

# Inspection report for Hunstanton Children's Centre

---

<b>Local authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	383971
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 September 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Daniel Grant

<b>Centre leader</b>	Linda Baynham
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
<b>Centre address</b>	Avenue Road Hunstanton PE36 5BW
<b>Telephone number</b>	01485 534228
<b>Fax number</b>	01485 536175
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:linda.baynham@actionforchildren.org.uk">linda.baynham@actionforchildren.org.uk</a>

<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Not applicable
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Footprints EY417579

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.

---

**Report published:** October 2012



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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100080](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100080).

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

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

No.100080

© Crown copyright 2011



## 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 representatives from the local authority. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Hunstanton Children's Centre is a phase two centre which opened in February 2008 and fulfils the core purpose of services. It has been managed by Action for Children on behalf of the local authority since 1st July 2012; prior to this it was directly managed by the local authority. The centre is based in the same building as Footprints, the centre's linked nursery, and on the same site as Hunstanton Community Centre. It provides services from the main centre and through four other locations within the local area. The majority of children live in areas within the 70% most deprived in the country, with pockets of greater deprivation. Much of the area served by the centre is rural.

A total of 762 children aged under five years live within the area. The number of families with children who are known to be entitled to free school meals is low. Approximately 15% of the children in the area are living 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 years provision with a range of skills, knowledge and abilities above those expected for their age.

Services are available 48 weeks of the year from 8.30 a.m. until 6 p.m. Monday to Friday. The centre provides a wide range of supporting services, incorporating a crèche, outreach and home visiting, health clinics and support, parenting courses, volunteering opportunities and workshops. Governance of the centre is supported by

an advisory board made up of representatives from the local community, professional agencies and parents. The centre manager leads a team of one family support worker and a business support officer.

## 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

The overall effectiveness of the centre is satisfactory. Leadership of the centre changed very recently and there is already a sharp focus on improving engagement and increasing services. The centre is well-established in the community and leaders have a clear vision and understanding of the centre’s strengths. The centre’s performance is improving steadily in many areas and outcomes for the majority of families although currently satisfactory, are improving. The local authority provides the centre with useful data and information about the families in the area it serves, which the centre manager uses increasingly effectively, to prioritise work.

The centre has satisfactory capacity to improve because leaders know what has to be done and are determined to make progress. The self-evaluation process leads to the centre having an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. Appropriate arrangements are in place to gather the views of parents, staff and partners to help plan for improvements. Families’ views are listened to and they influence decision making at the centre. However, these arrangements are informal as the centre does not have a parents’ forum, and the role of parents on the advisory board is under-developed.

The number of families using the centre including those from targeted groups is satisfactory. However, the centre recognises the need to increase registrations and extend engagement so that more families can benefit from its services, especially those from the more isolated rural areas. Children behave well at the centre and develop positive relationships with each other and adults. Families attending the centre are encouraged to contribute positively to their community and the life of the centre. Outreach provision results in the satisfactory support for vulnerable families. Breastfeeding rates have declined significantly in the past year. The centre and its health partners have not yet established a robust and effective strategy to address

this.

Staff are experienced and have good skills and understanding about risks and how to safeguard children, which they use effectively to provide a safe and secure environment within the centre. Parents share their concerns with staff because they trust them and know that they will receive effective help. Families attending the centre develop a good understanding of dangers and how to keep themselves and each other safe. The centre and its key partners work well together to provide high quality services for families with children subject to child protection plans and use the Common Assessment Framework process effectively to support the most vulnerable.

Children are appropriately prepared for school by centre activities which they enjoy. The proportion reaching a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is above average. Parents engage in courses and groups that help them to understand and support their child's speech and language development. However, the opportunities and support available for parents seeking work, or wishing to undertake training or gain accredited qualifications are limited. Only a few parents have benefited from further learning opportunities. There is good specialist support for families from Citizens' Advice Bureau who provide valuable weekly advice sessions on debt and benefits entitlement.

Leadership and management of the centre are satisfactory. There are clear lines of accountability and staff understand the priorities for the centre. The advisory board provides useful support for the centre but is not yet fully involved in setting targets or providing sufficient challenge. The centre's new leadership team have identified the need to increase the number of family support staff to enable the centre to improve outcomes for more families from target groups.

