

Dorking Nursery School and Dorking Rural Sure Start Children's Centre

West Street, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 1BY

Inspection date 5–6 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
		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 requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Although the centre has slowly increased the number of children registered, approximately four out of every ten children are not known to centre staff. At 40% overall, too few children, particularly from priority groups, access children's centre services.
- Leaders have correctly identified and prioritised families living in the two most deprived areas as their main priority groups. However, they have not undertaken a sufficiently detailed check on what is needed in the area in order to identify other key groups who are in most need.
- The centre and the health services do not share information well. As a result, only one third of children aged under one, and half of those aged under two, are registered with the centre. This limits the effectiveness of the centre and only a small minority of these very young children access children's centre services.
- Local authority processes for checking the effectiveness of the centre are not robust enough and agreed targets are not always sufficiently clear or challenging. As a result the centre is not driving improvements fast enough.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is not yet good and well below national levels in the most deprived area.
- Too few adults have opportunities to develop their English, mathematics and work-based skills.

This children's centre has the following strengths:

- The centre has been particularly effective at targeting services in the most deprived area that it serves.
- Support for the families in most need is often high quality and makes a discernible difference to their lives. For some families, the centre is, as one parent said: 'a life saver' and 'my second family'.
- Those families who are supported by play link home visitors and outreach workers show positive improvements in their well-being.

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 headteacher; two centre coordinators; representatives of the local authority; several parents; and representatives of the advisory board and governing body. They also met with groups of staff and a range of partners. They spoke to: local headteachers; staff from local preschools; and child-minders.

The inspectors visited a range of services delivered at Dorking Nursery School and Dorking Rural Sure Start Children's Centre sites and Beare Green. They also undertook three joint observations with leaders and managers.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation. The inspectors looked in detail at supervision records and a number of case files from the outreach workers and play link staff.

Inspection team

Michael Blakey	Additional Inspector, Lead Inspector
Patricia Collis	Additional Inspector
Teresa Kiely	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre/group

Dorking Nursery School and Dorking Rural Children's Centre is a phase two centre which opened in 2008. Services, to meet its main aims, are delivered from two main sites: Dorking and Dorking Rural, to the south of Dorking in an area of higher deprivation; and an outreach setting in Beare Green. The centre serves an area of relative affluence with pockets of deprivation including one Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) which is in the top 30% most deprived in England.

The Dorking site shares a building with Dorking Nursery School (URN 124912) which is subject to a separate inspection. The report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

The leadership of the centre is the responsibility of the recently appointed headteacher. She is supported by two centre coordinators who share the role. Governance of the centre is provided by the governing body of Dorking Nursery School and Dorking Rural Sure Start Children's Centre, an advisory board and the local authority.

The proportion of children who live in workless households is well below the level seen nationally. Children's skills and knowledge, when they begin school, are below those expected for their age.

There are 1540 children under five years of age living in the reach area. The centre has identified its priority families as those living in two most deprived areas.

