

# Inspection report for Spangles Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	384194
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18–19 September 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Daniel Grant

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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	N/A
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Not applicable
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Spangles Creche EY411212

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 an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, members of staff and partner professionals from other agencies. Discussions were held with parents and service users and representatives from the local authority. Inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Spangles Children's Centre is a phase two centre which opened in March 2008 and fulfils the full core purpose of services. It is managed by Spurgeons on behalf of the local authority and is based in the same building as Stansted Youth Club. It provides services from the main centre and four other locations within the local area. The majority of children live in areas that fall within the 70% most deprived in the country, with pockets of greater deprivation. Much of the area served by the children's centre is rural.

A total of 1050 children aged under years five live within the reach area. The number of families with children known to be entitled to free school meals is low. Approximately 10% of the children live in households where no-one is working. A very large majority of families within the area served by the centre are of White British heritage. Most children typically enter early education with a range of skills, knowledge and abilities above those expected for their age.

The centre is open for 51 weeks of the year from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. Monday to Friday and every alternate Saturday for antenatal appointments. On the fourth Saturday of each month the centre opens for activities for fathers. The centre provides a wide range of supporting services, incorporating a crèche, outreach and home visiting, drop-in health support, parenting courses, volunteering opportunities and workshops. Governance arrangements have recently changed and the centre's

governance is now overseen by a community group made up of representatives from the local community, professional agencies and parents. The centre leader has responsibility for managing two other children's centres.

## 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

Spangles Children's Centre meets the needs of its users well. A very large majority of families in the area are registered with the centre. Attendance rates have remained high for the past two years because families recognise the advantages of getting involved in the broad range of good quality activities on offer. The experienced and well qualified staff team understand the needs of individuals and make use of this information skilfully and sensitively to improve outcomes.

The centre has an established track record of continually improving what it does and there is good capacity to improve further because leaders and staff understand what needs to be done to increase performance. The centre has recently reorganised its staffing structure and has an increased focus on ensuring that families with the greatest needs receive high quality support. The whole staff and leadership team are self-critical and constantly search for ways to do things better. The local authority provides the centre with detailed information and data about the population it serves, which it uses effectively to prioritise work and set targets which it evaluates.

Safeguarding arrangements are good. The centre gives high priority to ensuring families feel safe at the centre, at home and when out in the community. Staff have good knowledge and experience about safeguarding children, which they use effectively. Families who face the greatest challenges are very well supported because staff work very effectively with health partners and the local authority to meet their needs. The centre and its key partners work very well together to provide high quality services to families with children subject to child protection plans and use the Common Assessment Framework process effectively to support the most vulnerable.

Children are well prepared for school. Support for children with speech and language

development needs is well organised and very effective. Transition is supported effectively and the Early Years Foundation Stage profiles show steady improvement in outcomes over time. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and the rest is being narrowed successfully. However, the centre does not measure the effectiveness of its contribution to improving children's achievements because assessment arrangements are not fully effective.

Staff make sure that families visiting the centre enter a warm and inviting atmosphere, where they are welcomed and made comfortable. The centre has become very well established and has a positive reputation in the community for making a real difference to people's lives. Families who use the centre are empowered to make important decisions and changes which have significant, lasting benefits. The parents' forum is active and ensures that parents' views are heard and that they contribute to decision making at all levels.

A high priority is given to the promotion of families' health and well-being. Each activity is well planned to ensure outcomes for those using the centre are improved. The centre works very creatively to provide services in rural communities. They make very good use of village halls and a community play bus to ensure many families in rural isolation can engage and benefit from the centre's work.

Partnership arrangements are strong and effective with all key partners. The local authority and health partners use their expertise to ensure all services are thoroughly integrated and very well coordinated. Midwifery and health visitor clinics are held regularly at the centre. The centre provides a broad range of courses and programmes to stimulate further interest in child development and parenting. The centre provides very effective individual support to adults who express an interest in training and education but do not promote the availability of accredited qualifications such as English and mathematics well enough.

## What does the centre need to do to improve further?

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the assessment of children's knowledge, skills and abilities so that the centre has an accurate view of how well they achieve and can adjust provision accordingly.
- Improve the level of service offered to adults who may be interested in training and education through better promotion of the availability of accredited qualifications.

