

Grovelands Children's Centre

Sandy Lane, Walton on Thames, Surrey KT12 2EQ

Inspection dates 19–20 March 2015

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:

- Not enough children or families from the centre's priority areas of St John's and Grovelands use services regularly. Assessments of specific needs have been carried out but these lack enough depth to ensure that appropriate services are in place to meet them.
- Information about new births in the area the centre serves is incomplete. This is because health partners are not consistently sharing this. Consequently fewer than half of all newborns are registered with the centre.
- Opportunities for adults to extend their education and training and move on to employment are limited. Any services the centre does offer are not explicitly advertised in the centre's activity timetable. Where adults have been supported by the centre or their partners such as Jobcentre Plus, systems to exchange information and to follow up the longer term impact are underdeveloped.
- The targets that are set by the local authority, the advisory board and by the centre in its action plan and self-evaluation documentation lack consistency. Targets that are set lack a specific focus on engaging priority children and families, as do staff's personal targets. The checks identified to measure impact are imprecise. This limits the centre's full capacity to improve.

This centre has the following strengths:

- The centre provides high levels of care, guidance and support for families that are referred to them for one-to-one assistance. As a result, most of the children or families who need extra help engage regularly with the centre and the outcomes for them are good.
- Parents have very positive views of the centre. They play a full role in developing services, for example through good levels of representation on, and contributions to, the advisory board.
- Health outcomes are good and improving in terms of the proportion of Reception-age children who have a healthy weight and the number of babies being breastfed at around two months old.
- A higher proportion of children locally achieve a good level of development by the time they are five than is typical nationally. Tracking of children who move on to Grovelands Primary School shows that those who have used the centre regularly make good progress and are well prepared for school.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that at least the large majority of children and families from the St John's and Grovelands areas use the centre regularly by:
 - establishing why some families do not use services after they have registered
 - identifying what the specific needs are of these families, especially in the areas that have high levels of unemployment
 - working with partners to provide services that are tailored to meet all assessed needs and encourage good take-up.
- Work with health partners and the local authority to ensure that new birth information is provided to the centre in a timely and consistent way so that babies can be registered as soon as possible.
- Improve the outcomes for parents, especially those living in the priority areas, by:
 - analysing what services would best meet their education and employability needs
 - establishing strong, productive links with partners such as adult learning and Jobcentre Plus to jointly provide the support families need
 - ensuring that these links and courses for adults are well advertised in the centre's timetable
 - establishing an effective system to track the longer term impact of the services provided on these families.
- The local authority, the advisory board and the governing body should work with the centre manager to ensure that targets are consistent across all documentation. This includes the local authority's annual review, the service delivery and action plans, staff's performance management and targets set by the governing body. Leaders and managers should ensure that where possible, targets are measurable and specifically focused on engaging priority families.

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 the centre manager, headteacher and chair of governors of Grovelands Primary School and representatives of the local authority. They also spoke to several partners, including those from health services, early years settings and Jobcentre Plus. They took into account parents' views and also spoke to volunteers.

The inspectors observed the well baby clinic taking place at the centre as well as a postnatal group. A joint observation of the Play and Learn session was undertaken with the centre manager. There were no off-site activities taking place during the inspection. The centre manager, the headteacher and a local authority representative observed all the inspection team meetings.

The inspectors looked at a range of relevant documentation. This included the centre's self evaluation, action plan and safeguarding policies and procedures.

Inspection team

Joan Lindsay, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Libby Dickson	Additional Inspector
Jameel Hassan	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Grovelands Children's Centre is a standalone centre that was designated in 2009. It is located adjacent to Grovelands Primary School. Services are also delivered in the community from Walton Oak Primary School, Cromwell Community Centre, Thamesview House and Walton Methodist Church Hall. The centre provides early years experiences, family support, adult learning and health services through partnership work.

The governing body of Grovelands Primary School manages the centre on behalf of the local authority; the headteacher line-manages the centre manager, who has been in post since October 2014. There is an advisory board in place to assist governance. The school is subject to a separate inspection. Its report can be found at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

There are 1,404 children aged under five in the area served by the centre. The area is economically diverse. Two of the nine separately defined geographic areas served by the centre are ranked in the 14% (St John's ward) and 18% (Grovelands) least advantaged in the country. The percentage of children under five living in households where no-one is in paid employment is 13% overall, which is below the national average but above the Surrey level of 11%. However, in the St John's area, this rises to 34% and to 23% in the Grovelands area. Around 13% of local families are claiming the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. The large majority of children come from a White British background. Some 7% of families have an Eastern European heritage, with the remainder coming from a wide range of backgrounds. Children start in early education with skills and knowledge at levels slightly below those typical for their age.

