

# Inspection report for Greenfields Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	383943
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 October 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Christine Field

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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Not applicable
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Asquith Nursery: EY302109

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 centre manager, locality coordinator, community involvement workers, a range of partners including health, Jobcentre Plus and social work professionals, advisory board and steering group members, local authority representatives, and parents. They also observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the self-evaluation form and action plan.

## Information about the centre

The centre was designated as a phase 2 centre in 2008 and opened in December 2009. It is located in the grounds of Greenfields Primary School and is open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 5.00pm all year. The centre delivers a range of services that meet the full core purpose including a fortnightly Saturday club, Dad's Den, and outreach services at various locations. These include services provided at The Hut specifically for families who live in Tovil, located in the furthest corner of the reach area. The centre has recently begun to deliver services on an army base located in its area.

There are 1,177 children under five-years-old living in the reach area, of which 13% live in workless households. Some 12% of families take up the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. The majority of families living within the reach area are from White British backgrounds, with a growing number of families from a wide range of different minority ethnic groups. Some families and children are at an early stage of learning to speak English. Most families live in housing association accommodation. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities when they enter early years provision are typically below the level expected for their age.

The day-to-day management of the centre is the responsibility of the full-time centre manager who also manages two other children’s centres. The centre’s work is overseen by an advisory board comprising a range of partners that also provide governance for the nine children centres in Maidstone. A steering group has been established to both support and challenge the work of Greenfield and the other two children centres that form a local network.

## 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

The good effectiveness of the centre in meeting the needs of the community it serves results in good, and improving, outcomes. Since it opened three years ago, the centre has become the hub of the community and provides families with a place in which they feel valued and safe. The centre is engaging with the large majority of families, including the most vulnerable from different target groups, and is increasingly extending its influence to the furthest reaches of its area by providing specific services which are matched to need, for example to army families and families living two bus journeys away from the centre.

Well-coordinated interventions are helping families to live safer and healthier lives. Partnership work is exceptionally strong and so families benefit from services that are fully integrated and tailored to meet specific needs. Data are shared to keep everyone in the loop. However, the absence of information about new births in the area impedes the centre’s priority to ensure its provision is precisely planned to meet all future needs. The positive impact of the centre’s partnership work is reflected in the success it has had in the key performance indicators of reducing accident rates, increasing breastfeeding rates and reducing obesity levels in Reception-age children, which at 7.4% is below the national average of 9.4%.

The safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults is given high priority. The centre is directly involved in supporting every child subject to a child protection plan in its area and making sure they are well protected. There is compelling evidence in case studies to show that family support work is particularly effective in helping families

through times of personal crisis. One parent told inspectors, 'Without the centre I do not know where I might have ended up, the staff are always there for me when I need them most.'

Good learning and development opportunities strongly support the good achievement of children and adults. Over a third of adults are involved in programmes that improve their life skills or extend their education. The centre tracks children's progress closely but has yet to develop similarly effective systems that enable it to track how well adults who attend further learning make progress, especially those from workless homes.

The centre promotes equalities very effectively and families from diverse backgrounds get on very well together, make new friends and enjoy attending activities. The centre's work to help narrow the achievement gap is proving successful. At 24.7%, the gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children living in the area and the rest is much narrower than seen nationally. Parents play a positive role in helping shape centre services, for example through their survey responses and post-activity evaluations. The work of the Have your Say group is enabling families to be fully involved in the life and development of the centre alongside their growing involvement in centre governance.

Good leadership, management and governance are driving a good pace of improvement based on accurate knowledge of the community, effective quality assurance systems and a sensible number of priorities which underpin the centre's good capacity to sustain improvement. Nevertheless, in going forward the centre acknowledges that its improvement planning process could be further strengthened by ensuring that all targets pinpoint exactly what impact is expected from the actions being taken to bring improvement.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Extend the good partnership with health services by ensuring that regular information about new births in the reach area is made available so that the centre can plan future provision more precisely.
- Sharpen action planning and monitoring by including priority targets that can be measured for impact at key intervals over the life of the plan and re-adjusted in the light of findings.
- Track how well adults who attend further learning make progress, especially those from workless homes, to ensure that experiences are enhancing their employability.

## **How good are outcomes for families?**

<b>2</b>
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Outcomes are good for families using the centre because of highly successful partnerships that result in joined-up services and because the centre works

effectively to shape its provision to meet local needs.

