

Hillfields Children's Centre

Clifton Street, Hillfields, Coventry, CV1 5GR

Inspection date	18–19 July 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 very large majority of families from the groups identified as being in greatest need of support, regularly access the centre's good-quality services. The number of regular users is increasing rapidly.
- Good communication with families and high levels of social inclusion are important factors in the centre's success. The centre is highly regarded as the hub of the community.
- Safeguarding provided by the centre is outstanding and underpins many areas of its work. Centre staff are highly skilled and qualified in this area. They are able to lead on individual cases to the highest level and work exceptionally well with social care. Intervention and prevention strategies to protect vulnerable groups, such as mothers and children, are highly effective.
- Well-planned sessions enable children to make excellent progress and ensure they are very well prepared for their transition into school.
- A good programme of parenting courses enhances parents' confidence and understanding of their children's behaviour and contributes to improved family life.
- Good provision to support parents whose first language is not English helps families new to the country cope with living here.
- A highly skilled centre manager and effective senior leadership team lead the centre well. Supported by an effective governing body, they keep pace with the ever-changing and increasing demands made on them by the community.
- Senior leaders have managed difficult circumstances well. They have maintained quality services and expertise among staff despite reduced funding and reorganisation. This shows the centre has the capacity to sustain improvement.

It is not outstanding because:

- There is no group to represent the interests of the children's centre users and to provide advice, assistance and challenge to centre leaders to ensure the children's centre operates effectively and fulfils its remit.
- There are not enough opportunities for fathers to engage in the centre's activities or for adults to raise their awareness of healthy lifestyles.
- The centre does not direct a sufficient number of adults to courses that carry accredited awards in order to improve their chances of gaining employment.

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 a team of three additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre leader, the senior leadership team, members of the governing body, team leaders and family support workers. They met with: officers from the local authority; representatives of the centre's professional partners and service providers including those from the social care and health services; a headteacher from a local school; and parents.

The inspectors visited a wide range of activities in support of babies' and children's early development and learning, and adult learning activities taking place in the centre.

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

Inspection team

David Speakman, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Janet Dinsmore	Additional inspector
Maureen Deary	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Hillfields Children's Centre opened as a combined nursery centre in 1971. In 1997, it was designated as an Early Excellence Centre. It is a stand-alone centre located close to the centre of Coventry. There are 17 centres in the city, and Hillfields is the only centre to serve its immediate district. Staff deliver a range of services relating to health, social care, early education, child development and adult education; they run groups for parents and children, and provide outreach and family support. The centre supports disabled children and those with special educational needs from within its own area and from across the city. The centre offers a flexible programme of nursery places for children from the age of two. The nursery was inspected in March 2013 and was judged to be outstanding.

The centre is managed by a governing body on behalf of the local authority. The centre manager and senior leadership team oversee work at this centre, including services delivered by service providers and other professional organisations.

Hillfields is a densely populated area and is one of the most deprived areas nationally. The centre's reach area has 1765 children under five. The population is ethnically mixed. There is a very high turnover of families in the area; around 40% of families move into or out of the area each year. The area is experiencing an increase in birth rate, and the centre averages 80 new registrations each month. The centre works with refugees and asylum seekers. Other main target groups are families living in poverty, those experiencing domestic violence, lone parents, disabled children and those with special educational needs.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Establish a group of service providers, parents and other relevant stakeholders to :
 - assist and challenge centre leaders
 - represent the interests of the children's centre users
 - help identify changes in the community's needs
 - locate where any required support might be found.
- Increase opportunities for:
 - fathers to engage with the centre
 - adults to raise their awareness of a healthy lifestyle
 - adults to improve their chances of employment through gaining qualifications.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families **Good**

- The centre has worked well with health partners to provide assessments for two-year-olds. This means that children get access to early years education at age two and three. A large majority of families from targeted groups access free entitlement to early education through the centre's own provision. Children's readiness for school is supported very well.
- Sharing of information with partners in relation to disabled children and those with special educational needs means that children from this target group are identified at an early stage and receive timely support. Referrals, fortnightly meetings and regular contact with the refugee centre mean that children in these focus groups have good access to services. The local authority directs disabled children and those with special educational needs from other parts of the city to this centre for support.