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

- Ensure access is good by:
 - increasing registration rates so that the remaining 40% of children are known to the centre, and in particular children who are aged under two
 - identifying other key focus groups through comprehensive checks on what the area needs
 - working with partners to ensure that the most vulnerable families (key priority groups) are known and the large majority access services
 - tracking the engagement of all priority groups to show both their attendance at services and the impact of services.
- Improve the quality and impact of services for all focus families, by:
 - ensuring children from the most deprived area achieve a good level of development broadly in line with national levels and the achievement gap narrows
 - ensuring adults have sufficient opportunities to access learning to support them with English and mathematics and to access training and further education to gain employment
 - tracking the progress and learning of children and adults in most need.
- Ensure that leadership, governance and management have a greater impact and that improvements are driven faster by:
 - developing a centre-wide plan, which sets out clearly identified focus groups and outcomes, and that challenging goals are set.
 - strengthening the challenge and support provided by the local authority so that aims are checked and met
 - urgently working with the local authority and health services so that the centre has live birth data which it can then use to focus on children, particularly those under two years old.
 - developing information sharing procedures with children's social care so that information on children in most need is routinely shared.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- The proportion of children registered with the centre increased from 57% in March 2012 to 61% in March 2013. However, the rate of improvement has not been rapid because the local authority and health trust have not agreed to share live birth data and health visitors have not effectively supported the centre to register enough families. As a result, only a third of under ones are registered and a small minority access services.
- Overall engagement rates are not yet good because over half of the children and their families living in the reach area do not access services. However, the centre is effective at working with families in the community and encouraging parents who are isolated to join with centre services.
- Pregnant women do not come to the centre often because partnership working with midwives is not well developed. These families therefore often miss out on what the centre has to offer them, because they are not registered or aware of what is going on.
- Approximately one quarter of two-year-old children who are eligible for free early education are not yet accessing their entitlement, and approximately 20% of children are not in good or better provision. The centre and the local authority have identified this as an area for improvement.
- Access is adequate, because the centre has been effective at targeting children living in the area which is most deprived. Through effective work in family homes, staff have registered most children, and approximately three quarters of these access services regularly. On average, children accessed a service 22 times over the last 12 months in this area and over half of the children access more than 10 times.
- Although the centre has not fully identified its focus groups, information shows that minority ethnic children are well represented at activities. As one Polish parent said: 'I love it here; and so do my Russian and Latvian friends.'
- Most children who are subject to child protection plans, children in need and those children who are looked after are known to the centre. However, information is not always shared between children's social care staff and the centre and the centre does not therefore always know where some of these most vulnerable children are.
- Activities, including 'Stay and Play', are often oversubscribed, but not enough families whose circumstances make them more vulnerable attend services.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The quality of practice requires improvement because inequalities are not narrowing quickly enough. In the summer of 2013 the proportion of children living in the most deprived area who achieved a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage was too low. At 24%, this is well below local and national levels.
- Although overall achievement has improved in the wider reach area in 2013 it was below national and local levels. Between 2010 and 2012 the achievement gap widened slightly across the area. The centre has correctly identified that it needs to do more to support children in the wider community to be ready for school.
- As a result of effective support, promotion and encouragement, the proportion of mothers sustaining breastfeeding at six-to-eight weeks is well above levels seen nationally. However, despite the centre's promotion of healthy living through programmes such as 'HENRY' and the provision of healthy snacks, the proportion of children who are of a healthy weight has started to decrease.
- Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes are used very well to assess the needs of some children and coordinate early help for families. However, the quality of assessment for families who are not subject to CAF requires improvement. This is because staff do not use an assessment tool to identify needs and as a result planning and reviews for those families who received more targeted support are not always sufficiently detailed.
- Outreach workers and play link visitors deliver a range of effective support to families in their own

homes. However, the coordination of their work is overly complicated and play link visitors do not receive supervision as frequently as outreach workers. The newly appointed headteacher has correctly identified that although they have different roles they both deliver family support and should have access to the same level of professional support.

- The centre knows the large majority of children in most need, including those subject to child protection plans, in the area. However, children's social services do not routinely provide the centre with names and addresses of all vulnerable children and this means that staff are not always able to deliver a coordinated support package.
- The quality of activities delivered is often good and parents appreciate the professional but friendly approach of the centre's staff. As one parent said: 'this is a very special place' and another said: 'my only recommendation to make it better would be that more families knew that the centre was here.'
- The range of opportunities for adults to undertake further learning, particularly around English, mathematics and vocational skills, is too limited and the centre's systems and processes for tracking the progress of vulnerable children and adults are not yet sufficiently well developed to show the progress that they make.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The headteacher has been in post for five months and together with the senior leadership team they have begun to introduce a number of changes to the way that they do things. However, they have limited the effectiveness of the centre because they have not driven improvements in registration rates sufficiently fast. As a result there are still too many children, particularly those under the age of two, who are not known to the centre.
- Self-evaluation is not always accurate. The local authority process for setting targets and monitoring performance is not robust or challenging enough. For example, an aim was set to increase registration rates from 63% to 65%. This broadly equates to 30 children over the year and is not challenging. However, because the authority has not yet managed to facilitate the sharing of live birth data, the centre is not able to contact all new parents.
- The parents' forum is particularly effective and focused on improvements. Parents regularly encourage others to attend the centre, raise money and discuss how they can contribute to improving access.
- The advisory board is supportive of the centre and meetings are well attended. However, it is not yet sufficiently challenged or supported by the local authority to drive improvements at a sufficiently quick pace. Members of the advisory board have plans to strengthen the challenge they provide to the headteacher and centre coordinators.
- The centre effectively supports the children who it knows are in most need including: those who are subject to child protection plans, children in need and looked after children. Case files demonstrate some very effective support for these children and some of these social care cases are greatly improved as a result of the centre's work.
- All staff are appropriately recruited and Disclosure and Barring Service checks are undertaken and recorded. They are appropriately trained to protect children.
- Resources are used appropriately to deliver a balance of universal and targeted provision. However, leaders are aware that they need to focus resources more tightly to ensure that inequalities are narrowed, particularly for those children living in the most deprived area.

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.

Centre details

Unique reference number	20970
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	430219
Managed by	The Governing Body of Dorking Nursery School and Dorking Rural Sure Start Children's Centre on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1540
Centre leader	Donna Harwood-Duffy
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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