

# Cornwall Locality 4 Children's Centre Cluster

Woodland Road, St Austell, PL25 4RA

<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 March 2015
<b>Previous inspection date</b>	Not previously inspected

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

- Not enough of the families most in need are taking part in the centres' activities and services across the locality. There are considerable differences in the numbers of families who are registered in different centres, with Newquay and St Columb centres registering many more than St Austell, Pondhu, St Blazey or the Clays.
- Partnerships with midwives and schools are not as well developed as those with health visitors. Partnerships are better in some areas than others and, as a result, the effectiveness of information sharing is inconsistent so that the centre does not hear quickly enough about new births.
- Adult learning and development are not yet embedded in the services offered. Systems to share information on the progress and outcomes of adults are insufficiently developed to evaluate the difference the learning makes to their lives.
- Some resources are not managed effectively to ensure their use is adding value to the lives of children and families.
- Parents are not sufficiently involved in the development of services or in decision making about the future of the centres.

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

- Good links with early years settings and an effective new way of working that is increasing the take up of free early years education by families whose children are eligible.
- A varied and broad range of parenting programmes that have a positive impact on parents' ability manage their children's behaviour, increase their confidence, and encourage them to take up learning again.
- Dedicated and resilient staff that are well qualified and trained.
- Effective day-to-day management, clear local authority leadership and a new challenging advisory board mean the group of centres is steadily improving.

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

- Increase the number of children and families that use services, especially those in most need, and ensure:
  - systems to identify families are effectively used across the locality
  - information is promptly received about when children are born.
- Strengthen partnership working with schools and midwives, so that:
  - partnership working is more effective in sharing information and more effective in helping children to be ready for school
  - midwives are involved with the advisory board and shaping services for expectant parents.
- Improve the identification and monitoring of adult learners' achievements so that:
  - better learning and development plans can be made
  - adult success can be tracked and celebrated
  - the centre can measure the difference the learning makes to families' lives.
- Improve the use of resources, in particular the use of the Ponde centre, outside play areas and displays so that they are more effective in promote learning.
- Involve parents more in the development of services and in decision making about future priorities for the centres.

## 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: Clays Children's Centre; Newquay, St Columb Minor and Major Children's Centre; and St Austell, St Blazey and Ponde Children's Centre.

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with parents, senior leaders, and managers from the local authority and centre staff. They also met health, education and social care partners, parents, early years practitioners, volunteers and representatives from the advisory board.

The inspectors visited the delivery sites of St Austell, Ponde, St Dennis, St Blazey, Newquay and St Columb Minor Children's Centres. They also visited Newquay pre-school and the Welcome to the Children's Centre session, Treverbyn Trailblazers and the SPACE group for young parents.

They looked at the cluster's self-evaluation, action planning, a survey of parents' views, a sample of case files and safeguarding practice, policies and procedures. The inspectors undertook a joint observation of Toddler Talk at St Columb Minor Children's Centre with the lead manager for learning and development.

They observed the centres' work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Inspection team

Lead inspector, Penny Mathers	Additional inspector
Graham Saltmarsh	Additional inspector
Debbie Farley	Additional inspector
Aileen King	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the group

Cornwall's Locality 4 Children Centre Cluster is made up of three centres: The Clays Children's Centre; Newquay, St Columb Minor and Major Children's Centre; and St Austell, St Blazey and Pondhu Children's Centre.

It is one of six locality clusters managed by the local authority. The individual centres were brought together in April 2014 under a cluster manager, who reports to the early help locality manager for children's services. The cluster is part of both the early help and integrated early years strategies in Cornwall. An advisory board governs the cluster of centres. The local authority commissions some services, such as those for young parents centrally.

Priority groups are identified as children who are eligible for two-year-old funding, children supported through child protection plans and children supported through early help plans. Most of the population is White British, with small numbers of minority ethnic groups. Most children start school with skill levels slightly below what is typical for their age. A small minority of children live in workless households and a small minority of families are eligible for the childcare element of Working Tax Credit.

The cluster covers a large geographical area of 192 square miles that stretches across the middle of Cornwall from coast to coast. Much of the area is rural, with many people living in the urban areas of Newquay and St Austell. There are pockets of high levels of deprivation in these two areas as well as in St Blazey. Much of the employment is seasonal and linked to the tourist industry, especially in Newquay where there are a number of families who only stay for short periods. The Clays and Newquay, St Columb Major and Minor, all share sites with the respective primary schools of St Dennis Primary Academy, Trenance Learning Academy and St Columb Major Academy and St Columb Minor Academy. These schools are subject to separate inspection arrangements.

The cluster of centres offers a range of universal and targeted services including health clinics, breastfeeding support sessions, parenting programmes, dads and young parents groups, adult learning, and family support. Services are offered from the seven centres and from various community venues at Roche, Indian Queens and Bugle. A story bus provides sessions in Penwithick and St Blazey.

