

Ecton Brook Children Centre

Ecton Brook Primary School, Ecton Brook Road, Ecton Brook, Northampton, NN3 5DY

Inspection date 18–19 February 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 is a centre that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Despite high levels of registration, not enough families, particularly those who need help the most, are engaging with the centre's services.
- There are not enough opportunities to engage parents and others in volunteering activities to help them prepare for progression to training and employment.
- Assessment and tracking systems do not record sufficiently the progress made by children towards their stages of development learning goals and for adults, their progression into training and employment.
- The proportion of mothers that continue to breastfeed at six to eight weeks in this area is lower than that of Northamptonshire as a whole. There are high levels of obesity amongst Reception Year children.

This centre has the following strengths:

- The centre is welcoming and well organised with resources that are of a high quality. Leaders and managers know the area well, are managing change effectively and the centre is improving.
- Families coming into contact with the centre are safeguarded well. Staff focus their efforts on working with families who are in greatest need. Highest priority is given to ensure services are quickly put in place for children and families who are suffering or are at risk of harm.
- Services that are available to all in the area are well planned to meet families' needs and interests so that families' health, well-being and personal development improve when they attend regularly. 'Stay and Play' and 'Creative Art' sessions are well attended and provide an effective route for families to speak to children's centre staff to get information, advice and access to services.
- Those responsible for the governance of the centre provide good support and challenge and as a result the centre has good capacity to build for even better effectiveness.

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 Blackthorn children's centre.

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

The inspectors held meetings with: the centre manager; representatives from the local authority; the deputies of the co-located primary school; members of the advisory board; a representative of the targeted prevention team; Northamptonshire Parent and Infant Partnership; representative from adult learning. They also met with a health visitor, a midwife and parents.

The inspectors visited a range of activities and observed the centre's work. They looked at a range of documentation including the centre's self-evaluation, development plan, monitoring documentation provided by the local authority, a selection of policies and procedures, and case files.

Inspection team

Susan Crawford	Her Majesty's Inspector
Joan Lindsay	Additional inspector
Steve Nelson	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Ecton Brook Children's Centre is a phase two centre that was designated in July 2008. It is managed on behalf of the local authority by the governing body of Ecton Brook Primary School. The day-to-day management of the centre is the responsibility of the centre manager. The governing body and the Advisory Board contribute to the management of the centre and include representatives from a number of community and statutory partners and parents. The parents' forum, recently re-established as 'Chitter chatter', feeds into the advisory board. The centre works in partnership with four other children's centres in the East Northampton locality.

The area is ethnically, socially and economically diverse. There is a high proportion of social housing, including temporary housing, resulting in a high level of mobility in the population. The largest ethnic group in the area are White British. There are smaller percentages of minority ethnic groups and an increasing number of White European families. Around 911 children aged under five live in the centre's catchment area and around 30% of these are considered to be living in poverty. Overall, the centre serves one of the 30% most deprived areas nationally. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities when they enter early year's provision are typically below the levels expected for their age.

The centre offers a range of services for families and children under five years. These include child health services and family support, including outreach and signposting for those seeking employment. The centre runs a crèche for some of its activities. The services are run from the centre and different community venues, including Standen's Barn Community Centre, Standen's Barn Primary School, Bellinge Community House, Ecton Brook Primary school and Weston Favell Library.

