

Inspection report for Horley Community Sure Start Children's Centre

Local authority	Surrey County Council
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Meath Green Infant School URN 125083
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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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 and staff, representatives from the local authority, and the advisory board. They also spoke to partner representatives from health and family support agencies, parents and other users of the centre.

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

Information about the centre

This phase two part-time centre was fully designated in October 2009. It delivers a range of services and meets the full core purpose. It is located in the grounds of Meath Green Infant School. The headteacher is the line manager for the centre manager who is responsible for its day-to-day running. The school's governing body manages the centre on behalf of the local authority. A local advisory board is in place responsible for the centre's strategic management. The centre is open from 9.00am until 3.00pm Monday to Thursday, and on occasional Saturdays and evenings, for 48 weeks of the year. Services are also delivered throughout the community from Manorfield School, Horley Young People's Centre and Empire Hall.

The centre is located in a semi-affluent social economic area in a catchment area that comprises Horley Central and Horley West wards. There are nine Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the reach area, with one 30% most disadvantaged area (the Court Lodge estate) with an Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) rating of 22%. Overall, in the reach area, 16% of children under five live in households dependent on workless benefits, but this rises to 38% in the most disadvantaged area which is well above the national average of 21%; 16% of eligible families benefit from the childcare element of Working Tax Credit, slightly below the national figure.

The area is not ethnically diverse with only 16% of the total reach population coming from ethnic minority groups, although this is an increase of 5% within the last year.

Following a major re-organisation of the children's centres' reach areas in April 2011, this centre technically lost half of its registrations with families transferred to the Windmill Children's Centre reach area. However, because two large estates were still geographically closer to Horley Children's Centre, families continue attend there although are not counted in registration figures. There are now 951 children aged under five years living in the reach area; 46% of reach area families have accessed the centre, but they account for only half of those who do.

Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years provision are typically in line with the level expected for their age at two of the three reach area schools, but well below at the third.

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

Horley Community Sure Start Children's Centre provides a good service to local families. It has been particularly successful in taking its services out into the community so that more families can benefit from the good levels of care, guidance and support it provides. Safeguarding children and adults, including the most vulnerable, is given a high priority in the centre so that staff are quick to act on any concerns and make effective use of the many strong partnerships that exist to help families. This means that most families have a lot of trust and faith in staff to support them, especially in relation to keeping their families safe and in how to lead healthy lives; outcomes in those aspects are good. Typical comments that sum up parents' views include, 'It feels like you have your best friends here,' and, 'Staff are hot on safety and really help the parents support their families.'

Early Years Foundation Stage data for reach area children show they make satisfactory progress. There have been some fluctuations over the last three years in both the attainment level and achievement gap data, but overall there have been no

significant improvements in either outcome. Nevertheless, parents state that their children make good progress when they come to activities, 'My child is coming on in leaps and bounds now,' or attend the crèche, and everyone obviously enjoys the sessions. This evidence is largely anecdotal, however, as there are no consistent systems to track children either at the centre or when they move on to school. In addition, the session planning does not take account of the next steps in children's progress as this is not being recorded. The majority of adults are engaged in developing their skills across an increasingly wide range of courses, but their long term outcomes are not being measured to show the impact on outcomes or to fine-tune future services. This is also the case where the centre signposts for advice, such as for employment or benefits support.

Staff know the local area well and have been successful in overcoming barriers such as the main centre building being located in the least disadvantaged area. The numbers accessing services from most target groups are increasing well, although there are relatively lower numbers of families from workless households because there are significantly higher proportions of this target group in pockets of the reach area. The centre is addressing this by taking more services out into the community, especially to Manorfield School which is located on the Court Lodge estate, but the impact of this work is yet to be felt in relation to economic and social well-being for the majority of families.