### Inspection judgements

#### Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Not enough families most in need are making use of the services. Registration and participation rates vary at centres, with greater numbers of families registering and accessing services at Newquay compared to other centres. However, the number of families registered over recent years has increased and more children supported through child protection plans or early help plans are staying engaged and receive services until their needs are met.
- The use of systems to register families varies and information sharing with partners is not embedded consistently. Centres are not yet getting early notification of births; however, plans are in place to improve this and bring services closer together.
- Parents appreciate accessing health services from the centres and staff promote this well through the new Welcome to the Children's Centre sessions that have been introduced alongside health clinics. Those expecting babies value the sessions run by midwives at Newquay, and there is good attendance at the 'Great Expectations' courses that centre staff contribute to.
- Numbers of eligible two-year-olds taking up funding for early years education have increased rapidly over the last year. Staff have worked hard and successfully introduced a new system over a short period of time and the large majority of two-year-olds take up funding for early years education and access good quality early years settings.

- Centres are not all in accessible locations to meet the families' needs. Families are reluctant to come to the Ponde centre, due to its position, and some centres are hard to reach due to infrequent public transport. The staff are using community venues and a play bus effectively to take the services to where families are.
- Staff work increasingly with those families in most need and have good relationships with social care and a central referral system that ensures children on child protection plans are engaging with the activities. Families who do access the services get information and advice in good time. Families, including those with children with additional needs and those expecting babies, are well matched to the services they need to improve their lives.

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

Requires improvement

- For those who attend the centres or receive individual help, including the priority groups, the quality and range of activities and services are good. Staff work well with social care staff in child protection cases. Staff provide good role models, promote equality of opportunity and have high aspirations for families.
- Partnerships with schools vary, so that information on children's development and achievement is not always shared adequately to support all children to be ready for school. Staff work well with children to promote their learning and this is supported by the use of good quality indoor equipment. Children improve their speech and motor development, with the majority on track to achieve a good level of development.
- Staff ensure children with additional needs receive support in good time to boost their progress and achievement from their relative starting points. Learning journals, planning and tracking are being developed across the cluster. Tracking systems are relatively new and are not yet fully embedded.
- Staff promote healthy eating well throughout the centres, but there is less emphasis on active lifestyles. Families feel safe and describe the centres and staff as very welcoming and friendly.
- Staff are flexible and innovative in how they run the parenting programmes. Courses are planned to meet families' requests, for example parents wanted support on attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and this was included in the parenting programme. Parents improve their understanding and ability to manage their children's behaviour and gain confidence.
- Good support is provided for young parents, breastfeeding and for domestic abuse. The well-structured SUsie Project for vulnerable women is delivered by a partner agency at the centres. Women report high satisfaction levels and describe it as 'life changing'.
- Staff work well with health visitors to identify children who are in need of help with speech and communication. Those children who need support attend sessions to promote talking and these sessions are narrowing inequalities for the priority children so more of them are reaching a good level of development.
- The cluster has not developed systems to record, monitor or evaluate adult learning. Partners who provide learning programmes do not share sufficient information to demonstrate the difference the learning makes or report how many adults progress to further education, training or employment. However, the new adult learning sub group of the advisory board has the potential to drive improvement in this as all the key partners are on board.

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

Requires improvement

- The local authority provides clear leadership and sees the centres' work as central to reducing inequalities and ensuring families get the early help they need. The local authority sets and monitors challenging targets. However, monitoring of the difference the centres are making to family health and adult learning is limited, and there is little evaluation of these areas in the self-evaluation record.
- Staff are committed to the families they work with. They are well trained, qualified and appreciate

the good supervision they receive. They are loyal and have been resilient during the move to cluster working.

- Strategic partnerships vary across the cluster. Partnerships with health visitors are generally good, whilst links with midwives are not so strong and they do not attend the advisory board meetings. The strategic managers of both early years and health visiting services are working hard to improve services. Involvement of schools varies, with some very keen to engage and others less aware of the centres' work.
- A culture of safeguarding is well established and staff understand the policies and procedures well. Families know how to keep their families safe. Recruitment procedures are followed and all the pre-employment checks are undertaken before staff or volunteers start work.
- Pondhu centre is not well used by families. Some sessions and meetings are held at the centre, but activities on offer for families are limited. Outside play areas at St Dennis, St Austell and Newquay are not well maintained and are not being used effectively to help children learn. Displays in some of the centres are good, but in others they are dull and not well used to inform parents.
- The advisory board is run effectively and has sub groups that are driving improvements. It meets regularly and has wide membership from pre-schools, early help, family learning and locality managers. The new chair is experienced and provides a good level of challenge.
- Parents are not fully involved in the running of the centre. Parents give their feedback at the end of sessions and the children's voice is captured through observations, but parents do not formally contribute to the advisory board. Where parents have voiced their views they are listened to and changes are made.
- Staff, advisory board and managers are all working hard to bring services together. A number of improvements have been introduced well and the number of families, in particular those who require early help and those on child protection plans, benefiting from services is increasing. Managers are keen to measure the difference they make and actively search for good practice and this means the centres are in a good position to improve.

**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>	80825
<b>Local authority</b>	Cornwall County Council
<b>Inspection number</b>	453932
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	7,351
<b>Group manager</b>	Leigh-Ann Tyler
<b>Telephone number</b>	01726 74969
<b>Email address</b>	ltyler@cornwall.gov.uk

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

- URN 22846 The Clays Children's Centre
- URN 22128 Newquay, St Columb Minor and Major Children's Centre
- URN 22836 St Austell, St Blazey and Pondhu Children's Centre

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