

Inspection report for Hampden Park Children's Centre

Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	386944
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the area coordinator and assistant area coordinator. They also met with staff, including early years teachers, midwives, health visitors, crèche workers, community development workers, a volunteer coordinator and the family learning coordinator. Inspectors attended a meeting of the centre's advisory group and met with parents and senior managers from the local authority.

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

Information about the centre

Hampden Park Children's Centre is situated at the centre of Hampden Park, to the north of Eastbourne town centre. The centre is located within a GP's practice and health visitors, midwives and a family nurse partnership share the same building. The Children's Integrated Therapy and Equipment Service also works from the building. This phase two children's centre was designated in 2008 but was not operational until 2010. The centre is managed by the local authority and meets its core purpose.

The centre's reach area covers Hampden Park ward and a small part of the Ratton ward. This area covers five Super Output Areas (SOAs). The local authority estimates that 540 children aged nought to four years old live in the area, including 250 children living in the two top 30% most deprived SOAs. The most recent data indicate that 24% of children live in households dependent on workless benefits. The percentage of families eligible for the childcare element of working tax credit is 17.5%.

Ninety per cent of families living in the area are from White British backgrounds. The other 10% of families are mainly from mixed heritage or white other backgrounds. Both Hampden Park and Ratton wards have a higher proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language than in East Sussex. Children's knowledge, skills and abilities on entry to early years provision are below the levels expected for their age.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

Hampden Park Children's Centre opened in 2010 and has successfully increased the percentage of children registered from 27% then to 64% in July 2012. Families who access the centre identify that the support they receive is often very effective. As one parent said, 'I was in crisis and the centre helped me to get an appropriate service and emotional support and basically change everything.' However, data show that only a small minority of children living in the top 20% most deprived areas accessed a service in 2011/12, which is well below the Eastbourne Children's Centre average of 56%. Data also show that not enough fathers, for example, are currently engaged with the centre.

Partnerships with health services are a highly effective feature of the centre's work and contribute to strongly improving health outcomes. Health visitors and midwives work closely with the centre to encourage families to attend services and have increased the rate at which mothers sustain breastfeeding through concerted and focused effort. Data show that the proportion of mothers sustaining breastfeeding at six to eight weeks has increased from a low base of 33% in 2009/10 to 42% in 2010/11. Over the same period, the percentage of obese children in Reception Year has fallen from 13% to 10.3%. However, underdeveloped outcome tracking processes make it difficult for the centre to clearly show evidence of its contribution to reducing obesity rates.

The proportion of children achieving 78+ points across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scales, including at least six points in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development, is well below the local and

national average. In addition, the gap between the 20% lowest achieving children and their peers increased between 2010 and 2011. However, the achievement of children who have attended the children's centre is much more positive than that of others of the same age. For example, in 2011 twice as many boys who had previously attended the children's centre achieved age-related expectations than others living in the reach catchment. The latest data from local schools indicate that this trend of improvement is continuing and achievement is therefore satisfactory.

Although data are collated and reported on by the local authority, its performance monitoring process, including the annual conversation, is not sufficiently robust to support leaders and managers in driving forward improvements. Leaders and managers do not always analyse information in the most effective way to show the impact of the centre's services, for example concerning the participation rates of target groups and the achievement of children. However, leaders and managers know the reach area well and have correctly identified an appropriate number of priorities which all staff understand and are committed to achieve. Business plans are in place and developing well. The centre's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

The Family Outreach Support (FOS) workers provide effective care, guidance and support to those families whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. The centre instigates the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes rigorously and works with partners to effectively support the most vulnerable families. However, the FOS team does not robustly track the impact of its interventions, but case studies show that interventions are effective with six month follow-up calls now taking place. Referrals to the FOS team come from a wide range of professionals, including health visitors and social care professionals, but links with schools are less well developed. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and ensure that children and parents are kept safe at the centre.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase registration and participation rates and specifically target community development work further to increase the participation of children, fathers and families living in the two most deprived SOAs.
- Work with early years providers to improve the achievement of children living in the reach area, specifically to:
 - increase the percentage of children achieving 78+ scale points including CLL and PSED in the reach area with a specific focus on boys and other groups of children at risk of underachievement
 - narrow the gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and their peers by targeting provision further at those most at risk of underachievement
 - track the achievement of children who have attended the children's centre through to the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The local authority should:

