

# W6 Westfield Children's Centre

Croxley View, Watford, WD18 6AE

<b>Inspection date</b>		5–6 June 2013	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of practice and services		<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This is a centre that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- The centre is not helping enough children and families who live within the reach area because the provision of services is not sufficiently focussed to attract families from all target groups and too few of these families are accessing children's centre services.
- The centre is improving because the local authority and the advisory board work closely with leaders and managers to develop and deliver services. However, the local authority does not always provide sufficient challenge, for example by setting measureable targets to ensure they know how well or not the centre is fulfilling its mission.
- Leaders and managers do not pay enough attention to using data and other information to plan services that meet the needs of families from all target groups. However, centre staff make effective use of information and data about individual families and use this to plan effective intervention, services and support for them.
- There are not enough courses provided to enable adults to improve their learning and skills so that they can go on to further education or employment.

### This centre has the following strengths:

- The large majority of families are registered with the centre.
- As a result of the centre's good work to develop their knowledge and skills, children who attend the centre achieve better results across the Early Years Foundation Stage than those who do not. These children are also well prepared for the transition to school.
- The centre and its partners work well together to provide good support, early help and high level care to families who access services with the most needs.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good and safety is actively promoted. The centre works well with a wide range of partners to reduce the risk of harm to families.

### 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 three additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders and managers from the local authority, centre staff, health, education and social care partners, parents, early years practitioners, schools, representatives from the employment sector and from the advisory board.

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

### Inspection team

Priscilla McGuire	Additional Inspector, Lead Inspector
Deborah Sanders	Additional Inspector
Anthony Mundy	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre/group

Westfield Children's Centre is managed by the Pre-School Learning Alliance on behalf of the local authority. Day-to-day management is the responsibility of the centre coordinator who reports directly to an area manager. The centre is supported by an advisory board.

Westfield Children's Centre is a phase one centre in West Watford in Hertfordshire. The centre shares its site with a secondary school. The area is ethnically diverse. Around 76% of children are of minority ethnic backgrounds. One of the wards within the reach area has the highest percentage of children living in poverty within Watford. Of the seven super output areas, three are within the top 30% in England. Around 19% of children live in households dependent on worklessness benefits. Most families live in social housing. A high proportion of children in the area are subject to child protection plans. The population is transient and a significant number of families move out of the area after only a relatively short time. Adult literacy and numeracy skills are low amongst the local population. Most children in the area enter early years provision with skills below what is typical for their age, with communication and language being the weakest areas.

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

- Increase the number of families, particularly from target groups, who access the centre by improving marketing and publicity strategies to ensure all families are aware of the centre's services
- Work with the local authority to improve the effectiveness of the centre by setting performance targets which are challenging, precise and enable leaders to thoroughly measure the impact of the centre's work
- Improve mechanisms for planning provision to meet the needs of all families within the area by
  - making better use of data and information to identify needs across the reach area
  - fully monitoring and evaluating the impact of services for all the families who use the centre
- Provide more opportunities for families to access courses that will enable them to improve their learning and skills and increase their chances of progressing to employment and education.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

### Requires improvement

- The centre works productively with a wide range of partners including charities and statutory agencies, to provide targeted services and support to families with the greatest needs. As a result, these families engage well with the centre. Their emotional health, their safety and their life chances improve significantly as a direct result of this engagement.
- The range of services is too narrow. Not enough families access services because staffing resources were previously too limited. However, the centre has recognised this as an area for improvement and has increased both its staffing resources and also its range of universal services by for example, organising midwifery clinics.
- Staff have a good knowledge about two year old funding and successfully signpost and enable families identified as disadvantaged, to access free and good quality education for their two year old children. Take up rates of funding for these children are good.
- The centre uses data and information well, to plan services and support for families with the most needs but has not paid enough attention to planning provision for other target groups. Not enough data and information is collected and recorded about their needs. This limits the centre's ability to effectively plan services to attract the very large majority of families living in the community.

**The quality of practice and services****Requires improvement**

- Assessment of families with the most needs is accurate, rigorous and based on reliable information. These families therefore receive good quality care and support from the centre and its partners such as social care or health professionals. This ensures that these families receive appropriate and early help which keeps them safe, healthy and prevents problems from escalating.
- The centre does not provide an appropriate balance of universal and targeted provision. The current provision is mostly responsive to families with the greatest needs, and this is helping to reduce inequalities. However, families from some target groups are underrepresented and do not access centre services.
- Good planning of sessions for children and effective partnership work with schools and pre-schools, helps the children who attend the centre to make good educational progress. Data show that these children achieve higher scores across the Early Years Foundation Stage than other children. Schools report that these children are also much better prepared for school than those who have not attended the centre.
- The range of provision to enable adults to improve their education and employability is too limited. Courses such as 'Let's Get Cooking' help parents understand how to live healthy lifestyles and other courses such as an ICT course, help them develop their computer skills. However, there are not enough courses to help parents develop literacy and numeracy skills, gain qualifications or progress into further education or employment.

**The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management****Requires improvement**

- The quality of leadership of the centre has improved since the Pre-School Learning Alliance started managing the centre. Management arrangements have also improved and there are clear lines of accountability for staff who have a good understanding of their roles and are highly motivated to do their best for families.
- The local authority's annual action plan is not robust enough because it does not include precise performance targets to drive improvement. This results in a lack of sufficient challenge for the centre to improve, from those who hold it to account. The local authority, the commissioned provider and the advisory board are not using data well enough to monitor the impact of all services provided to families.
- Arrangements to promote safeguarding and safety are effective and policies are implemented well. The needs of children subject to child protection plans and children in need are particularly well met and the Common Assessment Framework is used well to coordinate effective early support. Well organised preventative work with partners such as those from social care and the fire service enhance the centre's ability to keep families safe.
- Parents make a good contribution to the work of the centre. Through their representation on the advisory board and their work on the parent forum, they influence the way the centre operates. For example, in response to parents' suggestions, practical changes have been made at the centre which have improved the quality of facilities available to families.
- Governance arrangements are adequate and improving. Members of the advisory board are fully committed to improving its effectiveness. As a result of a process of self-review of their roles, members have set priorities for their work and identified 'champions' for specific areas of the centre's work to ensure the board can have a greater impact on its performance.
- Resources are used adequately to meet local priorities and the availability of these is improving. Since the centre came under the control of the Pre-School Learning Alliance, there has been an increased investment in staffing resources. This has enabled the centre to increase the range of services to meet needs of more families and to provide services at another venue within the reach area where families were previously particularly reluctant to participate in centre activities.

**What inspection judgements mean**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
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.

**Select details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	23431
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	423062
<b>Managed by</b>	Pre-school Learning Alliance on behalf of the local authority
<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	1139
<b>Centre leader</b>	Jodie Noakes
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01923 800003
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