

Inspection report for The Wooden House Children's Centre

Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	383841
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Rushmere Hall Primary School: URN 124679
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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.

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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.

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and one early years inspector

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, representatives of the local authority, members of the advisory board and parents' group, a broad range of users and a number of partners, including health, education and social care.

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

Information about the centre

Woodenhouse Children's Centre is a phase two centre and provides the full core offer. It opened in 2008 and is located within the grounds of Rushmere Hall Primary School. The centre serves the north Ipswich area.

The centre manager is responsible for the day-to-day running of the centre and also has responsibility for two other children's centres, Chatterbox and Quayside, within the cluster. A new manager was appointed in April 2012. Each centre has its own advisory board providing governance on behalf of the local authority. The centres work in close cooperation with each other. The advisory board consists of representatives from partner organisations and key stakeholders that work with the centre and the local authority.

The centre has 716 children aged from birth to five years in its reach area. The majority of families are of White British heritage with a small percentage from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of children from families in receipt of benefits and in homes where no one works is approximately 10% which is slightly above national levels and is particularly high in the area immediately around the centre, as is the proportion of lone families. When they start early years provision, children's skills, knowledge and abilities are often below those typical for their age.

The centre provides a wide range of on-site health and development services such as baby weighing, breastfeeding support, post- and ante-natal support, baby massage, parenting and adult learning courses and outreach support. The centre also provides crèche and other childcare facilities in other venues across its reach area.

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 families

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Woodenhouse Children's Centre provides a good service and meets the needs of the community it serves well. The centre manager's clear vision for improvement and the enthusiasm and commitment of all staff is driving the centre forward. A significantly increasing proportion of families make good use of the centre's facilities to improve their lives. Effective partnership and outreach services lead to good outcomes for all target groups, including those in circumstances that make them vulnerable. Good systems of governance provide challenge to the centre. As a result, it has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

Outcomes for children and adults are good. Breastfeeding and immunisation rates are positive and contribute to good improvements to the community's health. There is a positive trend of improving standards for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the gap between the lowest achieving group and the rest is generally narrower than the national average. The centre has a good impact on helping children and adults stay safe. Although the centre makes generally good use of available data to measure its effectiveness, some of the information is not local and precise enough to set the sharpest targets for improvement. For example, there is limited local data for assessing its impact on smoking cessation rates.

Through good support and outreach work, families who are considered most at risk receive timely intervention and support. This has had a particularly positive impact on mental health issues such as ante-natal depression. The centre works in close partnership with the other children's centres in the cluster to provide, for example, support for teen parents and literacy and numeracy training. The centre itself provides a bright, warm and welcoming environment and this encourages parents to seek out support for many aspects of their lives. Regular work with financial inclusion services has helped several families to address issues of debt and money

management. This has a positive impact on the economic well-being of many groups of users helping them into employment or volunteering activities. However, only a small proportion of families are currently involved in the governance and decision-making of the centre.

The centre is inclusive: it promotes equality and tackles diversity well. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used well to support those with circumstances that make them vulnerable and the centre promotes good outcomes for disabled users and those who have special educational needs. A strong commitment to safeguarding by all staff ensures children and their families are safe. Parents receive good support, training and resources for keeping their families safe. Hospital admissions for unintentional injuries are below average.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work with partners in health and education to increase the availability of accurate and precise local data in order to more systematically target improvements and measure the centre's effectiveness.
- Increase parental involvement in the decision-making and governance of the centre.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The centre works in close partnership with health services and promotes outcomes well. The many activities aimed at promoting good eating and exercise habits have a positive effect. For instance, the centre led an innovative programme to tackle obesity in pregnancy, in partnership with a local hospital. This was very well attended and led to a measurable improvement to all participants' health. The 'weigh and play' sessions within the centre are popular and are run in conjunction with regular midwife drop-in services. As a result, parents receive good support and advice on children's health issues. Levels of obesity for children in the Reception age group are approximately 8.8% and below national and local averages. As a parents said, reflecting others' views, 'There is always someone to ask about healthy eating or diet problems.'