Everyone has a clear understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for development. The centre manager leads her team well. A shared commitment to improve and encourage the engagement of more target families is at the heart of all the centre's work. There have been notable improvements in outcomes for families, especially in relation to those needing help most to keep their children safe. Everyone is clear about the priorities for further improvement and the centre has a good capacity to achieve them.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work with local schools and early years settings to improve the Early Years Foundation Stage results in the reach area overall and narrow the achievement gap by:
 - establishing a consistent method to track children whilst at the centre and in the longer term to pinpoint where most support is needed
 - linking the monitoring of children's progress to the next steps of their development in the session planning.
- Increase the number of families from workless households who are regularly engaging with the centre and improve their economic and social well-being by tracking and recording any signposting to fine-tune services to their needs and to show the longer-term impact of the centre's work.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Sustained breastfeeding rates are relatively low compared to Surrey as a whole, but they have increased substantially over the last three quarters. The childhood obesity rate of 7.2% compares favourably with a national figure of 9%. Immunisation rates are improving and are higher than the local authority as a whole. Good links with health services that include weekly well-attended baby clinics, with 273 families seen last year and the breastfeeding café, with 494 visits, have been effective in ensuring that a large majority of families engage well with health services. Families say they benefit significantly from the wide range of advice available at those sessions, as well as from the postnatal group. A typical comment was, 'It's great that they can pre-guess the help and support you need without having to ask.' Healthy eating sessions, including Baking with Dads and You Are What You Eat courses and encouraging physical exercise at Lively Little'Uns, ensure that a large majority of families have a good understanding of how to keep their families healthy. Well trained staff and targeted support also ensure good outcomes for families with emotional or mental health issues.

Parents can access a good range of structured parenting programmes to develop their parenting skills and understand how to keep children safe. Child Safety Week activities, road and car safety and first aid courses all contribute to families' good understanding of how to keep their children safe. Staff are adept at using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and supporting the most vulnerable families such as those subject to a child protection plan or who are looked after. This ensures that outcomes for the majority of those children are good. All of the families spoken to during the inspection and the centre's own research show that they have full trust in staff and are confident to share concerns saying, 'They always have a shoulder to cry on.'

Children are helped to develop their interpersonal skills and independence well at popular activities such as Play and Learn and Messy Play. There are good opportunities to enhance communication skills at Sign, Rhyme and Music Time and 158 individual children attended those sessions over 2012. The crèche sessions also give children good learning opportunities. At present, however, children's starting points and the progress children make are not being recorded, either when they are at the centre or when they move on. Children in the reach area attend a large number of early years settings and schools, not all in the centre's local area, and only a handful transfer to the link school, Meath Green Infants. This makes tracking their longer term progress harder, but the centre is aware that there is a need to do so, starting with when children attend the centre, in order to work with schools to improve the Early Years Foundation Stage outcomes. At 60%, in 2012, they are lower than national levels and the achievement gap between the lowest 20% and the rest at 31%, although largely in line with the national figure, widened slightly in 2012.

Recognising the need to focus services in the most disadvantaged area, the centre has been successful in developing links with Manorfield School and now runs a range

of adult and family learning there, facilitated by the Workers Education Association (WEA). Courses such as Value of Play for Learning and Discover Your Skills are attracting new families to the centre, but the longer term impact of this contact is yet to be seen. Overall, almost 60% of adults attended courses that extend their skills, and five families were helped to access free nursery education for two-year olds. Families are signposted to agencies for employment and benefits support. There are examples of some returning to work or improving their financial position, but the centre is not recording this information consistently. At present, not enough families from workless households are receiving specific support.

The numerous volunteers, including breastfeeding peer supporters, make a significant contribution to the centre through helping in the crèche and other sessions. In doing so they develop their confidence and personal skills. The parent forum is growing in number and, although there is scope to widen the range of target groups represented on the advisory board, the parents' voice is heard and responded to on that body. Parents feel they have good opportunities to put forward their views and to shape services.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	3
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment	3

How good is the provision?

