

# S6 Broadwater Children's Centre

Longmeadow Primary School, Oaks Cross, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG2 8LT

**Inspection date** 10–11 July 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Previous inspection:</b>	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
The quality of practice and services		<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This is an outstanding centre.

- The centre knows almost all of the families living in the reach area and many other users from across Stevenage, including families in the greatest need of help and support. The excellent network of partner organisations, including toddler groups, pre-schools, nurseries and schools, enables some very successful and rewarding joint working activities to attract nearly all of the registered families to use the services to great effect. As a result, families living in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and families in difficult circumstances, and some in crisis, are helped exceptionally well.
- Centre managers know the Broadwater area very well and make best use of a range of other information to make sure services are an excellent match for what families want. Families are highly satisfied with all that the centre provides. Many said it's like a, 'second home'. Parents were full of praise and appreciation for the help and support they received and the big difference it made to helping them become better parents and support their children's early learning.
- The quality and impact of services are excellent. Children who attend centre activities regularly make excellent progress because of the wide range of well planned and purposeful activities they enjoy. Adults too have access to an extensive range of leisure, vocational and academic courses to improve their skills and learning to help them get jobs.
- Partnerships are excellent, particularly with the voluntary sector and with key partners, such as health visitors, who carry out two-year-old developmental checks and help to address any concerns at this early stage. Links with Jobcentre Plus have helped some parents into work.
- The centre checks and assesses all activities and uses this information to make sure services have the maximum impact on those families who attend.
- Leaders manage the centre in an exemplary way and are continually improving services, helped by some excellent support from the local authority. Centre staff are a great team who are friendly, welcoming and provide the essential day-to-day help and support vulnerable families need.

## 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 senior leadership team, including the Project Development Manager and Family Outreach Worker; officers from the local authority and a range of partners. These included representatives from health services, education, housing, employment and other adult learning and training services. They also met with parents, volunteers and representatives of the advisory board. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documentation, including the self-evaluation form, service plan, a sample of case studies and files, parental satisfaction surveys, safeguarding policies and procedures and a variety of assessment files for the range of activities delivered. Visits and observations were undertaken jointly with centre staff and senior leaders attended all the meetings during the inspection.

## Inspection team

Catherine Stormonth	Additional Inspector, Lead Inspector
Anthony Mundy	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

The centre became operational in 2007 as a phase three stand alone centre. It operates from a purpose-built site alongside Longmeadow Primary School (URN 135083) and Playhouse Pre-school Broadwater (URN EY381778), both of which are subject to separate inspection arrangements. The reports can be found on the Ofsted website ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The centre serves the Broadwater area in the town of Stevenage. It is governed by the school's governing body and a sub-committee advisory board of key partners and parents. The headteacher line manages the centre manager. The centre meets the core purpose by providing 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 communication and language development.

The centre's reach area includes 828 children under five years of age most of whom are White British. The largest ethnic minority groups are from Poland, Lithuania and Russia and there are small numbers of African and Asian families. The area is very mixed socially and economically with pockets of deprivation. For example, the Hertford Road lower super output area is one of the 30% most deprived in England. Data shows that 9% of children live in workless households, 5% are lone parents and there is a high number of low income families. Key target groups include vulnerable children and mothers, especially those living in poverty and victims of domestic abuse; expectant teenagers and young mothers and fathers.

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

- Review the service level agreement the centre has with Jobcentre Plus to make sure it effectively improves the employability of parents who are seeking work.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

### Outstanding

- There are excellent communications between all partner organisations to make sure almost all families with young children are known to the centre. This information is used to carefully plan activities and services that help attract families to join in and feel part of 'something special where everyone feels important'.
- Almost all the families living within the centre's reach area are engaged with the centre and have access to the wide range of services. This includes high numbers of families in the key target groups. A large number of affiliated families also regularly use the centre because they describe the services as being exactly what they need.
- Strategies for encouraging families to participate in services are extremely effective and, as a result, a very large majority of families who would otherwise be hard to reach, access services. This results in most of the families that may require additional support attend centre activities. Consequently, they engage with the services that help them improve their emotional health and the quality of their family life.
- Monitoring systems are used exceptionally well by staff. For example, staff contact families who register at the centre but do not use its services. They assess the needs of families and encourage them to take full advantage of the centre. Families appreciate this approach and say that this makes them feel valued and want to come to the centre and reap all the benefits on offer. 'It's crazy not to

come here' said one dad.