The centre effectively supports mothers on breastfeeding and weaning. Overall, rates of breastfeeding have improved well over the last three years. For example, the percentage of mothers who fully or partially breast feed at six to eight weeks is 78% compared to a national average of 50%. The centre is working with other services to gather more health information on referral, although the centre is at times inhibited in ensuring that it is having a maximum impact because up-to-date precise comparative data is sometimes limited.

The courses to support children’s early learning and development make a good contribution to their enjoyment and achievement. The on-site sessions such as ‘Happy Mondays’, ‘Music and Rhyme’, ‘Play Bus’ and ‘Family Play’ promote early learning well. Initiatives such as the partnership with library services engage parents in regular reading activities and are accessed by all target groups. Standards children reach by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage across the area have improved well over the last three years although they are slightly below the national average. The gap between the lowest achieving children and the others at 25% compares well with a national average of 31 % over this period. The centre is building on links with other early years’ providers in the reach to gather more precise data to target improvements more sharply and raise standards further, but this is at an early stage of development. Parents report very positively on parenting courses in developing their understanding of children’s learning saying, for example, ‘They have given me the confidence not to over direct my child’s play.’

Children’s behaviour and safety are promoted well. They are happy and purposefully engaged in the centre’s activities. The many activities for parents and babies, such as baby massage, build a bond between children and parents. They also help adults, particularly those suffering depression or loneliness, to build relationships with others. The effectiveness of the centre’s training for all staff means that those subject to a child protection plan, looked after children and the families who care for them, are kept safe and helped to move forwards. The centre has taken successful initiatives to support children who may be at risk through circumstances of domestic abuse and relieve pressure for the whole family. For example, the centre provides good support and education on alcohol abuse, credit management with one-to-one support and financial inclusion initiatives.

Through the effective use of the Common Assessment Framework, Team Around the Child and good quality interventions for disabled children and those with special educational needs or who may otherwise be vulnerable, the centre ensures they are supported well. A good proportion of such families make use of the centre’s provision. The Family Support Workers have successfully helped several families to manage their concerns and improve their lives. Several of those parents who received this support have gone on to achieve qualifications and work or volunteer as a direct result of contact with the centre. This has made a good contribution to these families’ economic well-being. The centre works in close cooperation with the other children’s centres to promote access to accredited adult training courses in literacy and numeracy and English as a second language. Approximately 64% of adults in the area have at least level 2 or 3 qualifications. However, currently only a small proportion of parents are involved in governance of the centre. Increasing this is a priority for development.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

<p>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</p>	<p>2</p>
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The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment	2

How good is the provision?

2

The centre has good procedures for registering users and ensuring services are closely matched to their needs. The quality and use of assessment to support all aspects of its work are good overall. The centre increasingly analyses its activities by their impact. This leads to more prolonged engagement by users with the centre and greater success. As a result, this has had a positive impact on more than doubling the proportion of families who use the centre over the last three years. Over 50% of families in the reach make use of the centre's services and the large majority of new births are now registered. The largest proportion of users are from the areas of highest deprivation and include those in vulnerable circumstances, lone parents and teen parents. A good proportion of fathers are registered with the centre and attend several courses such as the weekend 'Daddy and Me' and other courses offering practical parenting and other skills.

The support for childminding services is also of good quality and has led to consistently good and better outcomes in their own inspections and assessments. The centre's outreach services make good use of such facilities to support families with children who are subject to a child protection plan or through the Common Assessment Framework process. The needs of target groups are met well by the centre. For example, the views of a lone parent receiving support are typical, 'The difference has been huge. I feel so much more confident. They know my child's problems well and moderate what they do to accommodate them.'

