

Inspection report for High Suffolk Children's Centre

Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	383959
Inspection dates	24–25 October 2012
Reporting inspector	Steve Nelson

Centre leader	Fran Bishop
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Gracechurch Street Debenham Suffolk IP14 6BL
Telephone number	01728 862900
Fax number	01728 860723
Email address	fran.bishop@suffolkcc.gov.uk

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.

Report published: November 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.

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/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at 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
W: 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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, the centre manager and members of the advisory board/governing body. They met with a number of representatives of services who work with the children's centre, including health visitors and outreach workers. Inspectors spoke to groups of parents. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the centre's self-evaluation form, development plan, users' evaluations and case study information.

Information about the centre

High Suffolk Children's Centre is a phase two children's centre. It operates from one site in the Debenham ward which is amongst the 70% most socially and economically deprived in the country.

The centre manager is responsible for the day-to-day running of the centre. The local authority funds the centre. The advisory board/ governing body consists of representatives from partner organisations and key stakeholders that work with the children's centre, the local authority and parents.

The children's centre has 944 children under five years old living in its reach area. The majority of the families who use the centre are from White British backgrounds. About 8% of children and adults who use the centre come from homes that are dependent on benefits and where no-one is in work. When they start early years provision, the majority of children have skills, knowledge and abilities that are in line with those expected for their age.

The centre fulfils its core purpose by offering a range of activities, which includes the local weigh-in clinic, breast-feeding support and baby massage. The centre has links with health visitors, community midwives and a range of voluntary agencies such as

Leeway and Homestart. It signposts families to a range of providers that offer adult education, volunteering opportunities, and activities designed to support parents and carers back into employment and training. The centre opens 52 weeks each year on weekdays from 8.45am until 5.20pm. The centre also offers some activities out of hours and at weekends.

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

High Suffolk Children’s Centre meets the needs of its community well and delivers good provision. Overall outcomes for parents, children and users, including the most vulnerable, are good. Parents feel comfortable in the centre and know they will get a warm welcome from the staff. These are two examples of what families told inspectors about the centre: ‘It’s such a lovely place, I don’t know what I would do without it,’ and ‘The centre is a great place to come to talk to someone if you’re are having a down day’.

Working with health practitioners, the centre helps to secure good health outcomes. Baby clinics run by health visitors are well attended, and families get ready access to specialist speech and language services following early identification of children’s developmental difficulties. Family learning about healthy lifestyles is good. For example, the breastfeeding ‘Baby Café’ has produced a consistent increase in breastfeeding rates at six to eight weeks that are above the local average.

The centre staff have a clear sense of drive and passion and a good understanding of the challenges they face in the area they serve. As a result, families are supported well. Partnerships with the local community and other agencies are effective. Regular partnership meetings are arranged, which ensure services are well integrated to deliver coordinated provision for families that impacts positively on their lives. The free of charge Family Swimming Session, at the local swimming pool is well received and attended by families on Sundays.

The centre promotes purposeful learning well and as a result families using the

centre are improving their economic stability and independence well. Increasing numbers are engaged in training and adult learning. However, within otherwise good provision there are not enough opportunities for adults to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Because assessment of children's starting points in their learning and development is not clear enough, it makes it hard to measure their progress and target resources to further improve their skills.

Effective safeguarding arrangements are given high priority and embedded well into the centre's practice. Staff have a good awareness about child protection matters through regular training and updates provided. The centre promotes an inclusive approach to children and their parents. The use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) demonstrates the strength in partnerships particularly well, as there is complete integration of services to meet individual or family support needs.

