

Stoke-on-Trent Central Locality group

Eaves Lane, Bucknall, Stoke ST2 9AS

Inspection date		28-30 January 2014	
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 group.

- Confident and highly skilled leaders, at all levels, make effective use of powerful reflection and analysis. They have led the centres from individually managed, and predominantly isolated positions of management, to a cohesive, forward-thinking locality group of centres. Large numbers of parents are involved in influencing the work of the locality, and are integral to the successful leadership and governance arrangements.
- All leaders know how the locality group is supporting improvements for children and families, especially those from target groups. Detailed and precise information about families in the area helps them understand where services need to be placed and for whom. The centres are very inclusive and leaders take positive steps to locate, and where appropriate re-locate, services in the heart of the localities where they are easily accessible to children and families.
- The very large majority of children living in the locality are regularly and routinely attending services and groups provided by the centres, partners and commissioned services. Most children access good quality early childhood provision.
- Effective support is provided to targeted groups. For instance, funding has been secured to facilitate all female swimming sessions. Most children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported in good and outstanding settings and schools.

It is not outstanding because:

- The gap between the lowest achieving children and their peers is too wide. The teaching of communication and language in the early childhood provision is not always consistent across the locality. The significant variations in some health outcomes mean that a few children do not always get the best possible start in life.

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 Hope Children's Centre, Kingsland Children's Centre, Penkhull Children's Centre, and Thomas Boughey Children's Centre.

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

The inspectors held meetings with the locality coordinator, the four centre managers of the locality group; senior leaders and managers in the local authority; family outreach workers; volunteers; representatives from health and commissioned services; parents and centre users; and representatives of the locality parent partnership board and parents forums.

The inspectors visited a range of services offered at each of the centres, including adult learning courses, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, 'Hands around the World' group, Breastfeeding café, 'Growing Together', 'Baby Play together', and 'Ready Steady Learn' sessions, and attended multi-agency meetings.

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

Inspection team

Deborah Udakis, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Elaine Clinton	Her Majesty's Inspector
Megan Dauksta	Additional inspector
Parm Sansoyer	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the group

The Central Locality Children's Centre group is one of three groups which cover the city of Stoke-on-Trent. The group is led by a locality coordinator, and centre managers hold responsibility for the daily management of each centre. The children's centre group works together, sharing many services and integrated leadership.

The Central Locality group consists of four children's centres; Hope Children's Centre, Kingsland Children's Centre, Penkhull Children's Centre, and Thomas Boughey Children's Centre. Each centre delivers the full range of children's centre services, including early education, adult learning, parenting support, health services, speech and language therapy and family welfare. Governance arrangements for the locality are provided by the local authority and the Parent Partnership Board. Registered early years provision is linked to each of the children's centres. Kingsland Children's Centre is located on the site of Kingsland Primary School. Penkhull Children's Centre operates from The Mount Education Centre. None of these settings were inspected at the same time as the centres. The most recent inspection reports can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

All four centres serve very diverse communities close to the centre of Stoke. The area served by the centres includes a significant proportion of children aged under five years from minority ethnic families. Overcrowded homes are a significant issue for families in the Hope and Thomas Boughey areas. Almost a quarter of all children under five years of age live in workless households, although this figure has fallen since 2010 to its current level of 24.5%.

The Central Locality group of centres serve a significant minority of the multicultural population. An increasing number of families speak English as an additional language; and 27 different languages are spoken at the centres. Services within the group are targeted specifically at teenage parents, lone parents, families from minority ethnic groups, low income families, children from workless households, fathers, parents with emotional health issues, families requiring help with health lifestyle choices, children with disabilities and/or special educational needs, families living in the most deprived areas and children being supported by social services. Some 4,573 children under five years of age live in the group's reach area. Children's skills and understanding on entry to early years provision are typically below or well below expected levels for their age.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Reduce the gap between the lowest achieving children and their peers in the Early Years Foundation Stage by working with the early childhood and education collaborations (partnerships) within the locality to:
 - promote children's speaking and listening skills in all play and learning activities across the locality
 - improve the quality of teaching in all early childhood settings and schools, so that all children are taught the letters and the sounds that they make in a consistent and systematic way.
- Work closely with health partners, to further reduce health inequalities and continue to improve health outcomes across the locality by;
 - reducing the number of children considered obese in Reception;
 - reducing the number of women smoking during pregnancy;
 - improving the take-up of breastfeeding in the Kingsland area
 - and consistently using opportunities within groups to reinforce key healthy lifestyle messages.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The leaders provide monthly analysis of levels of engagement and non-participation, by ward. This accurate information, for example, highlights the number of East European or refugee families yet to be reached and ensures the centres are targeting groups and activities in the heart of the

localities they are not yet reaching.