The centre works well with partners across its reach area to meet its core purpose. There are good links with the school's within the reach area which contribute to children's smooth transition to full-time education, although the sharing of data is still developing. Referrals to outreach services come through these links and those with health visitors. The centre has established partnerships with employment agencies, psychological support and speech and language services which also contribute to the good outcomes users achieve. The strategic sharing of facilities and resources with the other children's centres also contributes to the effectiveness of provision through, for example, supporting teen parents in the area with close links to high school and further education provision.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The centre manager has established good relationships with staff, partner organisations and users. She has quickly built upon referral and accountability procedures to drive improvements. She is well supported by enthusiastic staff and outreach workers who share a common sense of purpose. There is a good commitment to training and professional development at all levels. The advisory board, which is representative of the partners and centre community, provides a good range of support and guidance. As a result, governance and accountability arrangements are effective although few parents are currently involved. Self-evaluation is good, although the centre has identified the need for more precise and local data to make the very best improvements. The centre staff work effectively with outreach and partnership services to provide a good range of services. Consequently, the centre provides good value for money.

User engagement is good. An increasing percentage of all target groups within the reach area, including disabled adults and children and those with special educational needs, engage with the centre's services thanks to the skill, enthusiasm and commitment of all staff.

Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and include the vetting of staff, volunteers and others who have unsupervised contact with children and vulnerable adults. All statutory requirements are met. Early intervention arrangements are effective, reflecting the positive partnerships with a wide range of agencies and services. Child protection procedures are thorough and well recorded. Training in many aspects of safeguarding, including the use of the Common Assessment Framework and paediatric first aid, are regularly updated by all staff.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. All members of staff demonstrate a good commitment to inclusion and to tackling any discrimination. Staff, including outreach, make sure that families are well informed through documents in their heritage language when required. Staff help to provide transport or target their resources to ensure all users have good access to the centre's provision. The promotion of a positive view of diversity is well established in many activities and evident in the centre's displays.

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	2
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	2

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

None

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the The Wooden House Children's Centre on 4–5 July 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank you for speaking to us and telling us about the difference the centre has made to you and your families. We heard how welcoming the centre is, and how all staff respond to your needs. We heard of the wide range of ways that the centre uses to help you and your family be healthy, such as 'Go Mama', 'Breast Friends', weaning classes and cookery sessions, and ideas for healthy food and snacks.

It is clear that the centre staff, the manager and partner organisations are trusted and provide good support that makes a difference to many families' lives. Many of you told us how much you and your children enjoyed 'Bubbles and Babies', play sessions, and music and rhyme groups at the centre. These activities are of good quality and support your children's learning and development, especially in helping them be more ready for school.

You told us you feel safe when using the centre, and we judged the centre to have good procedures to keep you and your children safe and secure at all times. You told us how useful the training sessions on safety have been and how they have helped give you confidence to let your children become more independent. There are good links with experts that can help in a wide range of issues, and the centre has been successful in getting them involved when families need additional support or advice.

You told us that many of you, including fathers, are involved in regular activities such as the baby massage sessions and 'weigh and play' sessions, and attend many good courses to help you develop your skills as a parent. We heard of the outreach support many families receive if they are in a crisis, and of the consistently good standard of help and advice for families including lone and teenage parents. We heard that staff are quick to help you when you have emotional difficulties and need extra support. You also told us that attending the activities the centre runs has helped you to meet new people and overcome feelings of isolation. As one parent said, reflecting the views of several of you, 'This centre provides a lifeline when you need it most.'

We found that the centre staff and managers are committed to improving the work they do and welcome the ideas and feedback from people using the centre. Many of you have made good suggestions through discussions with staff and the feedback on courses. This is very important and your views often lead to further improvements. Several of you have also been able to give time as volunteers and learned new skills in the process. You have taken a number of training courses in parenting, literacy and numeracy and other areas which help you into further employment. However, few of you are involved in the governance and decision-making through the advisory board or parents' forums and we have suggested the centre works towards developing this.

We judged the centre to be well led and managed and found that it is in a good position to continue to build on its many strengths. However, some of the centre's plans for future development are not based fully enough on local and precise data and we have recommended the centre works with its partners to improve this.

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