## How good are outcomes for families?

<b>2</b>
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The centre works very effectively with midwives and health visitors to ensure families receive immediate, professional advice on many issues including breastfeeding and weaning. Sustained breastfeeding rates are good and improving while the level of obesity is reducing. Both are closely monitored by staff and managers. Health

professionals promote the centre's services well and this ensures that all new parents are made aware of the support available and the full programme of events on offer.

Healthy lifestyles are promoted well at the centre in sessions such as 'Ready Steady Go' and rugby games where families learn the benefits of active play and movement. One parent told inspectors, 'I really enjoy coming to the centre because it motivates me and helps me think of new things to do with my daughter.' Staff provide parents with effective encouragement and guidance which helps them make important decisions about immunisations, exercise and diet. The centre uses local parks and lanes very well for organised activities such as nature walks.

The centre is a safe place and children behave in ways that are safe for themselves and each other. New parents receive good support at the 'First Time Around' group. This helps to build confidence and supports the development of their parenting skills. Many parents share concerns with staff and each other. The Common Assessment Framework is very well understood by the staff and used effectively. There are significant improvements to the quality of life for many families and particularly so for groups with circumstances that make them vulnerable. Looked after children and families with children subject to child protection plans receive good support and close monitoring. All target groups are served well by the centre. Attendance by lone parents, fathers, disabled children and families who have English as a second language is high and increasing.

Parents make good progress in their personal development, well-being and self-confidence. Children are helped to make positive first steps in learning through a range of well-planned activities and this helps prepare them well for a good start at school. Adult education and family learning sessions enable those who participate to make positive and significant improvements to their lives. Opportunities for volunteering at the centre are well structured and parents and other adults are able to gain very useful work experience. The number of adults in the area without formal academic qualifications is low. Staff provide useful advice to those who express an interest in improving their educational qualifications. However, the centre does not display materials to promote adult learning or to help parents make their next step in education or training.

Parents are well supported to express their views about how the centre is managed and are active in their work on both the community group and parents' forum. Parents who felt isolated within the community thrive at the centre and begin to demonstrate positive behaviour and develop positive relationships. One parent told us 'Staff from the centre visited me at home for a few weeks and then encouraged me to attend the centre. This made me realise what I had been missing. The centre has changed my life for the better. I have friends now and enjoy life much more.'

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy</b>	<b>2</b>
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<b>lifestyles</b>	
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How good is the provision?**

<b>2</b>
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The centre provides a wide range of services which it is reshaping to better match the changing needs of all users and particularly the needs of individuals and families facing the greatest challenges. The staff are very experienced and quickly establish effective relationships with families. The centre has well-integrated services which are effective in ensuring arrangements to monitor and promote good health and help children learn and develop are of high quality.

The centre works very effectively with health partners and the local authority to ensure services are focused on its priorities. The team at Spangles Children's Centre are creative in their work and have a 'can-do' attitude. They are well-regarded by those who use the centre because of their determination to recognise and understand users' needs and find realistic and practical solutions. Outreach work is well organised and effective. Families using the centre receive good care and the staff team and their partners provide personalised support which has good impact. Participation rates are very good and increasing and evaluations are very positive.

The centre and its partners assess needs well. This ensures the challenges faced by families or individuals can be approached sensitively and overcome wherever possible. Support is tailored well to meet individual need and family circumstances, and staff value families' evaluation and feedback which ensures services are continually improved. Families feel listened-to and can see the changes made as a result of feedback.

Staff are successful in engaging users, particularly those whose needs are greatest. They ensure that support is available and accessible. One parent identified: 'The centre has helped me to manage my child's feeding habits. They showed me what to do and how to deal with my own anxieties and concerns. The advice was very effective and we then joined a group of other families with similar problems. It is all dealt with now and we have moved on.'

The centre and its staff have a positive influence on the improvement of early years

services throughout the community. They work effectively in partnership with the childcare development worker to support childminders and other settings. They provide good support to develop sustainable voluntary community-led groups such as 'Birchanger Buddies.' There is a strong focus on improving children's knowledge, skills and abilities, although the centre does not yet have fully effective assessment arrangements to enable it to measure, analyse and review its contribution to children's early learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

### **How effective are the leadership and management?**

<b>2</b>
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Great care has been taken to ensure recent changes in the governance and accountability arrangements have been effectively implemented. Governance is through a newly formed community group which acts as the advisory board. Leadership of the group is very strong and highly visible. Parents have a good level of involvement in decision making through representation on the community group and parents' forum. This has ensured the centre remains committed and determined to improve outcomes for those who attend. The centre leader is supported well by senior colleagues and is very well-regarded especially for improving the quality of services. Strategic planning strongly reflects local and regional priorities and is heavily influenced by a determination to ensure everyone succeeds. The local authority provides good support to ensure the centre continues to improve.

