

Inspection report for Guildford Children's Centre

Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	362490
Inspection dates	24–25 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Philip Mann HMI

Centre governance	Local authority
Centre leader	Elaine McCrimmon
Date of previous inspection	n/a
Centre address	Hazel Avenue
	Bellfields
	Guildford
	GU1 1NR
Telephone number	01483 566589
Fax number	01483 302150
Email address	admin@guildfordchildrenscentre.surrey.sch.uk

Linked school if applicable	Guildford Children's Centre Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Guildford Children's Centre Nursery EY282720

The inspection of this Sure Start Children's Centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No. 100024

© Crown copyright 2010



Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

An inspection of the registered childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 3 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Early Years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, representatives from the local authority and other external organisations, health services, parents and carers of children.

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

Information about the centre

This is a Phase 1 children's centre that was designated in May 2005, incorporating two maintained nurseries to provide the full core offer. The centre facilities are located on two contrasting sites, one in the town centre at York Road within a 70 per cent most disadvantaged area and the other in a residential area of north Guildford within a 30 per cent disadvantaged area. The governing body works closely with a community partnership committee of parents, representatives from health and social services, the voluntary sector and the local authority to provide oversight of the children's centre and maintained nursery provision. The York Road site serves a very diverse population where employment is generally average. In contrast, the Hazel Avenue site is located in a refurbished primary school and serves a local population that is predominantly White British with a growing number of White European, Asian and African families. Levels of unemployment in this area are above average, with approximately 160 families in receipt of benefits. Attainment on entry into the Early Years Foundation Stage is below age-expected levels overall and well below that expected in communication, language and literacy development for children starting at the Hazel Avenue site.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for users and the wider community

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding provider of integrated services to children and adult users within a large and diverse community. Centre leadership and governance are outstanding. The centre leader works with passion to drive forward improvements to services for the benefit of all users. All staff share this passion and together they ensure that the centre acts as a hub of care and support within the local community. Teamwork is a real strength and together staff demonstrate excellent capacity for further improvement. Lines of communication between the centre and a wide range of other professionals are highly effective. This is noted by many parents who feel that they know staff will respond rapidly to any concerns that they may have and

tailor services to meet their needs. Comments such as, 'The staff at Guildford Children's Centre are amazing, in motivating the children – they are very helpful and valued' reflect the views of many parents and carers.

Outstanding levels of effectiveness ensure that outcomes continue to improve for an increasing number of children and adult users of the centre in many areas of their development. Children using the centre facilities are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their learning because they make very good progress in all aspects of their development. They play very well together and display very positive relationships with others in all aspects of provision. Furthermore, increasing numbers of adult users are attending the courses provided to develop their own workplace skills such as using a laptop or working as a volunteer in the centre. As a result, parents grow in confidence and there are several examples of individuals gaining employment through the support of the centre.

The quality and range of services available to children and adult users are excellent. All staff work diligently to provide the highest possible level of care and support to users. The community café is the 'heart' of the centre, providing a relaxed and friendly atmosphere where users are able to share experiences and informally discuss issues with staff and friends. Safeguarding procedures are extremely robust. The centre premises in both settings are extremely safe and secure because of the very effective systems in place for minimising risk.

Well-designed and manageable procedures are used to ensure consistent and continual development of provision in all settings. Senior staff monitor the quality of provision regularly as part of the centre's ongoing process of review and improvement. Staff in both settings actively seek users' views through questionnaires and suggestion boxes. These comments are valued by staff and used very effectively to tailor services to users' needs, such as modifying the focus of the 'Play and Learn' sessions. A wide range of data is gathered to support self-evaluation. However, procedures for the rigorous analysis of this data are yet to be fully implemented in order to target resources even more effectively. Taking all factors into account, the centre provides excellent value for money.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Review procedures for the analysis of data to further increase the numbers of users accessing the centre's range of services.

How good are outcomes for users?

1

Excellent provision ensures that outcomes in all areas are high and continue to improve. A wide range of services, advice and support actively promotes healthy lifestyles and a reduction in children's obesity rates at age five. For instance, children in the nurseries and childcare settings eat with glee the healthy snacks,

fresh fruit and vegetables cooked on site. Keep-fit sessions are developing healthy lifestyles amongst adult users. New mothers respond very well to high quality advice about breastfeeding, finding the centre café a comfortable place to feed their baby.

Outcomes for staying safe are excellent. Children attending day care and other services settle very quickly and respond very positively to the excellent care provided by their key worker and other adults. Children demonstrate a good awareness of what to do in case of a fire and parents appreciate the excellent safety advice provided to them through home visits and input from other professionals.

Children in both settings make rapid progress towards the Early Years Foundation Stage learning goals. This is especially so in their personal and social skills and linguistic development. Parents grow in confidence as a result of attending centre-based activities such as 'Parent Puzzle', where they learn about how to manage positively the behaviour of their child. Many parents make new friends through attending the play and learn sessions and social interaction at the centre café. Carefully targeted sessions within 'Play and Learn' instil a sense of well-being between parent and child. Use of the library areas, storytelling sessions and toy and/or book lending schemes fully encourage parents from both settings to read and play with their child at home. Parents freely state how much they value these opportunities to work with their child.