The centre has identified priority groups as: young children and families living in the two least advantaged areas of St John's and Grovelands; individual families most in need of intervention and support, including those who receive social care supervision.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- The centre has registered the large majority of children living in the St. John's and Grovelands areas but not enough continue to use services regularly. This is despite there being several sessions each week that are delivered in community venues, making it relatively easy for families to access services on their doorsteps. The reasons for the low take-up have not been fully established by the centre and this requires improvement.
- The centre is starting to monitor which families are using its services. Although there are well-attended sessions delivered in the heart of both the priority communities, often a high number of families who access them are not from the area the centre serves. Some services are now being provided for families from specific postcodes, such as a postnatal group, but it is too early to check their impact on improving engagement figures.
- The number of young children registering is improving so that now the large majority are signed up. However, the system agreed with health partners to ensure new births are registered quickly is not always effective because some partners do not share pertinent information in a timely fashion. As a result, only 41% of newborns are registered with the centre.
- The centre is successful in engaging individual children and families who are most in need of support. As a result of the effective work of the outreach workers to reduce inequalities, most of these families engage very well and make frequent use of the centre's services.
- Well baby clinics and links with midwives who hold postnatal appointments at the centre ensure there are regular opportunities for families to access early health services.
- The centre has been effective in encouraging families with two-year-old children who are eligible for free early education to take up places, so that 78% now do so. Most three- and four-year-olds are

in early education settings and this helps them prepare well for school.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The quality, range and relevance of services require improvement because services are not specific enough to encourage the large majority of all the children and families from priority groups to use them regularly. Sessions such as Play and Learn are very popular but children and families coming from out of the centre's area often outnumber those from priority groups.
- The provision for adults to extend their education and employment opportunities is not wide enough, especially for those who live in the least advantaged areas. Links have recently been established with Jobcentre Plus and there have been some workshops put on by the centre, such as 'Looking Good, Feeling Good and Into Work' but the number of families involved is relatively low.
- Where adults have been supported by the centre or directed to other partners such as adult learning, the longer term impact of the services they receive has not been consistently followed up. Partners are sometimes reluctant to share information and the centre has not established an effective system to track adults' progression towards further education or employability.
- The outcomes for children are positive. Overall, the percentage of children who achieved a good level of development last year at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is improving. At 65%, outcomes were 5% higher than the national average. Through strong links with Grovelands Primary School, the centre can show that 71% of children who regularly came to the centre achieved age-related levels.
- Health outcomes are good. At 65%, a far higher proportion of babies are being breastfed at around two months than is seen nationally. The percentage of Reception-age children who are a healthy weight is also much higher than the average for England. The centre has a strong focus on developing healthy lifestyles. Children are encouraged to have fruit for snacks. Music and movement sessions are delivered in the community to encourage physical development.
- Individual families who are supported by the centre have good outcomes because they receive very effective levels of care, guidance and support. Outreach workers have good links with other partners, including those expert in dealing with emotional health. This ensures that families, who often have complex problems, receive the support they need to get back on track. As a result, families say things like 'Whatever I am today, I totally owe to the centre.'

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- Those who lead and manage the centre have not set targets that are consistent. For example, the local authority's annual review has different targets to those in the centre's delivery and action plans. There has been a focus on increasing registrations but less so on the regular use of the centre by children and families living in the least advantaged priority areas. As a result, self-evaluation is unrealistic and this requires improvement to ensure that the centre has full capacity to move forward at a rapid pace.
- The local authority monitors the centre's performance regularly. It provides information relating to children who are registered and using the centre. However, this information is not always used to best effect to set targets that are challenging in relation to priority families' regular use of centre services or to improve the provision for adults.
- There are clear lines of responsibility between the governing body and the advisory board. The setting-up of a children's centre working party has added another useful opportunity to challenge the centre and for governors to better understand the centre's work. Governors are now fully aware that the centre needs to do more to encourage children and families living in the least advantaged priority areas to engage regularly and to extend the opportunities for parents to improve their employment chances.
- The centre manager has been in post for five months. She has made a positive start in auditing the centre's strengths and weaknesses and already developed systems to track the progress of children

and has built good links with local schools. She is aware that more now needs to be done to improve action planning and target setting and to show the centre's long-term impact.

- Staff are well trained. They have regular supervision. However, personal targets in annual appraisals are not clearly defined or linked to helping meet the centre's priorities.
- Families receive a warm welcome and appreciate the opportunity to use the high quality resources inside and out in the attractive garden. Staff resources are used particularly well to meet the needs of families who require one-to-one support or are referred from other agencies. The centre promotes a well-structured volunteer programme, with seven current or in-training volunteers. Not only does this provide important additional capacity in centre resources but it increases the participants' confidence and work-based experience.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are effectively implemented. Protecting children is at the heart of all the centre's work and staff act properly and swiftly should they have any concerns about a child's or family's welfare. Well-audited case files demonstrate the positive impact of this work. Where the staff are aware of children subject to child protection, who are being assessed as a child in need or looked after, they provide effective support and work well with other agencies, including social care.
- Parents have very positive views of the centre and the staff, stating, for example: 'They are wonderful people who are key in my life.' Parents are fully involved in the development of services and a good number attend advisory board meetings and have effective input to meetings.

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 details

Unique reference number	21321
Local authority	Surrey County Council
Inspection number	454554
Managed by	The governing body of Grovelands Primary School on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1404
Centre manager	Nikki Gray
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01932 229313
Email address	centremanager@grovelands.surrey.sch.uk

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