The centre leader has a clear vision for how the centre is to develop. She makes sure everyone knows how well they are doing and what is to be done to improve. All staff and volunteers receive high quality training and support in their work. Professional supervision is used to ensure child protection and support services are of a high standard. The centre is performing well and is making good progress towards exceeding the majority of the key targets set for it by the local authority.

Staff and those they work in partnership with know the area and the communities well. This has enabled the centre to accurately target groups facing the greatest challenges and to secure their high levels of engagement. There is effective evaluation, careful analysis and self-challenge. The centre fulfils all of its statutory duties, has full support of the community and provides good value for money. The majority of partnerships have well established quality assurance and improvement initiatives which make sure they remain effective.



Safeguarding arrangements are well developed and very effective. The centre works in productive partnership with a range of agencies to protect children and vulnerable adults. All staff have been subject to a Criminal Records Bureau check and have good levels of awareness in child-protection procedures. They recognise the importance of early intervention and act quickly to engage other organisations to ensure children are well protected. Support and action to promote emotional health and well-being are good. Comprehensive procedures and guidance for safe recruitment are followed closely. In addition, staff provide good advice and access to expert help for those families experiencing domestic violence.

Everyone is made to feel very welcome at the centre. Equality and the inclusion of all children and their families are promoted effectively, particularly for children with disabilities. The centre supports community cohesion and celebrates cultural diversity by providing very well organised events where families learn about different lifestyles, values and heritage.

These are the grades for leadership and management

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>

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

Spangles Children Centre provide an occasional crèche to enable parents to attend family learning courses. Spangles Creche is registered on the voluntary childcare register and received a compliance visit from Ofsted in 2011. The crèche was found to comply with requirements.

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected Spangles Children's Centre on 18–19 September 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We enjoyed our visit to your centre and wish to thank those of you who helped us with our inspection work.

Throughout our visit the people we met were very enthusiastic in telling us how the centre had helped them. We really enjoyed speaking to you about what you have learnt at the centre and how it has changed what you do at home for the better. We were particularly impressed by the case studies that clearly show the difference that the centre is making, especially in helping you to live safe and healthy lives. For example, the centre is very good at helping new mothers who choose to breastfeed their babies to do so, and numbers are high.

The children's centre provides a good range of services which help children and families to learn, play together and have fun. The centre is working very closely with many organisations such as health, schools and social care professionals to improve the range of services that are available to you. Home visits are important for some of you who live in isolated rural areas and you told us how valuable these are.

We found the centre has many strengths, including the opportunities for so many of you to meet with health professionals and get expert help with matters like feeding and information about your child's development. We also saw how well the centre takes action to support you and your children's safety and well-being. The centre is very good at supporting families who face the greatest challenges. Some parents explained just how important the centre is in their family's lives. They told us that staff listen to them and help them to get the right help and support. This includes teenage parents and families with disabled people.

The centre is effective in encouraging you to help to run the centre, both as volunteers and through the parents' forum and community group. The centre also helps many people to make better choices about diet and exercise which has had a strong impact on improving lifestyles.

There is a wide range of interesting and challenging activities which help children get off to a good start in their learning and development. Well-planned activities help prepare them successfully for their trouble-free move to school. We recognise this as a strength but we have asked the centre to do more to assess carefully how well your children achieve and find ways to make provision even more effective.

The centre is a safe place for you to be. The parents we spoke to describe the centre as providing a safe and welcoming environment. They are confident that their children will be secure and well cared for. The centre leader has very strong procedures to make sure that staff and volunteers are well trained and suitable to work with you and your children. We found that the care, guidance and support provided for families are good.

The staff at the centre do all they can to make sure that families enjoy themselves and benefit from the courses and groups. The centre has shown that it is successful and has made big improvements to the lives of many people and will continue to improve. However, we have asked the centre to provide more information on courses for those of you who want to extend your education, particularly by undertaking accredited courses.

Thank you once again for sharing your views with us. We wish you and your families all the best for the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).