

Q2 Braintree Town CC Group

Chapel Hill, Braintree, Essex, CM7 3QZ

Inspection dates	25–26 November 2014
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected as a group

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Not applicable	
Access to services by young children and families		Good	2
The quality of practice and services		Good	2
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a good centre.

- This group is led and managed well. Good leadership from the centre group manager and governors means that families, especially the most vulnerable, receive good levels of care and guidance from staff and health specialists. Staff have successfully developed their skills because leaders encourage them to share their expertise and gain qualifications.
- Access to services is good and is improving for all families and particularly for those in the centres' priority groups. They join courses to develop their knowledge about how to be an effective parent and how to use massage techniques to sooth a baby and aid digestion. Children enjoy sessions where they learn to share equipment, behave well and become more creative.
- The quality of services and practice is good. This ensures that those most in need of support receive valuable advice. Parents learn new skills and take part in training which enables them to return to work. Many parents develop their understanding of how to keep their children safe because they complete first-aid courses. They learn about how to eat healthy foods in a balanced diet because the staff give them tasty recipes and teach them to cook.
- Children develop their basic skills well. Those who attend the centres regularly are twice as likely to work at a stage of development which is above that typical for their age when they are at nursery or a pre-school. They learn to communicate and understand the meaning of words because staff are well trained and speech therapists support children to develop these skills.

It is not outstanding because:

- In the local area, boys' skills in writing are slightly below average by the end of their Reception year. This is because the group does not track its impact on children totally successfully.
- Staff do not always show parents effectively how to develop children's knowledge and skills.
- Targets to improve the impact of the group are not always specific, especially with regard to the proportion of adults who attain extra qualifications which employers will value.
- Occasionally, the local authority does not share information with the centres about children who are particularly vulnerable or at risk.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Improve the ways that the group tracks its impact on local children so that:
 - more boys catch up and work at the stage of development which is typical for their age in writing
 - staff offer parents detailed demonstrations about how they could use equipment to develop children's key skills.

- Develop the leadership of the group by ensuring that:
 - all targets to improve the group's impact on families are specific and measurable so that staff and senior leaders are clear about how successfully they meet them, especially with regard to the proportion of parents who gain extra qualifications which employers would value
 - information is shared more effectively by the local authority about which children are particularly vulnerable or at risk.

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 three Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with or spoke to the centre group manager, two members of the advisory board, many parents and carers, group staff, health specialists, children and two representatives from the local authority.

Evidence from a recent satisfaction survey completed by 157 families was taken into consideration by inspectors.

One inspector visited the Carousel Day Nursery and the Seesaw Day Nursery.

Inspectors observed the group's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Jacqueline Cousins, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Ann Taylor	Additional inspector
Anthony Mundy	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the group

Q2 Braintree Children's Centre Group is situated in a mixed neighbourhood in which 5,415 children under the age of five live. The majority of the families who live in the surrounding area are from White British backgrounds, but a few are from minority ethnic groups and are learning to speak English. A few areas around the group have considerable levels of unemployment and families in receipt of benefits. Significant priority groups served by the centres include: children who have a disability; families where parents are not in paid employment; teenage parents; vulnerable families where adults may have mental health issues; and those subject to domestic abuse. The group also keeps a close eye on lone parents, minority ethnic families, those who speak English as an additional language, children in need and those subject to child protection plans.

Four centres amalgamated to become Q2 Braintree Children's Centre Group in October 2013. They operate from four main buildings. In partnership with other providers, the group provides the full core offer of early education and health services, family support and adult learning courses. There is one other children's centre groups in the Braintree area.

Most children enter early education with skills that are typical for their age, but a considerable proportion are at a lower stage of development in language and communication, writing, reading and knowledge of the world. Carousel Day Nursery and Seesaw Day Nursery share sites with the group and are subject to separate inspection arrangements. Their inspection reports can be found on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

The group is governed by an advisory board which is organised by 4Children. The advisory board includes health specialists, a headteacher, a parent and staff from the group and other partners. The organisation 4Children manages the group on behalf of the local authority.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- Families in the area access a good range of services which meet their needs. For instance, 100% of some priority groups, such as teenage parents, households where no one is in paid employment and children with a disability, are registered with a children's centre and the large majority of these families regularly attend sessions. All particularly vulnerable parents take part in group sessions as well as programmes to develop their ability to deal with difficult situations.
- Satisfaction surveys and discussions with parents demonstrate their appreciation of the children's centres and everything they offer them. They say the centres are friendly and welcoming. Teenage parents regularly attend sessions. One parent summed up others' comments when she said, 'The centres are very welcoming and you get to meet new and different people every time you come to them.'
- Parents bring their children to a wide range of sessions. They learn parenting skills and first-aid techniques because courses are effective. Pregnant and new parents attend special sessions. They can have their baby weighed and take part in activities which develop their understanding of how to wean a baby because of effective partnerships with health practitioners.
- Healthy lifestyles are promoted well for priority groups. Breastfeeding rates for babies at six to eight weeks are slightly above average. This is because staff offer swift responses to any calls for help from parents when breastfeeding becomes difficult. Parents learn how to overcome challenges because staff share their expertise and work with health specialists fruitfully.
- Children and adults with a disability are involved successfully in activities. The sessions are tailored to meet their needs, and resources allow them to make good progress. Children from families where parents have a disability achieve well in key areas of learning, and 'Learning Journeys' record their progress clearly in most areas of learning.
- This year, 99% of three-year-old and 97% of eligible two-year-old children took up their free education places with childminders or at pre-schools and nurseries. Staff offer parents, including those from minority ethnic groups, valuable guidance about how to select a place at a setting which would suit their child best so that they will make the most progress.
- Outreach work is good and so vulnerable families who might not otherwise access a centre are supported in ways which suit them. They receive useful guidance at home and so, for example, a parent developed her skills in managing challenging behaviour because she learnt how to calm her child down using a glitter jar and discussion at the best time.
- The local authority does not have proper protocols for sharing information with the group about which children in the area are particularly vulnerable or at risk. This means that the centres find out about a few vulnerable children from other sources but they do not find out about all of them. This means that one or two children do not access the services which they could do.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The quality of services and practice is good, and families receive useful guidance. For instance, they join sessions about how to develop their children's language skills which help their children to make good progress in learning to communicate, listen and understand the meaning of words. The large majority of children in the area attain the expected level of skill by the end of their Reception Year. This year, the gap in attainment between children who are eligible for free school meals and the rest