The centre refines its programme continually. Parents contribute routinely to evaluation of the centre's work. The centre's self-evaluation is accurate and it is used to inform the setting of ambitious targets. As a result managers and the advisory board understand what they need to do to improve the centre, and their development plans are well founded on the available information. Based on the good and improving outcomes secured and effective involvement of partners, the centre has good capacity to improve outcomes further.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- With training partners provide further opportunities for more adults to develop their literacy and numeracy skills so that they are able to achieve to the full.
- Improve the assessment of children's starting points, by making sure they are linked to the Early Years Foundation guidance, in order to more accurately measure and increase their progress.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Health outcomes for children and families in the area are good. Breastfeeding rates are increasing and are above the local average. The obesity rates amongst reception-age children are lower than the average for the area. The centre has been successful in reducing smoking cessation rates by fifty per cent in the last year amongst pregnant mothers. Families develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy through attending the well-promoted activities provided by the centre. One parent commented, 'The massage and yoga have really helped me to build a bond with my son and make friends.' The regular buggy walks are successful in encouraging young and teenage mothers to use the centre's services.

Children develop the skills that will help them in the future due to the centre's good provision. The centre is taking effective action to identify and narrow the

achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the rest. Services offered by the centre are popular and groups have high levels of attendance. The songs such as the 'Weather Song' sung in the weekly 'Jump and Jiggle' group sessions, are highly enjoyable and develop children's listening and speaking skills effectively. Children are well prepared for transfer to nursery. Families using the centre develop their skills, including their parenting skills, well and demonstrate good personal, social and educational development because of the centre's well-timed interventions.

The extent to which children engage in safe behaviour and develop positive relationships is good. For example, toddlers willingly share toys and older children are calm, polite and well mannered. The centre is good at making sure families and children keep themselves safe and free from harm. A parent who completed the First Aid course said, 'I have a greater understanding about safety at home and know what to do in an emergency.' Case studies show good impact and improved well-being and welfare for children on child protection plans. Effective working with partner agencies ensures that families who may be at risk of harm and children assessed under the Common Assessment Framework, including looked after children, are closely monitored and kept safe.

Families make positive contributions to the life and development of the centre. Parents including those from priority groups such as lone parents are well represented on the Advisory Board. They help plan new services such as the outreach 'Worlingworth Family Group' stay and play sessions. Children's behaviour is good and they form positive relationships within the centre. The centre's role in the life of the community is good. It has participated and provided activities at a range of local events, such as the Harvest festival. Training and both formal and informal education programmes for parents have improved their self-confidence and work-readiness. Thirty parents have progressed on to paid work in the last year. The centre provides good opportunities for adults to develop their computing skills. However, opportunities for families to improve their literacy and numeracy skills are underdeveloped. Sixty families have benefitted from financial advice. Information on child and working tax credits, as well as help provided to the increasing housing needs of families, is effective in improving their economic stability.

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	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups,	2

contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment	2

How good is the provision?

2

There is a good range of services offered by the centre that meet the needs of local families. Staff have a good understanding of the community they serve. They provide good quality assessments that ensure the needs of individual families, including those who are most vulnerable, disabled children and those with special educational needs are well met. Strategies have been developed successfully to meet the needs of priority groups, including fathers and teenage and young parents groups. For example, the centre's Young Parents' Family group is effective and provides a good range of training programmes, such as animal care and customer service that improve their employability skills.

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage at the centre is good. Children behave well and follow staff instructions. They are provided with a good range of activities and learning opportunities from birth onwards that effectively support their development. Good quality resources that are age-appropriate and interesting activities encourage children's engagement well. However, the centre does not have a current system to assess and measure children's progress against the developmental stages in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The centre is particularly good at recognising families' personal development and achievements through 'Wow board' celebrations. A parent who attends the Parents and Toddlers groups said, 'It's a lovely, bright, colourful, stimulating environment for my daughter.' More parents are attending courses provided by the adult education department, improving their self-esteem and life skills.