Arrangements to ensure equality of opportunity and the promotion of diversity are satisfactory. Families with the greatest needs are prioritised for interventions and the centre uses its resources adequately to ensure support is provided at an early stage. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and the rest is being narrowed successfully. The increased engagement of targeted groups, such as children with disabilities, young parents, and fathers has rightly been identified by the centre as an area for improvement.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Increase registration and user participation through better promotion of the centre's provision, further integration of health services, extending outreach work, recruiting the full complement of staff, and by more precise identification and targeting of those most in need, including families who live in isolated areas.
- Increase breastfeeding rates and health outcomes through the effective development and implementation of a joint strategy with key health partners.

- Enhance users' economic well-being by ensuring Jobcentre Plus, adult education and other training organisations provide better information, support and opportunities for those interested in seeking paid work, training and education.
- Increase the effectiveness of decision making processes by, for example, establishing a parents' forum, and encouraging more parents to become active advisory board members.

## How good are outcomes for families?

<b>3</b>
----------

The centre is attractive, bright and welcoming, which encourages families to respond well to the wide range of activities relating to exercise and lifestyle, improving diet and development. Outcomes for the children and parents who use the centre are satisfactory overall. Many health outcomes are improving with obesity rates decreasing, teenage conception reducing significantly, and effective support to promote awareness of the benefits of immunisation and stopping smoking. However, the number of mothers commencing and continuing breastfeeding is decreasing and there is insufficient attention being given to prioritising improvement. Staff work effectively with the health visitor to conduct home visits for a few families who benefit from the service but regular health clinics held in the centre are not yet fully integrated with other activities.

Families engage with centre activities well because staff are supportive and build strong, trusting relationships with them. These relationships support the good work that is undertaken through the Common Assessment Framework process, those subject to child protection plans and looked after children. This support is highly valued by users. For example, one parent told the inspectors: 'I really needed a lot of support. My family is back together now because the staff helped me develop better awareness of my children's needs. I'm really looking forward to our first Christmas together.' Mothers experiencing post-natal depression and families in crisis receive effective support from the centre staff and partner professionals. Home visiting is used effectively to support a few of the families who face the greatest challenges. One parent told inspectors: 'I was completely isolated and didn't know what to do. My health visitor asked the family support worker to visit me. I met her the very next day and over a few weeks I began to feel more positively about things. Life is so much better now.'

Children and adults enjoy attending the centre and they feel safe. Arrangements to help keep children and families safe when accessing services at the centre are effective because staff have a good level of expertise and the building is secure. Staff encourage children to explore and understand risks and dangers through play experiences. Children respond well to the established routines and settle quickly because they have positive relationships with the adults. Children's behaviour in the centre is good. Support and action to promote families' emotional health and well-being are good, such as for those suffering from domestic violence.

Children benefit from the support they receive to improve their skills, knowledge and abilities as they prepare for school. The centre has correctly identified and focused attention on the need to help improve children's communication and language skills.

An above average 77% of children gained 78+ scale points across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. A range of activities including music and rhyme, story sacks and speech and language therapy are available and case studies indicate these improve children's learning and promote parenting skills. One parent commented: 'We really enjoy these sessions. My son likes to come to the centre early so that we can choose different books. We practice reading at home too.' The tracking of individual progress is at an early stage but emerging evidence shows that centre services enable children to have a positive start to school life. Data show the gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and the rest reducing over time. The services provided by Citizens' Advice Bureau result in a good number of families benefiting from advice about debts and benefits. However, opportunities for adults seeking to improve their educational qualifications, undertake training or find paid work, are limited and not promoted well enough.

Families are encouraged to contribute positively to their community and the life of the centre. For example, parents who attend sessions to improve their parenting skills benefit because the experience also helps to strengthen bonds with their children. Some parents who recognise they had little confidence and low self-esteem have developed greater self-assurance and improved their personal well-being due to the centre's interventions. Parents' involvement in decision-making and governance of the centre is under-developed.

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 lifestyles</b>	<b>3</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>3</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>3</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>3</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>3</b>

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

**3**

The quality of provision is satisfactory overall. The centre has an adequate understanding of the needs of the community but has been slow to increase the number of families registered and to target those most in need of support. The centre staff work very hard, and to their maximum capacity, but low staffing levels have prevented the centre from increasing its reach and securing good effectiveness. New leadership has already begun to tackle these issues.

Families using the centre receive satisfactory care, guidance and support. Staff assess the needs of families appropriately and plan individual support to ensure their needs are met. Systems for tracking progress are not yet fully established but this has been identified as a key priority by the new leadership team. Outreach provision for families facing challenges and those using health-related provision is satisfactory and improving. Opportunities for parents to extend their personal, social and parenting skills are satisfactory. However, support and guidance arrangements for those seeking to improve their education and find paid work remain under-developed. This was confirmed by one parent who stated, 'The centre would be improved if they had more time to help you join courses to get higher qualifications.'