The contribution of users to the centre and local community is excellent. This is because a strong inclusive ethos promotes community cohesion extremely well amongst all users. Fathers take great pleasure in making a den with their child in the centre grounds during 'Family Fun' days. Children using the centre facilities are well prepared for the next stage of their learning. An increasing number of users are attending courses that provide good levels of advice and support about how to access a range of services to users on a pathway to work.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	1
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	1
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	1

How good is the provision?

1

Excellent use is made of assessment information within both nursery settings and the centre to fully inform planning and provide a comprehensive understanding of each child's needs. Individual files provide an extremely detailed record of children's development within each setting. For instance, the colour coding of children's individual progress provides an excellent record of improving outcomes. Staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of users individual needs and use this to provide a unique and personal care package for each family. The common assessment framework procedures are used extremely well to record concerns and target specific support to the individual needs of children on a child protection plan.

Staff adapt services to meet both individual and community needs. Activities are of very high quality and staff regularly celebrate the achievements of users, boosting their confidence and encouraging them to participate more. Users express considerable satisfaction with the extensive range of services provided. Comments such as, 'Guildford Children's Centre provides a very safe and happy environment where children are nurtured and learn to have fun' represent the views of many adult users of the centre. Planning for nursery provision is excellent and fully supports the development of all children within the childcare settings. The centre staff and family practitioners provide excellent levels of support and training for local childminders. As a result, the quality of child care in the locality continues to improve.

Relationships and lines of communication between staff and users are excellent and these build a sense of trust between all parties. Family support practitioners are extremely successful at using activities such as home visits and centre sessions to carefully access users. Parents are provided with high quality support and guidance to access the right help at the right time for their child. A strong partnership with the Guildford Action for Families, training in basic skills and use of computers provide excellent levels of support to adult users looking for employment and greater economic stability for their families.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	1
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

Governance arrangements are excellent and clearly understood by all parties. Day to day management is extremely good. Roles and responsibilities are very clearly understood and effectively delegated to centre staff. A strong sense of teamwork exists amongst all staff who are totally dedicated to the aims and vision of the centre. The local authority provides good levels of support as part of an integrated network of local children's centres. The involvement of users and other professionals through a community partnership committee is excellent. Strong links exist with the adjacent school for children with significant learning difficulties. Services are fully integrated to provide a cohesive range of support for users of the centre.

Procedures for performance management are thorough and used extremely well to develop the skills and expertise of centre staff and volunteers. Key priorities for improvement are carefully identified and shared with leading partners. Self-evaluation is accurate and effectively engages a wide range of staff, other agencies and users in the comprehensive annual reviews. Senior staff collect a wide range of data to support the development of the centre's effectiveness but are yet to analyse this data fully to target services even more closely to the needs of the most vulnerable and difficult to reach users.

Equality and disability legislation is fully implemented. The centre's strong inclusive ethos promotes community cohesion extremely well amongst all users. Access to the centre facilities is very good and effective levels of support are provided for individual users with disability. Family support practitioners go the 'extra mile' to support vulnerable users to access services. Centre staff are particularly good at tailoring support services to the needs of individuals and their needs. For example, very effective levels of support are provided for individual users with disability within both the nursery settings and centre activities.

Safeguarding is extremely robust, and recruitment and vetting procedures are rigorously adhered to. The governing body actively oversees comprehensive procedures for risk assessment. Procedures for monitoring the welfare of children and the sharing of any concerns are applied with rigour. Superb interagency working ensures that excellent support is given families in times of crisis.

Financial resources are managed extremely well. The quality of resources is outstanding and these are very effectively deployed to provide a fully integrated package of services for users. Very effective use is made of accommodation within both the centre and nursery settings.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood	1
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	1
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	1
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	1

Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

Inspectors made reference to the findings of the inspection of childcare provision at the Guildford Children's Centre undertaken at the same time.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the Guildford Children's Centre on 24–26 November 2010. We judged the centre as outstanding. Many of you told us that the staff are very caring and supportive. We agree with you because we feel that this is one of the centre's key strengths. We were also very impressed with their ability to work as a team under the excellent leadership of the centre leader and governing body. Together they all work extremely hard to support both your child's development and your own skills and confidence. With the support of a number of other professionals, they provide you with excellent information on how to be healthy, safe and get extra help for your family. This is improving the health and well-being of yourselves and your family really well. The centre staff gather lots of information about what you think about the services available. They use this information very well to plan activities for you and your children. However, we have asked them to make even better use of this and other information to make sure even more parents and children from all backgrounds know about the centre and use it regularly.

Guildford Children's Centre is a secure and safe place for you to bring your child. The centre is warm and friendly, allowing children to play happily while they learn indoors or outside. All are making rapid progress in many areas of their development. All staff and volunteers are carefully checked for working with children. The centre café provides a wonderful place for you to meet other parents and people who can help you and your family. It is quickly becoming a super asset for the whole community.

We would like to thank all of you who found time to talk to us and we wish you and your families the best for the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.