

Prince Avenue Children and Family Centre

Hornby Avenue, Westcliff on Sea, SS0 0LG

Inspection date

4–5 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:		
		Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Good	2
The quality of practice and services		Good	2
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a good centre.

- The large majority of parents, carers and children, including targeted groups, in the local area make use of the centre regularly. Families are really satisfied with the quality of services at the centre and all that it provides is highly valued by them.
- Adults improve their literacy, numeracy and English speaking skills because of good use of courses which enable them to gain new qualifications.
- Children who attend the centre regularly make good progress because of the good range of activities and services on offer. Their skills are average by the time they leave the Reception Year of school and higher than those of children who do not attend the centre.
- The centre works well with different groups of local people because staff know the area in detail and support local families successfully. This is because leaders improve services and practice carefully. Training is used thoughtfully to develop staff expertise.
- A strong partnership with health specialists and centre staff means families receive high levels of care and guidance. Families are kept safe in the centre because leaders give safety a high priority.
- Leaders including governors manage the centre well so, for example, extra sessions have been added recently to support families about how to manage their spending over several weeks.

It is not outstanding because:

- Children's speaking skills are a little lower than expected at the start of Nursery.
- Records of achievement for adults and children are rather brief. Staff do not always explain in detail what children have done well and so parents are not fully aware of their children's strengths.
- Staff targets for development are not always followed up effectively by leaders and staff.
- The local authority does not assist the centre sufficiently to collect data about the percentage of workless households who attend the centre.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

This inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, the Chair of the Governing Body, three other governors, parents and carers, centre staff, health specialists, other local children's centre leaders, children and a representative from the local authority.

The inspectors visited sessions held in the mobile toy library, the Family Store House and at a local church.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation. Evaluations of satisfaction from 38 families were taken into account.

Inspection team

Jackie Cousins	Additional Inspector, Lead Inspector
Joan Lindsay	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Prince Avenue Children and Family Centre is situated in a mixed neighbourhood which includes some areas with significant levels of disadvantage. It attracts a diverse range of families to the centre. The large majority of the families who live in the surrounding area are from White British backgrounds and a significant proportion are from minority ethnic groups. A considerable number of families are from Asian and African families or from Western and Eastern European groups. A few families are at the early stages of learning to speak English. Some areas around the centre have considerable levels of unemployment, families in receipt of benefits and workless households. A high percentage of adults have no formal qualifications.

The centre was opened in December 2009. In partnership with other providers, it provides early education, childcare and health services, family support and adult learning courses. Most children enter early education with skills that are lower than those expected for their age, especially in language development. The children's centre operates from a new building on the site of Prince Avenue Primary School and Nursery. The Nursery and Reception classes run by Prince Avenue Primary School and Nursery are subject to separate inspection arrangements. There are 11 children's centres in the area.

The centre is managed by the governing body of Prince Avenue Primary School on behalf of Southend-on-Sea Local Authority. The Steering Group includes two local headteachers, parents and staff from the centre. The centre is not part of the payment by results trial and is not receiving extra funding from the government.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Improve children's speaking skills so that they are higher at the start of Nursery by ensuring:
 - staff feedback for children is more detailed so that parents understand how well their children are learning to speak
 - records of achievement for children and adults celebrate what they have learnt while they attend the centre.
- Develop the effectiveness of centre leadership by making sure:
 - staff targets for improvement are followed up more regularly and staff are involved successfully in celebrating how they have met them
 - the local authority helps leaders to collect data about the proportion of workless households who come to the centre.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The large majority of families in the local area, including targeted groups, regularly attend the centre, and the proportion who benefit from the support of skilled centre staff has increased significantly in recent years. This is because staff analyse data effectively to determine and provide a good range of services from which families benefit. Exciting activities are provided, such as cookery sessions where adults and children experiment with recipes and food from all over the world. This encourages those who might be reluctant to attend to join sessions.
- The staff have established and maintained contact with many children and families from target groups. For example, all children known to have disabilities regularly come to the centre. This is because staff know the area well and they ensure that services are of use to these families.