Parents are actively engaged with a broad range of activities to help improve outcomes for their families, such as healthy eating, breastfeeding support and programmes to help deal with the effects of domestic violence. Parents have fun at the centre and engage in exciting activities, whilst building their confidence, relationships and parenting skills. Families from targeted groups are the focus of prioritised support and the needs of those who use the centre's services are adequately met. One parent commented: 'All of the staff at the centre understand how to help you. I'm much more confident from attending the sessions and know that I'm a better parent because of their support.'

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

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

**3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The newly formed centre leadership team is focused on improvement, staff are supportive of the recent changes and morale is high. The centre has the confidence of partners and the local community. Key priorities have been identified by the centre, including the need to: increase staffing; promote the benefits of the centre to increase registration; target more accurately those facing the greatest challenges; and, improve arrangements for parents to be involved in decision making processes.

Arrangements for governance and accountability of the centre are satisfactory. In the past year the centre has made reasonable progress towards achieving the majority of targets set by the local authority. The local authority provides the centre with effective support and good data and information about families in the area it serves. The centre has been slow to fully assess local needs and to identify target groups so



as to increase the number of families registering with the centre. However, data are now being used more robustly to establish specific targets for improvement.

The centre has a very well-established and supportive advisory board but membership and involvement from parents is low. The centre provides satisfactory value for money because it uses its resources appropriately to meet the needs of an increasing number of families who use its provision. Partnerships are appropriately in place with a range of key organisations including health, social care, childminders and voluntary and private sector organisations. These ensure that the centre meets its core purpose. Outreach provision results in the satisfactory support for the most vulnerable families. However, not all health services are yet fully integrated with centre-led services.

The centre gives a warm and friendly welcome to families and promotes equality satisfactorily. For example, activities involve the celebration of different cultures and beliefs, such as Chinese New Year. Discrimination, where it occurs, is dealt with promptly and effectively. The centre is committed to inclusion and removing barriers, including those faced by users with the greatest needs. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and the rest is being narrowed successfully.

The centre manager and her new leadership team have introduced effective arrangements to ensure all safeguarding requirements are met and result in centre users being well protected. Staff receive good training, have good levels of awareness and know what to do if action needs to be taken. Staff have ready access to expert advice on safeguarding and protecting children. Arrangements for staff vetting comply with requirements.

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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>3</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>3</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>3</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>3</b>

<p><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></p>	<p><b>3</b></p>
--	-----------------

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

The findings from the inspection in July 2011 of the centre’s linked nursery, Footprints, have been taken into account.

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](http://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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

### **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Hunstanton Children's Centre on 25–26 September 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

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

The centre is a bright and attractive place that you told us provides a warm welcome. It is a safe place for you and your children. Staff have lots of experience and skills to make sure your time there is well spent and are effective in providing specific support for individuals when they need it. The services provided, for example by the Citizens’ Advice Bureau, are benefiting many of you and helping you to overcome the problems you are facing.

There is an interesting variety of sessions and activities organised at the centre which an increasing number of local families are using. We have recognised that the number of mothers in the Hunstanton area who choose to breastfeed their babies is currently too low. We have asked the centre to find ways of promoting the benefits of breastfeeding and providing more support for those of you who choose to breastfeed your babies.

We found the staff to be committed and keen to support your children’s learning and development and to help some of you become more confident parents. The centre’s work has a positive impact on helping your children get ready for school. The children we saw enjoyed what they were doing during activities. It is really good to see how well young children, including the most vulnerable, achieve by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The staff are determined to become even better at supporting families with the greatest needs. They want more families to join the centre so that they can benefit too. We have asked the centre leader to tell more people about what the centre

offers and to encourage more families to use it. We have asked the centre leader to make sure there is enough staff to do this. The increased engagement of targeted groups, such as children with disabilities, young parents, and fathers has been identified as an area for improvement.

Appropriate partnerships have been built with other professionals and organisations to ensure you have full access to a range of support and guidance that help keep your families healthy and safe. Good effort has been placed on increasing your children's learning and development through many interesting and exciting activities. However, we think the centre and its partners do not provide enough opportunities for adults who want help in finding work, undertake training or enhance their education.

The new leadership team are working well together to set the right priorities to take the centre forward. The centre has an active and supportive advisory board and we have asked the leadership team and the advisory board to work even more effectively together to make sure the centre gets even better. We have also asked them to find ways of encouraging more of you to join the advisory board and to set up a parents' forum so that you have a greater say in how the centre is run.

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