The centre has registered early years provision, which is subject to a separate inspection. The report can be found on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Increase the engagement of local families, especially those from the most disadvantaged areas and those whose circumstances make them more vulnerable.
- Involve parents and other volunteers more effectively in delivering the work of the centre through opportunities such as volunteering activities, to help them prepare for progression to training and employment.
- Increase the proportion of mothers breastfeeding at six-to-eight weeks and reduce obesity levels in children.
- Develop tracking and assessment systems that accurately measure the impact of provision on:
 - children's learning and achievement, and their readiness for school and the long term impact of the centre's services
 - adults' learning and development to increase their opportunities to access employment and further education and/or training.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- A system for monitoring attendance and participation is now in place. This is helping leaders to monitor engagement levels and identify target groups most in need of intervention and support. However, too few local families, particularly from the most disadvantaged areas, participate in activities or services offered by the centre.
- There are good arrangements in place to ensure that most children take up the free entitlement to early education. The vast majority of early year's provision in the area is of good and better quality. Consequently, this is helping to close the achievement gap for families and children, thus reducing inequalities. Centre staff and partners are able to identify and support all two-year-old children who are in most need of help. As a result, children start school well prepared for learning.
- Information for adults about potential work opportunities is made available on-line which enables some adults to access current vacancies. However, there are few opportunities for them to gain the relevant advice, skills and qualifications or support for volunteering. Some parenting and literacy courses have been provided but these are not linked closely enough to how they will improve adults' work-readiness. There is no provision for adults to improve their numeracy skills.
- Early intervention features well in the centre's work, with priority given to those families who are referred by other agencies who are in most need. Where concerns about the safety or well-being of any child or family member are raised, teams work well together to provide the support that is needed.
- Staff work effectively with schools and partner agencies to support family contact visits and when making referrals for extra support for those with additional needs. This increases families' access to relevant services and helps to reduce inequalities.
- Children and families access a wide range of services when they are in regular contact with the centre. Good quality stay and play sessions are well attended and run from the centre and various venues in the locality including neighbouring schools, libraries and community centres. Appointments with 'Community Law' give one to one advice on debt management, budgeting and benefits. Health visitors attend regular baby clinics which also have good take-up rates.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- Centre staff plan and deliver an appropriate range of good quality activities to those children and families who access services. These include 'Stay and Play', 'Family Fun' and 'Little Giggles'. There is, however, little continuous observation, assessment and planning of next steps for individual children. This means that it is difficult to monitor their progress from their starting points.
- Young parents are well supported through one-to-one and regular sessions, with good levels of engagement. Many have achieved better bonding with their babies by attending baby massage courses. Some have accessed help that has led to progression into work or onto a parenting course.
- Adults do not have enough opportunities to gain qualifications particularly in numeracy. Those who do access training, such as parenting programmes and how to keep children safe, are not routinely tracked, so the centre does not know what impact it is having. There are not enough opportunities for parents to volunteer.
- Parents comment positively on how the support that they have received from centre staff over the

years has helped them. For example, how to manage their children's behaviour more effectively and how to better manage their finances. One parent said, 'I think if I didn't come here I would go out of my mind at home.'

- Partnerships with health services ensure there is an appropriate range of activities and services to promote families' health, safety and well-being. However, despite healthy eating programmes, obesity levels remain high. Breastfeeding information and support is provided, through sessions such as 'Baby Babble'. However, the number of parents still breastfeeding at six-to-eight weeks is below local and national levels.
- Assessments of need, case files and records are maintained to a good standard. They are up-to-date, include families' views and opinions, and clearly identify the involvement of other professionals. Case files show target children are well protected by centre staff through intervention and prevention work. The good support from outreach and family support workers is helping some families to move out of crisis situations.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders know that more needs to be done to increase the number of families in most need of support accessing what the centre has to offer. They know the centres' strengths and have set targets to improve. However, they have not yet used all the information available to them to find out why some families are not engaging. For example, although the large majority of families are registered with the centre leaders and managers have not tried to understand why they have not accessed services.
- Governance arrangements are effective and a parent chairs regular meetings. The advisory board has a firm grasp of what is happening in the centre, including the use of performance management, and knows the centre's current priorities and target groups. Members are clear about how well the centre is helping to close the achievement gap for children, thereby reducing inequalities. The advisory board and parents' forum are used positively to enhance the leadership of the centre.
- The local authority supports and challenges the centre through the annual conversation processes, regular visits and analysis of the centre's performance data. This has positively impacted on the centres performance over the last 12 months, for example doubling the number of families registered.
- The needs of children subject to child-protection plans, children who are looked after and children in need are appropriately met. The Common Assessment Framework processes are used well to provide effective early help. Robust safeguarding policies, procedures and practices, including information sharing with the co-located school and day care provision, ensure that the most vulnerable families are supported effectively. Staff are swift to act when they identify concerns.
- Regular supervision meetings and the establishment of a more reflective process ensure that staff are well supported and consistently work with a high level of professionalism. Effective systems ensure that staff are recruited with the right level of qualifications and skills required to fulfil their roles. Safeguarding is well managed so that all staff are appropriately trained.
- The building and the resources are of good quality and staff are deployed well across various outreach sites. Staff are aware of priorities and an appropriate balance between tailored and universal services has been achieved.
- Evaluations provide sufficient information for the centre to plan future provision for those parents

that they have contact with. Parents contribute regularly to feedback on centre activities, and a survey is carried out annually by the local authority. However, a relatively small number of parents responded but those that did were satisfied with the centre and its services.

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	21052
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	430169
Managed by	Ecton Brook Primary School behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	911
Centre leader	Jackie Line
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Telephone number	01604 409280
Email address	Jaline@northamptonshire.gov.uk

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