- Staff work diligently to talk to families when they arrive and make time to discuss their concerns. Parents always feel welcome at the centre, and several parents said, 'The groups here are not cliquy and everyone talks to you.' This ensures that older and younger mothers and fathers benefit from the centre's services, and almost all teenage mothers or pregnant teenagers in the area come to the centre.
- The very large majority of three- and four-year-old children from targets groups attend pre-schools or nurseries because of effective information supplied by centre staff. A considerable number of two-year-old children benefit from early education because the centre works well with local providers.
- The large majority of minority ethnic families come to the centre and use services such as the ante-natal and baby clinics. They also gain valuable advice from the good expertise of health specialists during these sessions. For example, parents learnt about weaning a baby and what portion of mashed potato is suitable to give a baby.
- Working with families in their own homes is successful and so those who would not normally attend become regular visitors. One parent who had medical problems after the birth of a child said that the staff helped her to get on with adults again. Another parent said, 'You can ask staff anything.'
- Some data collected about workless households appear inaccurate and so the centre is not sure how many of them it is not working with.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- Good-quality services are provided for the families living in the area. Children who attend the centre make good progress throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage, and their knowledge and understanding are average by the end of the Reception Year. In 2012, children who had attended the centre showed that their skills were typical for their age in personal and social development, communication, language and literacy, mathematics and physical development.
- An effective partnership with a local college means that considerable numbers of parents complete literacy, English and numeracy courses at the centre and almost all gain qualifications successfully. One parent summed up her thoughts by saying, 'I am so grateful to have been given this opportunity. Not only have I gained qualifications, I have gained confidence, friends and lots more knowledge!'
- Staff's good expertise in developing children's skills means children are prepared well for school. Attainment on entry to Nursery for the large majority of children who attended the centre is what you would expect for personal, social and emotional and physical development. Children's speaking skills a little lower than expected. The tracking of children when they join the Nursery has recently revealed that some children use rather a limited range of words. The centre plans to develop services and practice which will promote children's speaking skills more effectively.
- Centre staff attend all meetings where provision is discussed for families who are at risk. They make sure that decisions are made thoughtfully about how to support the children and parents. Child protection issues are handled well because of the effective use of other services and partnerships.
- In 'Stay and Play' sessions, staff successfully show adults how to play with children of all ages and improve children's well-being. The centre runs separate 'Stay, Play and Learning' sessions for babies and toddlers from the age of nought to two, as well as for three- to five-year-olds. Activities are planned which challenge and interest children appropriately for their stage of development.

- Adults contribute effectively to running the centre through evaluations completed at the end of sessions and by parents being part of the meetings held with school governors. This means that centre leaders are knowledgeable about the services that families would like and this has helped them to set up a good range of services.
- Records of children's and adult users' achievements are rather limited and so their successes are not gathered together productively. Staff feedback about what children can do on a daily basis does not take developmental guidance sufficiently into account, and so parents are not fully informed every few months about what their children are doing well or what they could improve.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The centre manager and leaders are constantly looking for ways to improve the chances in life for children and adults. An asthma and allergy clinic run at the centre meant that nearly all children who attended improved their health.
- The centre monitors its performance well and uses data to identify where results could be even better. Although immunisation rates are high in the area, the centre has set up extra clinics to ensure all children are immunised.
- Leaders and staff thoughtfully look for ways to make the community a better place for families to live in. Courses are used carefully to promote good parenting skills, and so parents say they improve their understanding of how to manage children's challenging behaviour. The centre, in partnership with the police, the local community and parents, has significantly reduced incidents of anti-social behaviour in the community over the last year.
- All staff have good qualifications in early years, and training is used successfully to develop staff expertise. For instance, the centre provided training to enhance provision for children to learn to make marks, and so recent observations show children frequently learn to draw and write using chalk and pens effectively.
- Families are kept safe at the centre because safeguarding procedures are followed thoughtfully. For example, checks are completed before staff start work at the centre, and child protection and first-aid training are kept up to date. Records for individuals and families at risk are kept carefully, and resources are used well to support them and other families.
- Parents, who achieve success for themselves and their families through attending, for example, adult education courses, have encouraged other parents to use the centre's good services.
- Leaders and staff set targets to improve the centre's performance each year. They do not always follow up individual areas for staff development every few months to see whether the targets are being met.
- The local authority monitors the performance of the centre effectively to ensure that it meets the locally agreed priorities. These include reducing inequalities by increasing the proportion of families from the most deprived local areas who regularly use the centre. Data are not collected accurately for the proportion of workless households who attend the centre because the local authority does not assist the centre sufficiently to do this.
- The governing body watches over the work of the centre carefully and is clear about its overall effectiveness. It understands how good the quality and range of services are and how well staff are

performing. Governors use data successfully to monitor the impact of the centre on families. For example, they are aware that the centre is reducing inequalities because children who are eligible for free school meals, who attend the centre, make good progress in their Reception Year and their attainment is broadly average by the time they start Year 1.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Practice consistently reflects the highest aspirations for children and their families and as a result inequalities are reducing rapidly and gaps are closing.
Grade 2	Good	Practice enables most children and their families to access good quality services that improve children's wellbeing and achieve the stated outcomes for families.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	Performance is not as good as it might reasonably be expected to be in one or more key areas.
Grade 4	Inadequate	The needs of children and families in its area are not being met and/or the leaders and managers are not providing sufficient challenge to bring about improvement to the quality of services.

Children's centre details

Unique reference number	22422
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	421491
Managed by	The governing body of Prince Avenue Primary School on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	845
Centre leader	Caroline Thornton
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01702 311411
Email address	caroline@princeavenue.southend.sch.uk

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