- further develop its children's centre performance management processes, including annual performance meetings, so that issues are identified early and the centre is effectively supported to drive forward improvements in outcomes
- provide further advice and guidance to enable the centre to effectively track the achievement of individual children who attend the centre and further develop activities and services to support early learning.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Parents who use the centre say that they feel safe and children are effectively safeguarded. Case files demonstrate this: Family Outreach Service (FOS) workers routinely offer advice on safety in the home including storing chemicals safely and removing knife blocks out of the reach of children. The centre's work is proving effective as reflected in the significantly reducing number of emergency hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries to children. The CAF process to initiate concerns has not always been used to harness multi-agency support quickly enough. The introduction of a 'Low Levels Concerns' process has improved the early identification of children and families who may require additional support to keep them safe and is a positive feature. Children who were subject to child protection procedures no longer require this level of intervention due to the effective support of the FOS workers.

Staff are effective at supporting families to lead healthier lives. As one parent said, 'I always go to market on Tuesday to buy fresh food to cook now, thanks to the help the centre gave me.' Another parent described how she had changed her shopping behaviour: 'Healthy packed lunches for my children are now the most expensive part of my shopping!' The 'Health Drop In', which takes place every Thursday, is well attended, and breastfeeding is promoted well. The forty-five minute long 'Music and Movement' session on a Tuesday promotes exercise and the centre is currently piloting walks in the park for families to help them keep fit.

The proportion of children achieving 78+ points across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scales, including at least six points in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development is well below the local and national average. In 2011 only 39% of children reached the level expected for their age, 8% fewer than in 2010. In the same period, the gap between the 20% lowest achieving children and their peers increased from 38.1% to 40.9%. However, the achievement of children who have attended the children's centre is much more positive than that of others of the same age. For example, in 2011 the proportion of boys reaching 78+ scale points was extremely low at 15.2% whereas twice as many boys who attended the children's centre achieved age-related expectations. The latest data from local schools indicate that this trend of improvement is continuing and achievement is therefore satisfactory, despite the previous declining trend seen in past data.

The centre does not routinely track the progress of adult learners well. However,

records maintained by FOS workers show that a small number of parents gained part-time employment in 2011/12. Case files also demonstrate that FOS workers effectively support families to improve their economic well-being, through advice and guidance on debt and benefits, for example. A relatively small but increasing number of parents volunteer at the centre, for example, helping to lead walks in the park or supporting in the crèche or activity groups. The introduction of 'priority pathways' for parents who are wishing to return to work and who want to undertake learning programmes is positive. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact of this approach. Parents are members of the centre's advisory group and inspectors observed five parents engage fully in decision making at a meeting with other partners. Useful contributions are made by parents during the recently organised 'forum' opportunities.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families.

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
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	3
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	3
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	3

How good is the provision?

3

Hampden Park Children's Centre is increasing its reach and provides particularly effective integrated health services. This health focus is clearly evident in the centre's activities and services. However, the percentages of parents from minority ethnic backgrounds and lone parents who access services are both falling, while the percentage of teenage parents registered is increasing. This mixed picture demonstrates that the centre has more to do to increase the registration and participation rates of some target groups and to widen their access to services. Staff deliver four activities per week at the centre and in 2011/12 the most popular event was the 'Health Drop In', which was attended by 95 different children in total. However, the range of activities delivered at the centre is fairly narrow, and staff state that they have struggled for 'over a year' to find appropriate accommodation to deliver services 'over the line', referring to the railway that splits the reach area into two. Nevertheless, what it does provide is of good quality and overall needs are being satisfactorily met.

The centre's increasing focus on early learning is beginning to have a demonstrable impact on the positive achievement of children. 'Little Diggers', run in partnership with another centre, is targeted at improving the achievement of boys in particular. The centre is ably supported by early years teachers who help staff to plan activities to maximise opportunities to improve communication, language and literacy. However, as the centre has been open for such a relatively short period of time it has not yet established a full partnership with other early years providers in order to track a cohort of children through to the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage to establish how effective this approach is.

