minority ethnic backgrounds, and then put processes in place to make sure that they are encouraged to attend more regularly.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- The majority of families with children aged under five and expectant parents who live in the locality regularly use the groups and services run by the centre and/or its partners. A great majority of teenage parents and Traveller families take full benefit of what the centre offers. However, attendance at some groups is low. Only a minority of lone parents and those from minority ethnic backgrounds access services.
- The centre staff work closely with health and social care practitioners to identify families living in the area. As a result, most families who live in the area are registered and know about the centre's services and activities. An increasing number of families with children with special educational needs are registered and attending groups.
- A majority of families with a two-year-old child and most three-year-olds known to be eligible for free early years education have taken it up this year. The take up is lower in Ockendon than at Belhus, Aveley and Uplands. The centre has not been proactive enough in finding out which children are not taking up the place that they are entitled to and why.
- Take up of adult education courses is good with almost all completing the courses they sign up for. Most parents who attend parenting programs complete the course. The large majority of those who attend go on to volunteering and/or find work.
- Crèche facilities are often available to families accessing adult learning sessions which parents highly value as this enables them to attend.
- Through positive partnerships with the local police, social care and health partners, the centres know about those families suffering domestic abuse and/or domestic violence. A majority of those identified with children five years old and older attend groups to discuss issues and to get help.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- There are two way, established and productive working relationships with the preschools and primary school on site helping to improve families' welfare and care. However, in terms of working together to contribute to the children's educational development and progress as they move through these settings, and work to engage targeted families, this is at a very early stage of being developed.
- The systems for checking on the quality of what is being provided in the centre are not strong enough. There is no clear rationale for ensuring children are making clear gains when they attend the sessions and involving parents in this. Staff lack the necessary Early Years' skills to make an informed contribution to this process to ensure that children are developing as well as they should.
- Adults receive good support that enhances their employability skills and builds their confidence and skills well. The Wishes program provides a co-ordinated approach that offers a good range of good quality learning opportunities that are closely matched to the needs of parents and carers and the skills needs of local employers. As a result, adults develop the skills they need and help them get back into work.
- Health services ensure that in most areas there is an adequate range of activities and services to promote families' health, safety and wellbeing. Breastfeeding rates are in line with the national average. Delivery of midwifery and baby clinics at the centres provides a seamless service for expectant and new mothers including teenage mothers, encouraging them to move on to other

appropriate services within the group.

- Parenting programmes are well targeted to families who need them most and are of good quality. Parents engage well and increase in self confidence, learning new techniques for managing their children's behaviour and good strategies for improving and sustaining positive relationships in the family.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The local authority's monitoring of the group's effectiveness has improved greatly but it has yet to become fully embedded. It monitors the effectiveness of the centres through an annual conversation and quarterly reports and has in recent times set realistic targets. However, it has not monitored the accuracy of the group's recent development planning or self-evaluation to check that the targets are relevant and challenging enough and actions making the planned difference to families and children's lives.
- Performance management and professional supervision are established for all staff in the group but it is not as effective as it should be because there is variable practice in the completion of case files and some services offered. Staff have good access to further training and professional development opportunities.
- Leaders are aware that the impact of the centres' work is not clear and data analysis is not robust enough to ensure all services are delivered in response to local need. New systems are beginning to be put in place to monitor the effectiveness of what the group offers and more precisely measure the impact of services for children and families.
- There are some examples of parents' views shaping service delivery and design. Consultation with parents shows high levels of satisfaction with services and parents are enthusiastic advocates of the centres.
- Advisory board members show a commitment to supporting the centres' work. They have recognised that they need to improve their own effectiveness in challenging the children's centres to reach more targeted families. The local authority is offering training for advisory board members to ensure they are clear on their roles and responsibilities. Although an appropriate membership of key partners has been identified, attendance at the advisory board meetings that have been held so far has been low.
- Safeguarding is adequate overall. There are appropriate arrangements, policies, and procedures in place to help keep children and vulnerable adults safe and protected. The local authority now ensures that the centres are informed of all children who are subject to a child protection plan in their local area, and staff work closely with social care and health partners to give full support through their active use of the Common Assessment Framework procedures and full participation at relevant meetings.
- Resources, including staff deployment, are used appropriately to meet the needs of children and families. Rooms are inviting and welcoming with high quality toys and equipment. A range of information is available and notices are displayed to further promote the safety and welfare of users.
- The centres work well with some key partners and support a few new initiatives in the wider community. The provision of crèche places is supporting those in most need of access to services. Families are safe and secure when receiving services and attending activities, and risks are identified and minimised.

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/Children's Centre Group details

Unique reference number	80775
Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	441404
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	2134
Group manager	Laura Burroughs
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01708 863954
Email address	lburroughs@thurrock.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- 20144 Aveley Children's Centre
- 22238 Ockendon Children's centre

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