Care, guidance and support arrangements are effective. Good tailored support improves families' well-being effectively. Families express high levels of satisfaction with the level of care, guidance and support offered by centre. They report that their lives are better for having had the help they needed, particularly at low points in their lives. For example, being given food parcels and supported with heating oil. The centre works well with the specialist family support services for vulnerable children and their families to ensure their particular needs are met. Good quality information, advice and guidance mean families are signposted effectively to the appropriate support services.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The centre manager has a well-conceived strategic vision and leads and manages the centre effectively on a day-to-day basis. Governance arrangements are well understood and effective in holding the centre to account. The advisory board monitors performance, reviews progress and contributes to future planning effectively. Formal service level agreements are in place for commissioned services and are carefully monitored. Managers and staff are enthusiastic, motivated and committed to improvement.

All staff are involved in the self-evaluation process that results in an accurate review, which with strong local knowledge and clear target setting underpins the centre's good capacity for improvement. Senior leaders' and managers' work is well focused on a clearly identified set of priorities to take the centre forward. The centre promotes the inclusion of children and their families well. Good strategies have improved engagement and outcomes for some priority groups such as disabled children and those with special educational needs. The centre has contributed effectively to narrowing of the achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children in the area and the rest in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The centre's arrangements for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults are good and staff are well trained. The highest priority is given to safeguarding and all policies and procedures meet requirements and are consistently implemented. Effective risk assessment procedures are followed and there are good recruitment and vetting procedures for staff. Criminal Record Bureau checks are recorded accurately and well maintained. The centre is proactive and collaborates effectively with other key agencies to reduce the risk of harm to children. Families experiencing crisis, including domestic violence, are provided with a place of safety and centre staff are instrumental in ensuring they access appropriate services swiftly.

Partnership working is excellent and a key strength of the centre. Statutory and voluntary organisations such as Homestart work very closely together to ensure that a coherent, supportive and developmental programme meet the needs of the community. Outreach services are improving and targeting identified needs in the wider community. The centre's impact on the community results in consistently improving outcomes and its good-quality provision engages the majority of families. Resources are managed efficiently and the centre provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

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

None.

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. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the High Suffolk Children's Centre on 24–25 October 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We are very grateful to all the parents, carers and representatives from the centre and the professional partners who took the trouble to come and tell us about the work they do. You gave us a positive picture of the centre, and what you said was very useful in making our final judgments.

We were delighted to hear how helpful and friendly you find all of the staff. Like you, we were greeted with a warm welcome when we arrived and found the staff very

communicative and helpful. The centre promotes equality and diversity well. Everyone is included, treated with the utmost respect and able to access all the services the centre provides. We gathered evidence to confirm that you are very satisfied with the service you receive.

We are pleased to tell you that the centre provides good support to you and your families. The centre does some things particularly well such as the way everyone works together to make things better for you, and the way you are encouraged to keep safe and make a contribution to the centre and your own community. You told us that your children are well cared for and that you are supported very well and we agree with you. We are pleased to hear that more of you are coming to the centre and making new friends and getting involved.

We were delighted to see that the centre is making a real difference to improving your lives and to hear how much more confident you are as parents. You told us about the friends you have made through the centre's activities and outings. It was very encouraging to hear that many of you feel less isolated in the community by coming to the centre and getting involved. We are also very pleased to hear that some of you have been helped to undertake training to get you back into work.

Your children's behaviour at the centre is good. Many of you find the healthy eating and keep-fit activities really interesting and enjoyable. You told us they help you and your children learn about how to stay healthy. We found that children have fun and enjoy the many activities the centre offers. You enjoy sessions such as 'Baby Yoga', 'Explore and More' and 'Stay and Play' with your children. Good quality sessions are organised for you to improve your parenting skills and for your children to develop the basic skills they need for the next stage in their learning. This means that you gain more confidence and expertise and your children are well prepared to start nursery school.

We have found a few areas that require improvement and the centre's management are already aware of these. We are recommending that they increase opportunities to help some of you develop your basic skills in literacy and numeracy. We have also recommended that the centre make more accurate assessments of children's starting points to help increase the progress they make in developing new skills.

We wish you every success for the future.

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