The centre has a strong focus on encouraging physical activity, for example by organising buggy walks and nature walks led by volunteers. Free bread, milk, fruit and vegetables provided by a local charity are available for families to take home after the Family Day session, and parents say how much this helps tight budgets go further in preparing nutritious meals. Joint work with health professionals, such as baby clinics and breastfeeding drop-ins held in the centre, is proving effective in improving sustained breastfeeding rates, which are rising. Families have a good awareness of how to lead healthy lives because of the centre's interventions and a large majority engage well with health services. The centre responds swiftly to local health concerns, such as increasing mental health problems, with positive outcomes for families.

Families have extremely high levels of confidence and trust in staff. 'They always offer a warm welcome and provide a safe and relaxed place that families feel comfortable in using' is a typical view. The individual and often complex needs and concerns of the families are swiftly identified through the use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and increasingly the Team Around the Family (TAF) processes which involve highly effective partnership work and result in a closely knit structure of support for the most vulnerable families. Consequently, there have been significantly improved outcomes for children, including those who are looked after, and those who are subject to child protection plans. Families' understanding of how to keep themselves and their children safe are enhanced by their participation in structured parenting programmes and Nappichino's, a group specifically for young parents. The centre's very supportive work with those suffering from domestic violence does much to empower the victims to take control and get their lives on track.

Children's good enjoyment and achievement are supported by well-planned learning experiences and the centre's purposeful partnerships with early years providers and schools. Activities such as Stickyfingers are much enjoyed as children get their passport stamped when they 'travel' to, and learn about, the lifestyle and culture of different countries around the world whilst creating their own works of art. Monster Music, held at the army base and at The Hut, is hugely popular. Children sing songs, make the actions to the words, play instruments and move to the beat with real enjoyment. At 70.28% the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is above average and, at 24.7%, the gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest is closing rapidly.

Adults learning to speak English as an additional language benefit from English language classes and thoroughly enjoy the opportunity to make new friends. Parenting skills are well supported. Parents say that their confidence and self-belief are nurtured positively because of the centre's well-timed interventions. Regular sessions run by Jobcentre Plus and Citizens Advice Bureau staff have resulted in families benefiting from advice about training and pathways to work. The centre's successful volunteering programme helps adults build good workplace skills, with a

few completing advanced qualifications and securing paid work. Although the centre has a good idea of how adults get on when they signpost them to courses, there is no formal tracking of their achievements and this is a missed opportunity to see what the impact is on their economic well-being, particularly those from workless homes.

Parents say that they are confident to put forward their views and someone always listens to their suggestions. Parents and children write their ideas down on 'What would you like' boards, with recent suggestions including more musical activities, afternoon buggy walks and dads' football please! The chair of the revitalised Have your Say parents' forum sits on the steering group and this is enabling families to have a growing involvement in centre governance.

*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>2</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's good provision meets the needs of most local families well and the large majority, including parents and children from all target groups, participate in activities regularly. Robust assessments and extremely effective partnership work help families most in need of support to overcome personal difficulties and get back on their feet. Information is shared regularly between partners to keep everyone up to speed. However, the absence of information about new births in the area impedes the centre's priority to ensure its provision is precisely planned to meet not only current but also all future needs.

Good learning and development opportunities result in the good achievement of children and adults. The centre's enabling environment supports the learning interests, needs and differing skills of individual children well, particularly during Stay and Play and crèche sessions, when staff work one to one to help children move on with their learning. The use of learning journals is a positive feature in keeping a check on how well children are doing. The centre's good provision effectively meets

adults' personal and social needs, as well as extending work-readiness skills and the prospects of employment. However, the centre is not keeping a close enough check on progress rates and destinations. Personal achievement is recognised and celebrated to good effect, for example the wonderful 'under the sea' painting created by the children with an artist in residence is displayed for all to enjoy.

Care, guidance and support are good, with very effective outreach work supporting families who are most in need. Parents identify that staff undertaking home visits are highly skilled in helping them get back on track, particularly in times of crisis. One mother with a child with special needs told inspectors, 'I have never felt embarrassed or judged, our family is accepted by everyone and we have benefited greatly from the staff's support.' The coordination of services between partners and free flow of information are further strengths that result in 'the left hand knowing what the right hand is doing' and enable a tailor-made service to be delivered that has good impact on improving family life.

*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?**

**2**

Leadership, management and governance are good and are the driving force behind the centre's good provision, good and improving outcomes and good overall effectiveness. Outstanding partnerships have been forged that result in good information sharing and effective services that assist the large majority of local families in improving their lives.

