

Arun West Children's Centre Group

c/o Treehouse CFC, Laburnum Grove, Bersted, PO22 9HT

Inspection dates

13–14 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Access to services by young children and families	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
		Good	2
		Good	2
		Good	2

Summary of key findings for children and families

This children's centre group is good.

- The centre group provides a welcoming environment where parents and children say that they 'feel at home'.
- Staff are successful in ensuring that most families are registered, and that the large majority attend the group's activities regularly. This is because they are very knowledgeable about the needs of the community the group serves.
- The well-qualified team manager provides very effective leadership through her positive encouragement of staff and parents and her thorough supervision of staff performance.
- Successful partnership work with health professionals is ensuring that health outcomes for families are positive and improving.
- Governance is good. Members are knowledgeable about the group's work and are increasingly confident in challenging leaders to make further improvements.
- The local authority gives highly effective support for the centre group. It provides timely and reliable data on the group's performance, which is helping it to improve.
- The vast majority of eligible two- to four-year-olds are taking up their free early education place.

It is not outstanding because:

- Planning and tracking of early years activities are not sufficiently robust to ensure that children, especially those from Polish backgrounds, achieve a good level of development by the end of their Reception Year.
- Although improving, not enough Polish families are regularly accessing the group's services.
- Arrangements for tracking the progress made by parents when they access learning and training opportunities are underdeveloped.

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

- Develop effective planning of early years activities and tracking procedures to help children, especially from Polish backgrounds, to make good progress and result in them achieving a good level of development by the end of their Reception Year.
- Ensure at least the large majority of Polish families regularly attend the group’s services.
- Ensure that the progress and success of parents participating in further learning and training are monitored and tracked thoroughly.

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 Treehouse, Felpham and The Villages children and family centres (CFC).

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the team manager, team leaders and representatives from the local authority. They also met partners from health and early years education, parents, and representatives from the advisory board and family forums. The team manager, team leaders and representatives from the local authority attended all meetings of the inspection team.

Visits to activities such as ‘Heartbeeps – Baby Beeps’, baby clinics, and ‘Play and Learn Together’ were undertaken jointly with staff. The inspectors looked at the centre group’s self-evaluation, action planning, a sample of case files, safeguarding practice, policies and procedures and a range of documentation.

Inspection team

David Scott, Lead Inspector	Additional Inspector
Patricia Collis	Additional Inspector
Graham Saltmarsh	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre group

Arun West Children's Centre Group was established in 2011. The group comprises three centres: Treehouse, Felpham and The Villages children and family centres (CFC), which are located about four miles apart. The Treehouse CFC, which started operating in 2008, is where most of the activities take place and is situated on the site of Bersted Green Primary School (URN 125873). The pre-school setting Little Acorns (EY 475952) is also located on the same site. The Felpham CFC opened in 2008, is located on the site of Bishop Tufnell Infant School (URN 126050) and Bishop Tufnell Junior School (URN 126026), and operates services for four days a week but is open to the public on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. The Villages CFC opened in 2007, is located in a former youth centre, and the centre operate services five days a week but is open to the public on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. The group currently includes Felpham CFC, which was due to be transferred to the management of Bognor Regis Nursery School Children's Centre (URN 20357) in December 2014. This will now take place in April 2015. All these settings are subject to separate inspections: reports can be found at www.Gov.uk/Ofsted.

The centre group provides a range of services, including health, parenting classes, 'Stay and Play' sessions, adult learning and family support. The team manager has day-to-day responsibility for running the centres, with the local authority overseeing the work of the group at a strategic level. There are two advisory boards: one for Felpham CFC and The Villages CFC, the other for Treehouse CFC, comprising parents and key partners. There is also a family forum at each centre.

There are 2,900 children under five years of age living in the area the group serves. The centre group serves a community that is socially and economically diverse, with pockets of high deprivation and relative affluence. Just over one in ten children live in the least advantaged areas. Information shows that approximately one in five children live in households where no-one is working. A quarter of all families live in rented accommodation, with one in ten living in social housing. A quarter of parents have been educated to university level.

Most families are of White British heritage. Just over one in ten are from other minority ethnic groups, the largest groups being from White Irish, Polish and Eastern European heritages. Children's skills and abilities on entry to early education are below the levels typical for their age.