has reduced.

- The children's personal, social and emotional development is promoted well. Children are confident to ask for help when they need it and they learn to share toys fairly. They adapt their behaviour to different situations. The children sit sensibly and sing songs because staff clearly explain how to behave in different parts of the session. The large majority of children reach the expected standard by the end of their Reception Year in this area of learning.
- Children who attend the group regularly are twice as likely to work at a stage of development which is higher than their chronological age when they are at nursery or pre-school. This is because staff carefully assess children and explain to parents whether their child is at the stage of development typical for their age or not.
- The group works well with health practitioners to keep children's weight down. Over the last three years, levels of obesity in children at the end of their Reception Year have fallen steadily and are at 7.4% which is below average. Families are encouraged to eat a balanced diet. They take part in cookery classes and are given tasty recipes to try at home. They learn to avoid drinks with high quantities of sugar because of good use of displays and knowledgeable staff.
- Parents, especially those who are not in paid employment, develop their self-confidence and learn about how to return to work. This is because courses explain how to write a CV and how to answer interview questions. Considerable numbers of parents who attended these courses gained part-time or full-time employment. Some have gained functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics at the higher level one and two. Volunteering at the group often leads on to paid employment.
- In the local area, boys' writing skills are a little lower than average by the end of Reception. A few boys who attend the group do not catch up and work at the stage of development typical for their age. This is because the group does not track children's progress totally effectively and so it is not clear about its impact on children's achievement in this area of learning. Occasionally, in sessions staff do not show parents a range of ways that they could use resources to develop children's key skills.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The group manager is very passionate about improving the lives of local families. In the short time she has been in post, she has formed a good partnership with the advisory board and senior leaders. They keep a close eye on the quality of the services provided. The proportion of families from priority groups who attend sessions has increased steadily. Data about outcomes for families show the group is having a valuable impact on local families' lives and is reducing inequalities.
- Partnerships are good and so, in the local area, immunisation rates are high. This is because staff work well with health specialists. Staff take every opportunity to explain the health benefits of inoculation to parents before and after a child is born. Any parents identified as having mental health issues are thoughtfully supported through one-to-one assistance from staff.
- The advisory board and leaders use data well and so the group identifies the needs of local families, including those in priority groups. The group is aware that some parents are learning to speak English as an additional language. The group employs one member of staff who speaks Polish and sessions are run to support families' language development. Considerable numbers of parents have completed English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses at a local college.
- Group leaders place a great deal of emphasis on keeping families safe. Policies and practices are

followed carefully. Displays in each of the buildings explain who to phone if parents or staff have any concerns. Staff and leaders are trained effectively in how to handle child protection issues. Families and children assessed under the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and the Shared Family Assessment (SFA) are supported successfully because of dedicated staff who make sure that families receive thoughtful advice and guidance. Files show that the group makes a great deal of difference to the lives of families who are vulnerable or at risk.

- Governance is good. This is because the local authority and the advisory board use data effectively to study outcomes for local families and they know that resources are used well. All families are included productively in group activities because a wide range of resources and sessions are available each week. Families are treated equally and discrimination is not tolerated. A recent parent survey shows high levels of satisfaction with the group, including staff expertise and the speed of their responses to their concerns.
- The advisory board is clear that staff gain promotion because of their consistently good work with families. Each member of staff's plan of work is checked every four to six weeks to see if they have met their targets. New targets are agreed that concentrate on the needs of local families. In rare cases of underperformance, staff are supported by senior leaders. Staff have valuable opportunities to train and develop their skills. All those who work with families have a level three qualification in early years or counselling.
- The local authority effectively checks on the group's impact on local families and assists it to identify areas for development. The group then evaluates its work carefully but it does not produce a plan with targets which are all specific and measurable. In a few cases, therefore, it is not easy to explain how successfully targets have been met, for example, for the proportion of a target group who have gained qualifications which an employer would find useful.

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

Unique reference number	80705
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	447653
Managed by	4Children on behalf of the local authority.

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	5,415
Centre leader	Amanda Storie
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected as a group
Telephone number	01376 556863
Email address	amanda.storie@4children.org.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- 20383 Acorn Children's Centre
- 20384 Rainbow Children's Centre
- 20385 SeeSaw Children's Centre
- 20386 Carousel Children's Centre

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. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email 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.

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.

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
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No. 130186

© Crown copyright 2014