- Outreach work is exceptional in working with the most vulnerable families in their homes and in the various outreach venues where a large number of toddler groups are delivered. Case studies show that families who are in crisis from disability, depression, domestic abuse, loan sharks or inadequate housing are helped and supported to dramatically improve the quality of their lives.
- Some excellent marketing has helped to promote the work of the centre which has a high profile locally. Attendance at the numerous activities both in the centre and in the wider community is high and many holiday activities, events and trips are oversubscribed.
- Nearly all children of targeted groups take up their free entitlement to early education.
- The two-year-old assessment checks enable children with disabilities and other more complex development difficulties to have some excellent early intervention support and guidance to meet their more specialist needs. This includes children with signs of autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and sensory impairment.

### The quality of practice and services

### Outstanding

- The quality, range and relevance of services are outstanding. The five antenatal 'Prep for Baby' courses had full attendance from teenage and young mothers. Baby clinics, 'New Start Baby Group' and breastfeeding support groups have helped to double breastfeeding rates in the last two years.
- High quality early learning experiences with a strong focus on personal, social and emotional development, and communication and language development offer major benefits for when children transfer to pre-school settings and school nurseries. Local headteachers confirmed strongly that children arrive at school, 'brimming with confidence and good personal self-care habits'. Regular assessment checks, family files and learning journals show that targeted children are making good and occasionally outstanding progress from week-to-week from very mixed starting points.
- The proportion of children who achieve the expected level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is just above average. However, the gap between the lowest attaining children and their peers is closing rapidly as a result of some excellent partnership working with pre-school settings and schools.
- A large majority of targeted families are able to extend their parenting skills through nurturing and health awareness programmes, such as the 'Family Toolkit' and 'Parent Puzzle'. Evaluations show the significantly positive impact on improved family life.
- The centre provides access to a wide range of training courses, further education and superb advice. Parents are supported to attend these courses with excellent crèche facilities provided for their children. These programmes support parents to gain qualifications to improve their economic stability and chances of employment. Half of all the parents who gained literacy and numeracy qualifications in the past year have managed to achieve employment under the guidance of the centre.
- Several volunteers confirmed that they have been given the chance to work at the centre and make worthwhile contributions to events and activities and some go on to employment in education and care services. Jobcentre Plus has helped some parents back to work but the current service level agreement needs to be reviewed to improve the partnership. The debt counselling service and welfare benefits advice are outstanding and, as a result, many parents have been supported to improve their economic wellbeing.

### The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

### Outstanding

- Centre staff are exceptional in the way they work closely with the most vulnerable families. They provide easy access to a range of support services and have the total trust of parents who couldn't find the words to praise staff enough. This support helps families at times of crisis to cope

effectively and staff intervene early to provide help when this is required.

- The local authority provides some excellent support to the centre through high quality, termly reviews. The authority sets challenging performance targets based on secure data about priority families and the centre regularly meets or exceeds these. The centre is data rich and analyses it well leading to strong self-evaluation and improvement planning processes for all activities. The monitoring of families' engagement is a particular strength.
- Governance arrangements are well established and there is a shared pursuit of excellence and continuous improvement. Advisory board key partners ask searching questions about the centre's performance. Parents have an effective voice and are involved in decision making through activities like the 'Big Breakfast' debates. The range of strategic partnerships for collaborative working to deliver all the services is excellent. Links with the voluntary sector, including local charities, provide particularly positive outcomes for some families coping with complex needs.
- Safeguarding arrangements are another strong aspect with excellent policies, procedures and practice in place. This ensures that safeguarding procedures and the welfare of children are a top priority. The centre works successfully to reduce the risk of harm to children on child protection plans, those deemed children in need and those subject to Common Assessment Framework multi-agency support plans. This includes an excellent working partnership with the children's social care team. The case follow up procedures are exemplary to make sure children stay safe.
- Resources are used efficiently and effectively to meet the locally agreed priorities for children and families. The children's centre building is used well and staff have been creative in using many outreach community centres and partner venues to deliver and maintain services.

**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.

**Children's Centre details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	22602
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	421495
<b>Managed by</b>	Managed by Shephalbury Meadow Federation under contract by the Local Authority
<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	828
<b>Centre leader</b>	Sharon Bell
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
<b>Telephone number</b>	01438 230444
<b>Email address</b>	manager.broadwater@hertschildrencentre.org.uk

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