- The centre is successful in addressing inequalities for a large number of targeted children and families; these include the steadily growing numbers of refugee and asylum seeking families, those suffering domestic violence, those who do not speak English and Roma families. The centre is a completely inclusive centre. This strong support for disadvantaged families and the effective procedures to deal with diversity are very successful in engaging hard-to-reach families.
- The centre has excellent procedures to support the safety and well-being of its vulnerable families. Partnerships with health and social care inform centre staff of potential risks to adults and children in the reach area. Effective outreach support is provided through a wide range of home visits and highly skilled intervention. Outcomes of caseload meetings, consultations, referrals and outreach work are used effectively to identify the specific needs of target groups, such as speakers of languages other than English or those experiencing domestic violence. The centre can demonstrate high levels of success in improving circumstances for families in cases of domestic violence.
- Although the access to targeted services for vulnerable children and their families is good, there are fewer universal services to support some less vulnerable groups. There are too few opportunities for parents to attend health, well-being, nutrition and physical fitness groups. There are few dedicated opportunities for fathers to engage in suitable activities within the centre. Services to improve parents' literacy and numeracy skills to improve their prospects of employment do not all result in qualification.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- Good-quality services, based on an accurate assessment of needs and on reliable information from the community via a community governor, provide the very large majority of families from the target groups with good services to improve their lives. The centre has focused on providing targeted services for vulnerable groups. Adults contribute to shaping services directly to the governing body, which has four parent representatives.
- There is good provision to support parents whose first language is not English and who are recent arrivals to this country. 'Welcome to the West Midlands', a course run in conjunction with West Midlands Fire Service, raises the awareness of families new to the country of a range of daily routines and helps them cope with living here.
- There are good opportunities for parents to progress into volunteering work and a few case studies record the movement of adults through education into employment. A range of programmes to support parenting skills contribute to improved family life, health and well-being through helping parents understand and manage their children's behaviour.
- Effective partnerships with primary schools and ongoing liaison between early years providers and the children's centre make sure that the pathways children take from early childhood until they transfer into school, lead to high levels of readiness for school. The planning of all activities and for all groups is clearly focused on the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff record assessments of the development of all children so they build successfully on what children have already learned.
- Safeguarding is outstanding and underpins many areas of the centre's work. All statutory requirements are in place, and necessary checks have been made on all adults coming into contact with children and their families. Staff and governor training in relation to child protection and safer recruitment is up to date.
- Centre staff are highly skilled and qualified in matters relating to safeguarding. They are able to lead on individual cases to the highest level. Highly effective intervention and prevention strategies protect vulnerable groups, such as mothers and children. Safeguarding is extended throughout the local community; the centre is proactive and is currently promoting fire safety checks to every

household in the reach area, and a large majority of households are taking up the offer.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The centre leader is passionate about the well-being of the families and children in the reach area. She is supported in achieving her ambitious goals by a skilled and effective senior leadership team. They lead the centre very well and each member is strong in their own areas of responsibility.
- The senior leadership team manage resources very well. They have maintained service levels despite cuts in funding and continue to meet the needs young children and families. Consequently, resources are used effectively to meet local agreed priorities and provision is made for the centre to address any unforeseen issues that arise, for example the current rapidly increasing birth rate.
- Governors are active participants in managing the centre. They make focused visits to the centre and have built a good awareness of the centre's work. They are professionally skilled in areas relating to key aspects of the centre's work. Governors have exceptionally strong community links through a community governor who provides access to local organisations working for the development of Hillfields. However, there is no group of stakeholders to advise, assist or challenge the leadership team, to help identify changes in the community's needs and to locate where any required support might be found. This is done informally through the senior leadership team.
- The local authority has a good knowledge and understanding of the centre's strengths and any areas for development. It regards the centre highly and, like a number of professional partners, uses the expertise of the staff to support other organisations and families from beyond the reach area. The local authority rates highly the centre's work in relation to safeguarding, disability and special educational needs and its work with families from overseas.
- Clear analysis of the needs of the community places the centre in a strong position to identify the main target groups and to provide well-targeted support to improve the lives of the very large majority of families in the area. Detailed self-evaluation and development planning are based on the community's requirements. However, systems for gathering information are not robust and do not evaluate the full impact of services to adults, particularly when directed to services outside of the centre.
- The tracking of targeted services, such as review meetings, cases involving the Common Assessment Framework and the centre's work to safeguard children subject to a child protection plan demonstrate a detailed, clear and successful audit trail for each individual case.

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

Unique reference number	21500
Local authority	Coventry
Inspection number	421467
Managed by	The governing body on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1765
Centre leader	Helen Watson
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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