

The Ivers Children's Centre

Grange Way, Iver, Buckinghamshire, SL0 9NT

Inspection date 22–23 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
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.

- Centre staff are highly committed and work well with partners and the local community to identify and engage families who benefit from the support and activities provided. Good progress is being made in engaging priority groups.
- Outreach work is managed well and is improving outcomes for families who have difficulties accessing the centre.
- Assessments of needs are carried out sensitively using an outcome-based programme and centre staff track children and parents carefully to ensure lessons learnt from the services provided are sustained.
- Parenting courses are well run and appreciated by parents. Particularly good use is made of the 'Holding Hands' programme.
- The centre focuses well on improving children's communication and language skills and works well with speech and language therapists and early years practitioners.

It is not outstanding because:

- The centre is not yet engaging fully with lone parents and those who are isolated.
- The local authority is not ensuring the centre receives all the data and information it needs to target families promptly and to demonstrate the impact of services.
- Children are making good progress in their learning and development. However, the development of children's language and communication is not always included in plans to ensure it is consistently delivered to the same high standard.
- More parents need to be encouraged to improve their English, mathematics and employability skills.

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. It was carried out at the same time as another children's centre which was The Chalfonts Children's Centre.

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre co-ordinator, the county children's centre operations manager, advisory board, parents, early years partners, children's centre staff, early years support, speech and language therapy, national careers service, adult education and health representatives.

The inspectors visited the children's centre, outreach centres and the mobile library.

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

Inspection team

Kenneth Jones	Her Majesty's Inspector, Lead Inspector
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Denise Blackwell	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Catherine Kickham	Additional Inspector
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Full report

Information about the centre

The Ivers Children's Centre is a phase two centre managed by Buckinghamshire County Council and supported by an advisory board. The centre is based at Iver Village next to Iver Village Infant School. Its reach area covers Iver Heath, Iver Village, Richings Park and the hamlet of George Green. Travel between these villages by public transport is difficult and the centre uses village and church halls and different outreach venues to provide services. The area is relatively affluent but with pockets of deprivation and low income households. Worklessness is low overall. There are 731 children under five years of age in the reach area. The population is predominantly White British with Asian families constituting the next largest group. Children in the area start early years provision with skills which are lower than the average for county, communication and language skills being the lowest. The centre provides a range of services which include health services, family play sessions, parenting programmes, family support and adult learning. The centre co-ordinator is a temporary agency worker and the county council was in the re-tendering process for children's centre provision at the time of the inspection.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- The local authority should ensure that the data and information required by the centre to target families and demonstrate impact are provided for the reach area. Protocols for partners to share the information required by the centre to target families promptly should be clarified and implemented consistently.
- Ensure centre staff plan and provide opportunities for children to develop their communication and language across all activities, targeting individual children and reflecting best practice at the centre.
- The centre should increase the numbers of parents improving their English, mathematics and employability skills.
- The centre should improve the engagement of lone parents to help reduce their isolation.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families Good

- The centre works well and often imaginatively with partners, including local police officers and the local housing association, in responding to the needs of children and families. Managers make good use of available data and information to develop services. The large majority of families are registered with the centre and benefit from carefully planned universal and targeted services.
- Priority groups have been clearly identified and engagement is improving well. The centre is particularly effective at working with the Traveller community, teenage parents, the families of disabled children and fathers. Rapid progress has been made in engaging lone parents, those from workless households and Asian communities.
- Outreach services are used well to work with most isolated parents and those who find it difficult to attend the centre. Family support workers use their skills and understanding of the needs of these parents particularly well in providing one-to-one outreach support. They are particularly adept at gaining the trust of parents and building their confidence so enabling them to attend the centre.
- A firm foundation has been laid for providing opportunities for education and training through family learning. However, the centre recognises that there is more to be done to help parents improve their English, mathematics and employability skills. Good opportunities are provided to enable parents to gain experience through volunteering which is helping them secure employment.
- Centre staff work effectively with social care in providing individual support to parents where there is social work intervention. Clear referral procedures are in place to enable families who

need services which are not provided by the centre to receive them promptly.

- Much good work has been done by the centre, in partnership with early years settings and parents, in encouraging and working with families to help them take up their entitlement to free early education.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The centre uses an outcome-based assessment tool well to assess the support needs of families and secure input from other services. Parents and staff find the visual representations easy to work with and valuable in assessing progress and the impact of services. Good use is made of learning journals and a paper-based system for tracking children's progress.
- Centre staff understand the reach area and the needs of parents well. Parenting programmes are well run with high attendance and completion rates. The 'Holding Hands' programme is a particular strength of the centre and is used well both within the centre and through outreach work. Parents speak highly of the help they receive and centre staff monitor the progress carefully to ensure learning has been sustained.
- Improving communication and language is a priority for the centre. Staff use their knowledge well and maintain a clear focus on improving the proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Drop-in speech and language therapy workshops held at the centre are popular with parents and are used well to identify development needs early. Nurseries with which the centre works comment favourably on the extent to which children who have used the centre are prepared for learning.
- A high priority is placed on the safety of children, referrals to children's social care are appropriate and timely and the centre works closely and effectively with social workers when required, although the centre does not have a designated social worker. The centre promotes safety in the home and wider community well and involves the police and rescue services in activities which children enjoy.
- Parents have good access to advice on health and child development matters. Health visitors hold clinics at the centre and village hall regularly. Support for breastfeeding is provided together with referral arrangements to drop-in support at the local hospital when further one-to-one support is required. There is, however, no area based data available to assess the impact of the centre on overall breastfeeding rates and no locally based data to assess the impact of the wide range of activities provided by the centre to encourage regular exercising, healthy eating and smoking cessation.
- Family learning and English language courses are well attended and the centre has good links with adult learning providers. The National Careers Service provides regular and constructive advice and support to help parents write their curriculum vitae and prepare for interviews. The centre recognises that more needs to be done to build on this foundation to encourage parents to develop their English, mathematics and employability skills.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The co-ordinator is clear about what the centre needs to do to succeed and self-evaluation informs developments well. Both the co-ordinator and staff are very pro-active in developing good working relationships with partners at the local level. This approach has been highly effective in driving improvement and is increasingly effective in identifying and engaging with parents who are hard to reach.
- Highly effective support is provided by the centre advisory board which is well informed, understands the area well and is ambitious for children. The board is clear about local needs and priorities and views the centre as having an important role to play in supporting the community. Centre staff are challenged well; the board sets clear improvement targets and maintains a firm

focus on demonstrating the impact of services on improving outcomes for families.

- Users of the centre have many opportunities to express their views about the quality and accessibility of services. Staff review feedback carefully, take appropriate action and inform parents of developments promptly.
- Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Performance management arrangements within the centre ensure staff are clear about priorities and receive the training and support they need to address them.
- Support and challenge provided by the local authority require improvement. Although the local authority has conducted annual conversations and set performance targets for the centre it is not ensuring the centre receives all the data and information it needs to target families and to demonstrate the impact of services across the reach area. The local authority is working on improving the appropriateness and timeliness of data and recognises that protocols for sharing information between partners need to be clarified and implemented consistently.

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	23199
Local authority	Buckinghamshire County Council
Inspection number	427527
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	731
Centre co-ordinator	Brian Roohan
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01753 650252
Email address	iverchildrenscentre@bucksc.gov.uk

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