Care, guidance and support are effective for those families who access the centre. A range of displays and leaflets are available for parents including advice on weaning, domestic violence and immunisations. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the Family Outreach Service: 'The service has been invaluable to me as well as being helpful and informative. Just having someone to talk to has helped me to address issues. I'm now much more able to cope and control situations and my family life has improved exceptionally due to this.' Families have been empowered by centre staff to improve their own circumstances through being given opportunities that help them to build a strong sense of self-worth and self-reliance.

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	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	3

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. Management processes ensure that all staff receive appropriate supervision and that services are well coordinated across Eastbourne town. Staff, at all levels, know their reach area well and are committed to improving the lives of children and families. Parents support the life and development of the centre through opportunities such as the 'parents' forum week'. Others are members of the centre's advisory group and engage fully in decision making at meetings with other partners. The centre uses its resources appropriately and has made sound progress in increasing registration rates and improving outcomes for families, particularly increasing breastfeeding rates and reducing obesity. Value for money is therefore satisfactory.

However, the local authority's performance management processes do not fully

support the centre's drive for speedy improvement. For example, minutes of the annual conversation show that the local authority does not evaluate the effectiveness of the centre or set challenging targets or support its continuous development. The local authority systems for recording attendance and outcomes are sophisticated and provide the centre with a strong foundation from which to develop and evaluate its performance more robustly. Its capacity for improvement is satisfactory.

Safeguarding arrangements are good and assisted by the good quality partnerships which ensure the effective dovetailing of services that keep parents healthy and safe. Recruitment processes, including Criminal Record Bureau checks, are robust and all staff undertake regular child protection training. The centre's 'Bumps and Bruises forms' and 'Low Level Concerns' recording system contribute effectively to the early identification of concerns and contribute well to keeping children safe. The centre has effective risk assessments in place. However, the health and safety subgroup of the advisory board correctly identified that recording systems should be strengthened to ensure that all staff are aware of these.

The centre promotes equalities well and is effective in its work to help narrow the achievement gap between the 20% lowest achieving children and their peers, especially boys. Families' achievements are celebrated and the introduction of 'priority pathways' for parents who are wishing to return to work and who want to undertake learning programmes is positive in breaking down barriers. The centre has correctly identified the need to engage with more minority ethnic groups, including those learning to speak English as an additional language.

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	3
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	3
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	3
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	3

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

Not applicable.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Hampden Park Children's Centre on 11–12 July 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We would like to thank those of you who met with us. Your views were very important in helping us to reach our judgements about the centre.

The centre has effectively increased the number of children and families registered with it since it opened in 2010, and for those families that access the centre the support they receive is sometimes very effective. As one of you told us, 'I was in crisis and the centre helped me to get an appropriate service and emotional support and basically change everything.' However, the data given to inspectors showed that only a small minority of children living in the top 20% most deprived areas accessed a service in 2011/12, which is well below the Eastbourne Children's Centre average of 56%. Data also show that too few fathers, for example, are currently engaged with the centre. We have therefore asked the centre to focus on improving the engagement of families in these areas and to encourage more dads to attend.

Partnerships with health services are a key feature of the centre and contribute to strongly improving health outcomes. We heard how health visitors and midwives work closely with the centre to encourage families to attend and have increased the rate at which mothers sustain breastfeeding. We also analysed data which showed that the proportion of mothers breastfeeding at six to eight weeks has increased from 33% in 2010/11 to 39% in 2011/12. This is a very positive trend. Over the same period, the percentage of obese children in Reception Year has fallen from 13% to 10.3%.

Children do not achieve as well as expected at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. There are large variations in outcomes for different target groups and boys. We have therefore asked the centre to focus on improving the achievement of all children and in particular boys.

Although data are collated and reported on by the local authority, its performance monitoring processes, including the annual meeting with the centre, are not sufficiently robust to support the centre's leaders and managers to drive improvements fast enough. Leaders and managers do not always analyse information in the most effective way to show the impact of the centre's services, for example around the participation rates of target groups and the achievement of children. However, leaders and managers know the reach area well and have correctly identified a number of priorities for the centre, which all staff know. We have therefore asked the local authority and the centre's leaders and managers to improve the way in which they use data so they know what works best and so can drive improvements faster.

The Family Outreach Support (FOS) workers provide effective care, guidance and support to those families whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. Between July 2011 and July 2012, the FOS team supported 27 families with a wide range of issues including housing and behaviour. Safeguarding arrangements are good and ensure that children and parents are safe at the centre.

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