Governance and accountability arrangements are clear and staff supervision is effective. Self-evaluation processes are inclusive. The centre manager, staff and members of the advisory board, steering group and parents' forum work cooperatively to identify strengths and weaknesses and target development. The action plan is a well-conceived tool to assist in this; however, not all targets are precise enough to enable the impact of actions being taken to be fully evaluated. Regular monitoring by the locality manager of the centre's core priorities ensures robust accountability. This has helped the good pace of improvement evident as the centre has established itself successfully as the focal point in an area with no previous integrated early childhood services.



Safeguarding is given high priority and the strong cooperation amongst partners ensures that families most at risk are well protected. Families are effectively made aware of how to keep safe and the referral system that alerts the centre about cases of particular vulnerability is very securely in place. Information sharing protocols are highly successful and ensure that the CAF process is used consistently to aid assessments. The work to support children subject to a child protection plan is also highly effective in meeting their needs and keeping them safe.

Outstanding partnerships make a significantly positive contribution to the good quality of services that meet local needs well and, increasingly, the needs of families living some distance from the centre. Parents enjoy attending the centre and benefit from well-planned activities that respond effectively to their needs. The Dad's Den group is going from strength to strength. A recent football match between dads and the police team was very well supported by families who also shared the post-match lunch. The activities programme is reviewed regularly in response to staff evaluations and parent suggestions. Changes are made as appropriate, for example to the timings of sessions.

Parents play an important role in centre decision making including governance. The centre's inclusive approaches result in families from diverse backgrounds enjoying being together in each other's company in the centre. Equalities are fully promoted, as reflected in the good achievement of children and adults. A zero approach is taken to any form of discrimination, with the centre's expectations for behaviour promoted in a user-friendly fashion in the 'golden rules' displayed in the centre. The centre is an attractive place with good-quality resources that families enjoy using. Given the current level of engagement, and overall good outcomes, value for money is good.

*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>1</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>2</b></p>
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## **Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection**

Not applicable

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected Greenfields Children’s Centre on 3 and 4 October 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We talked with some of you, your children, staff, and a wide range of partners, steering group, advisory board and local authority representatives linked to the centre. We looked at evaluations of the centre’s work and a range of documents and very much enjoyed chatting to you during activities. Well-planned activities strongly support your children’s first steps to learning. It was lovely seeing you having fun with your children as they painted, sang songs or won a sticker for being able to balance so skilfully on the beam! Partners in the area are working really hard to make sure your children have the best start in life. Their endeavours are resulting in good outcomes which you told us a lot about. Thank you very much for your contribution to the inspection.

The centre is doing a good job of meeting the needs of your community. Since it opened three years ago it has become the focal point and provides families with a place in which you told us you feel valued and safe. It is good to see that the centre is extending its services to pockets of the area where transport makes attending the centre difficult, for example families from Tovil. The staff are keen to make sure even more families attend so if you know anyone who would benefit from its services please tell them about the centre.

The good range of activities and well-coordinated services help you to live safer and healthier lives. Partnership work, particularly with health services, is exceptionally strong. This means you benefit from support that is specifically tailored to meet your needs. The centre makes good use of the data available to plan services. However, it does not get regular information about new births in the area. This means it cannot plan for future needs and we have asked for this to be made available where possible.

The safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults is given high priority and you told us that you feel well protected when you use the centre. One parent said, 'Without the centre I do not know where I might have ended up, the staff are always there for me when I need them most.' This view sums up what many of you told us.

Good learning and development opportunities support your good achievement. The English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) class, which took place during the inspection, is one example of how well the centre is trying to help you improve your skills and how valuable you told us you find such experiences. Over a third of adults are getting involved in programmes that improve their life skills or extend their education and this is great. However, the centre is not yet tracking how well everyone is getting on and we have asked them to look at this and to check if you need any further help, especially those who are currently looking to get back into work.

Parents and centre users such as childminders and grandparents play a positive role in helping shape centre services, for example through their survey responses and post-activity evaluations. The work of the Have your Say group is enabling an increasing number of families to be involved in centre governance and we hope the coffee morning you have planned to develop your programme attracts lots of interest.

Good leadership, management and governance are driving a good pace of improvement based on an accurate knowledge of your community, close checks on how things are going and a sensible number of priorities which underpin the centre's good capacity to continue to improve. However, to improve even more we have asked the centre to make sure that that they can measure the impact of all the targets in its action plan.

We thoroughly enjoyed our time at the centre and would like to send you our very best wishes for the future.

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