The centre group has identified teenage parents, children and families living in the least advantaged areas, disabled children and Polish families as its main priority groups.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- Staff have been successful in ensuring that most families, including those from priority groups, are registered, with the large majority of families regularly attending centre group services.
- The engagement of families is effective because staff provide good quality support, care and advice to those who are in most need. As a result, most disabled children and the large majority of teenage parents and those living in the least advantaged areas attend the centre group's activities regularly. In contrast, only a minority of Polish families regularly access activities. This is because this group has only recently been identified as having priority needs. It is too soon to judge the impact of the initiatives designed by the group to increase the take-up of services.
- Almost all three- and four-year-olds and all eligible two-year-olds are accessing their free early years place. This has been as a result of staff proactively helping families to complete their application form and encouraging them to take up their place. Through their work, centre staff are making a

strong contribution to helping reduce inequalities for families with the most needs.

- Effective partnerships with health professionals, social care and early years settings have enabled the centres to increase attendance rates by providing a good range of activities and support packages. For example, 'Play and Learn Together' and baby clinics encourage families, including expectant parents, and those less likely to access services, to attend regularly.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- There is a good range of appropriate activities that is a right balance between those available to everyone and those designed to meet the needs of priority families, including expectant parents. The centres provide a warm, welcoming and inclusive environment that families value.
- Good quality sessions such as 'Heartbeeps – Baby Beeps' enable parents to bond with their child and support their development and learning through music and movement. However, not all activities for children are planned and tracked sufficiently well to support and promote their good learning and development.
- Teenage parents, a priority group, are helped to improve their parenting skills by attending courses that are delivered to a high standard. While on these programmes, participants have regular access to key professionals such as the young parent midwife and young parent champion. Together, they provide advice and guidance on how to lead a healthy lifestyle. In addition, they lead workshops designed to help teenage parents obtain housing, develop their independence and life-skills, and encourage their return to further education.
- Disabled children receive excellent support which enables them to participate and progress in a range of activities, both within the centres and out in the community. This is as a result of the group's staff's highly effective collaboration with early years partners.
- Advisory staff support early years settings and have played a positive role in their development. The majority of Reception age children across the group achieve a good level of development. However, not enough children reach the national average, particularly those from Polish families, whose literacy skills are still developing.
- Staff working in partnership with health visitors, have adopted the county's healthy children and family centre programme. This initiative has nine public health priorities, designed to promote healthy lifestyles and positive health outcomes for families. As a result, breast-feeding rates, the proportion of Reception age children who are obese, immunisations and developmental checks are all in line with national averages, and improving.
- Staff provide high levels of care and support to all families, including those from priority groups. The group has developed excellent partnerships with charities to provide swift practical help by providing clothing, furniture and bedding when families are in crisis.
- The group has formed a productive partnership with Jobcentre Plus to help prepare parents wishing to return to work. During the last year, there was a 29 percentage point reduction in the number of adults within the area claiming job seekers allowance. A senior manager commented that the work of the children's centre group had made a very positive contribution to this outcome. However, staff do not track the success and progress of parents participating in learning and training rigorously enough. Consequently, they do not always know how many have successfully gained qualifications or moved into employment.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The well-qualified team manager provides very effective leadership through her positive encouragement of staff and parents and her regular supervision of staff performance. She has a natural ability to empathise with families, particularly at times of crisis, which puts them at ease, and helps them to learn and to make sensible decisions. Staff who work with families in the community commented 'She has a good brain to pick when you are stuck.'

- Centre group staff are well qualified and receive a comprehensive range of training and development opportunities to enable them to support families effectively. They recognise that more focus is required in encouraging higher numbers of Polish families to access services and also to ensure more Reception age children reach a good level of development.
- The local authority is highly supportive of the group's work. Through its regular monitoring visits, annual review and target-setting process and ongoing support, it has supported the group to take effective actions to improve. The data team provides timely and helpful information about the group's performance. Its effective use is enabling staff to have an increasingly effective impact on helping to improve the well-being of children and families with most needs.
- Accommodation and resources at all three sites are of good quality, and provide a welcoming environment where parents and children 'feel at home'. Through the family forums based at each centre, parents are given regular opportunities to contribute to the running of the centres. Parents report 'Staff always listen and care about us and our children.'
- Governance is good. The advisory boards provide effective support for the work of the group. Members receive detailed information on the centres' performance and are increasingly confident in challenging centre leaders, in order to drive further improvements. They know about the process of setting targets for staff and make an active contribution to the annual review process, where their views are regularly sought.
- Procedures for safeguarding and the safer recruitment of staff are well established. As a result of effective training, staff have a good understanding of safeguarding policy and procedures. Children who are looked after, subject to child protection plans and those deemed to be children in need, are very well supported. Access to the different sites within the group is safe and well controlled.

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	80374
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	453911
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	2,900
Team Manager	Jeannette Sax
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01243 642917
Email address	treehouse.cfc@westsussex.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- 23269 Treehouse CFC
- 21153 Felpham CFC
- 23273 The Villages CFC

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