2

Strong local knowledge and in-depth analysis of data, especially in relation to the Super Output Areas (SOAs), have led the centre to establishing a good range of services throughout the community. The popular Young Parents' group held in Horley Young People's Centre and the numerous groups held in the Empire Hall, such as Baby Explorers, located much closer to the town centre, ensure that services are adapted to meet needs. Consequently, most target groups engage well with the centre. This includes fathers, where almost 60% are registered at the centre and good numbers attend the Dads Ahoy Saturday session. Although the percentage of workless households overall who engage with the centre is akin to that in the

community, the numbers are relatively low where there are pockets of very high unemployment.

Children benefit from experienced staff who have a clear understanding of their early development needs, but this is not always reflected in the planning. A lack of consistent methods to track children’s progress means that individualised goals and next steps are not incorporated into planning. Nevertheless, activities are well located and popular, which reflects families’ justified opinions that they are of good quality. Personal achievements are celebrated through parties and certificates at the end of courses for adults and children’s work displayed in the centre.

‘It feels like a second home; if I hadn’t got the support I don’t know what I would have done,’ reflects how many families feel about the good quality care, guidance and support they receive. This is especially when they are most vulnerable or they are at a critical stage of their lives, such as impending homelessness. The non-judgemental staff have families’ trust and are able to galvanise a wide range of support, especially from the health services and other agencies such as portage, to enable them to put in tailored support. Good levels of information exchange and involvement in multi-agency meetings in relation to the most vulnerable children have led to positive outcomes for many families.

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	3
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 ensures the smooth day-to-day running of the centre and has a clear vision for the future shared by leaders, managers and staff at all levels. The advisory board, that includes effective participation of key partners, is knowledgeable and plays an active role in supporting and challenging the centre. Self-evaluation is accurate and used well to set priorities in the delivery plan, although there is not a consistent use of data to measure outcomes easily.

Value for money is good. Given that the centre is not open all week, it manages to provide a wide range of services throughout the community. Although registration of some target groups is increasing faster than others, the centre is successfully engaging growing numbers of families from all target groups. This is due to careful planning and very effective deployment of permanent and casual staff. Volunteers play a valuable role in delivering the centre’s services, especially by supporting the crèches which allow high numbers of parents to access courses at the main centre

and at Manorfield School. Resources are good quality and appreciated by parents, especially the outdoor areas and the toy library.

Families feel welcome in all the venues used by the centre as staff are warm and friendly. All of those using the centre treat each other with respect as equality and diversity are promoted strongly. The percentage of families from minority ethnic groups who use the centre is higher than that in the community as a whole. Children with special needs are well catered for with the monthly One Step at a Time group jointly-run with portage, and venues that are accessible to the disabled. Some evening and Saturday sessions help fathers and those who work to benefit from the centre's services.

Safeguarding arrangements are good and include detailed risk assessments, comprehensive policies and rigorous vetting and recruitment checks on all those working in the centre. A particular strength is the in-depth training of staff covering aspects such as domestic violence, mental health and child protection matters. Children in need and families at risk are supported effectively through one-to-one work with the outreach worker, joint home visits and multi-agency support. This leads to good outcomes and families have a strong feeling of being kept secure.

Good partnerships are in place with a wide variety of services, such as the WEA, and portage. Mutually beneficial and respected links with early years staff and the home-school link worker at Manorfield School are beginning to have an impact on the number of families from the centre's most disadvantaged area who are accessing services. Strong links with health services, enhanced by the weekly baby clinics, are having a positive impact on health outcomes. Less effective links are in place to support families in returning to work or further training.

Families using the centre are pleased with the service they receive saying staff 'go above what they should be doing'. They have regular opportunities to evaluate and participate in deciding the direction of the centre despite the range of target groups being relatively limited on the advisory board currently. Children's views are captured imaginatively by them selecting photos of what activities they have enjoyed and posting them in the Children's Choice box. Several volunteers stated that they were motivated to help so they could 'give back' something of what the centre had given to them.