- All targeted groups, including teenage parents, lone parents and fathers are well supported by the centres and their partners. The level of engagement with families in greatest need is impressive.
- There are good arrangements to target children to take up the free entitlement to early education, especially disadvantaged families with two-year-olds. Consequently, accurate and up-to-date information about the availability and quality of early childhood services in the locality is widely available to all families. Most children access funded early childhood provision in the locality.
- The number of children and parents attending 'Play Together' groups is consistently high across the locality. Transition groups are also popular and are supporting children and families well as they progress from centre services and early childhood provision into school. All parents who commented about this group said how well it helped their child to become school ready. Parents also said that the crèche provision is invaluable, and enables them to access a good range of workshops and training away from their children.
- The locality, health partners, collaborative early childhood providers, and commissioned services, are routinely engaging with 88%, a very large majority, of the children living in the area. Centre membership is increasing weekly. For instance, four new members were recruited during the baby massage class on 29/01/2014. Most important is the very high levels of engagement with children and families. There is a concerted effort by all partners to sign up all users as centre members and data shows this is working well.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The quality of assessment, case files and support for individual children and their families identified as being more vulnerable and needing one-to-one support is good. Case recording is completed to a good standard and reflects the quality of universal and targeted services, the views and opinions of families as well as the involvement of other professionals. Case files show the impact that good quality practice and services are having on improving the lives of children and families.
- Partnership working is very successful. For instance, collaborations with private and voluntary early childhood settings and maintained schools help ensure that children access good quality provision. Good use of peer and joint moderation of assessments charting children's progress is helping to promote a consistent approach across settings. In the centres, robust observation, assessment and tracking of individual children's development, and the progress they make from starting points, is used well to inform planning and tailor activities to help children optimise their learning.
- Most children across the locality are doing as well as expected at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, especially in communication and language.
- There is particularly strong and effective support for families new to the UK, through the 'Hands Around the World Group', including asylum seekers and refugees. There is a strong focus on improving English skills to enable non-English speaking families to be full participants in the community and to gain meaningful employment. All centres have a clear focus on equality and diversity and actively promote the inclusion of all children and their families, including those with disabilities.
- Constitutional groups, such as 'Parent Time', support individuals increased confidence and employability. The group successfully raised money to subsidise the cost of coach hire to Blackpool for 140 adults and children enabling them to enjoy time together away from the usual pressures of home. Parents gain an extended range of skills by taking on a variety of roles within these groups; consequently many parents have become more aware of their own potential and have firmed up their career paths.
- There is strong commitment to reducing health inequalities. Consequently, most children in this locality are getting a good start to life and their continued good health is well promoted. There is a good take-up of breastfeeding in Hope, Penkhull and Thomas Boughey but take-up is lower in Kingsland. There has been a reduction in the numbers of women smoking during pregnancy but figures remain higher than seen nationally. Obesity rates in Reception are also higher than seen nationally. There are some missed opportunities in groups to reinforce the importance of healthy lifestyles and choices.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Rigorous performance management is used by staff, leaders and the parent partnership board to challenge and support the quality and impact of the locality services. The quality and impact of services are carefully measured through observations and quality assurance visits, and audit reviews.
- There is a clear focus on individual performance, continuous professional development and raising ambitions across the locality team. Leaders monitor what staff do, how well they do it, why they do it and measure the impact of the work to see whether children and families are better off as a result of activities and support provided.
- There is convincing evidence that the centres are helping to reduce inequalities for children and families across the locality. A good deal of the positive approaches to improving outcomes for children and families are at early stages of implementation. Therefore, in some instances, the leaders have yet to demonstrate that these are having a notable impact on improving the lives of families.
- Self-evaluation is accurate, routinely reviewed as part of the governance and performance management cycle; and supports the locality's drive for continuous improvement. All leaders including parent representatives on the parent partnership board play a major role in the self-evaluation process.
- The parent partnership board has grown significantly in strength and influence within the locality leadership team. Chaired by parents, the board members provide effective challenge and support to centre leaders. The vice chair (parent) said that she has 'Found a fire in her belly', since becoming involved in the board and is eager to find, 'The hairline cracks before they become a problem'.
- Parent Forums effectively help parents to contribute to and influence decision making and governance within the locality. Parents confidently say, 'These are our centre's', and eagerly suggest where improvements can be made. Actions taken by leaders in response show that parent suggestions are taken seriously are thoughtfully considered and improvements are made as a result.
- Reducing the risk of harm to children and all users is deeply embedded in the locality's work. Procedures are rigorously applied and understood by all who work with children and their families. Families who access services are kept safe and well protected.
- The centres' role in the local authority's early help, intervention and prevention strategy is well developed ensuring families experiencing troubles and crisis, receive intensive and targeted support. The good use of the Common Assessment Framework and Early Help pilot helps to tailor good quality multi-agency support for children on child protection plans and looked after children. This enables families to move forward in their lives. The needs of children with disabilities and special educational needs are well met.

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.

Stoke-on-Trent Central Locality Group details

Unique reference number	80262
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	430345
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	4573
Centre leader	Jaime Wainwright-Jones
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Telephone number	01782 236333
Email address	jaime.wainwright@stoke.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- Kingsland Children's Centre
- Penkhull Children's Centre
- Thomas Boughey Children's Centre
- Hope Children's Centre

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