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

The findings of the last inspection report of Meath Green Infant School, conducted in January 2008, and the Ofsted Interim Assessment letter of January 2011 were taken into account in relation to the safeguarding, leadership and management judgements and attainment on entry information.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Horley Community Sure Start Children's Centre on 26 and 27 March 2013. We judged the centre as good overall.

We thoroughly enjoyed our time at your centre. Thank you for being involved in the inspection and for taking the time to tell us about the centre's work and how positive you are about how staff have helped you and your children. A view that several of you voiced was, 'It feels like a second home; if I hadn't got the support, I don't know what I would have done.'

It was very enjoyable and useful to visit the activities taking place, such as the Sign Rhyme and Music Time and Baby Explorers at the Empire Hall and the library, and the Parenting Puzzle and postnatal group in the centre. Thank you for welcoming us so warmly into your groups. Here is a summary of what we found.

Outcomes are good overall for families who use the centre. The strengths are that you feel you have a good understanding about how to lead healthy lives through having the baby clinic and breastfeeding café on site. The Dads' Baking session and

Healthy Treats group held at Manorfield School, as well as the Lively Little'Uns activity, all help you to improve your families' fitness and eating habits. This is having a positive impact on health outcomes. You all told us that you feel safe and secure in the centre, not just because of the good safeguarding systems but also because you have high levels of trust in staff and feel able to share your worries with them. Typical comments made to us were, 'It feels like you have your best friends here,' and, 'You always have a shoulder to cry on.' It is also good that so many of you are 'giving something back' to the centre by volunteering to help at the crèches and the breastfeeding café. You are making a valuable contribution to your centre by doing so. You can help the centre further by going along to the parent forum meetings and perhaps by agreeing to attend advisory board meetings where there is a fairly limited number of parents from a range of groups in the community at present.

You tell us that your children make good progress because of coming to the centre, saying they are coming on 'in leaps and bounds'. We could see that they behaved well and really enjoyed the different sessions. However, the centre does not have any consistent way of measuring their input into children's development as it does not monitor children's progress when the children are at various groups or in the crèche, or when they move on to school. This is something we have asked the centre to work with the schools and pre-schools in the area to develop a system to see how attending the centre is helping children in the longer term. We have also asked the centre to use the information it gets about children's progress to plan sessions that focus more clearly on what the children should be learning next.

The centre has been successful in increasing the numbers from all different groups who make use of the services by running sessions in the community, such as the Young Parents' Group at Horley Young People's Centre, and various activities in the Empire Hall. There are relatively more families out of work and who may need extra help living in the Court Lodge estate than elsewhere in the area served by the centre and the centre has set up additional courses and sessions at Manorfield School to help with this. We have asked that the centre try to get more families who need help getting back to work or to do further training to register with the centre. Also, when the centre does give advice or point out where families can access help, that they keep a record of this and what the impact on the family in the longer term is.

The outreach worker and other staff ensure that you all receive a warm welcome when you come to any of the centre venues. Children behave well when they are there and you all treat each other with a lot of respect. 'Staff are hot on safety and really help the parents to support their families,' describes how you feel about the safeguarding and care at the centre. The levels of care, guidance and support you receive are good because staff know you well, are very experienced and well trained and are adept at knowing where to get you specific support for your problems. This is especially so when you come to the centre when you are at very low points in your lives or when children and families are especially vulnerable or at risk. Outcomes for those families are generally positive.

Everyone working at the centre, and those who lead and manage it, have a clear understanding of what the centre does well and where improvements are needed. There have already been improvements in many of your lives and your knowledge of parenting skills and how to help your family be safe and healthy are good. There is a strong commitment from all staff to ensure more families benefit from their work and so the capacity to keep improving is good.

Thank you again for your help and best wishes for the future.

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