

# Highfield Children's Centre

Chesterfield Drive, Ipswich, IP1 6DW

## Inspection date

24–25 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.

- Leadership, management and governance are good. Managers have a clear understanding of the strengths of the centre and what needs to be improved further. They are committed to meeting the needs of families, especially the most disadvantaged, to the very best of their abilities.
- Strong teamwork ensures everyone is pulling in the right direction. Effective action plans are supporting further developments. As a result, the centre has good capacity to sustain improvement.
- Strong partnership working with the school and other local children's centres ensure that the large majority of families in the area access services regularly, especially those from priority groups, such as teenage and young parents, families in workless households and lone parents.
- The services offered by the centre are of good quality and develop most parents' skills and children's learning and development well, and improve the lives of vulnerable families.
- Tracking shows that a large majority of children from priority groups, including vulnerable children and those with special educational needs or disabilities, make rapid progress during centre activities.
- The centre is a very friendly, warm and safe environment for all its users. Children are eager to be there and have fun whilst learning. Parents appreciate the centre's support and value the positive impact this has on their lives.

### It is not outstanding because:

- The proportion of mothers initiating and continuing to breastfeed at six to eight weeks is insufficient to meet or better the local average.
- The numbers of adults developing their basic skills in literacy, numeracy and the use of computers is too low.

## 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 centre staff, the local authority, the children's centre manager and school headteacher; members of the governing body and advisory board; parents and users of the centre; and representatives of organisations who work in partnership with the centre.

The inspectors visited activities taking place in the centre and a support session held at the home of a parent.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a sample of case studies and range of relevant documentation. Inspectors jointly observed two activities with centre staff.

## Inspection team

Steve Nelson	Additional inspector, Lead inspector
Anthony Mundy	Additional inspector
Lorraine Manford	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Highfield Children's Centre, which opened in 2006, is a phase one children's centre. It operates in the Castle Hill, Springfield, Whitehouse and Witton wards and is based on the same site as Highfield Nursery School with an outreach site at Bramford Lane. The nursery school was inspected in June 2013 and the report can be found on [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The local authority has delegated responsibility for the governance of the children's centre to the governing body of Highfield Nursery School. The centre also receives advice and guidance from an advisory board. The centre manager is responsible for the day-to-day running of the centre. The centre fulfils its core purpose by running a range of services for families, by commissioning services from a range of partners and by working in partnership with health visitors and midwives. Activities are planned with other local children's centres to ensure a full range of services are available to families.

The children's centre has 1,277 children under five years of age living in its area. The majority of the families who use the centre are from White British backgrounds. Some 21% of families who use the centre come from homes that are dependent on benefits and where no-one is in work, and 13% of families are eligible for the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit.

When they start in early years provision, the majority of children have skills, knowledge and abilities that are lower than those expected for their age.

The main priority groups assessed in need of the centre services are vulnerable children, families living in the most deprived areas, teenage and young parents, families in workless households and lone parents.

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

- Increase the proportion of mothers breastfeeding their babies at six to eight weeks by:
  - working more closely with health partners to promote the benefits of breastfeeding
  - setting a more challenging target for improving the breastfeeding rate.
- Provide more opportunities for adults, especially those from workless homes, to develop their literacy, numeracy and computing skills by developing stronger links with training providers.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

**Good**

- The centre is successful in engaging the large majority of priority groups in the community. An increasing number of families from the most disadvantaged areas, together with teenage and young parents, and workless families use the centre's services. This is because staff know the community and ensure that services meet the needs of these families well.
- Well-established links with health partners mean that the centre is informed of new births in the area which they follow up swiftly with home visits. Weekly midwife and health visitor sessions, plus the baby weaning groups, result in the large majority of families accessing early childhood services.
- Outreach work has a positive impact on the lives of disabled children and those with special educational needs who benefit from attending the 'Little Stars' group. Increasing numbers of grandparents are encouraged to join the 'Grandparents Toddler Group' that helps them build stronger relationships with their grandchildren.
- Participation rates and attendance levels at sessions are consistently high. Surveys and parent feedback show high levels of satisfaction. Parents feel comfortable in the centre and know they will get a warm welcome from the staff. One parent expressed a view that was typical of many others, 'The staff are so friendly and are always there for you.'
- The family support workers have a very good knowledge of the many issues and challenges facing families in the community. Effective work in the home successfully ensures that many of those suffering from a range of difficulties are very well supported.
- The centre works effectively to support early years settings in the local area. Consequently, the vast majority of disadvantaged two-year olds take up their free early years place, helping adults return to work to take up further education. Most of the children aged three and four years take up their free entitlement to early education preparing them to get ready for school.

### The quality of practice and services

**Good**

- The quality and range of services are good and there is a good balance of targeted and universal provision. Services are planned jointly with neighbouring children's centres to ensure a full range of activities are in places that are convenient for the families in the area.
- Staff make effective use of assessments of children's achievements to plan the next steps and, as a result, children make good progress in their learning and development. The centre is taking effective action with partners to narrow the achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the rest. This is helping to reduce inequalities.
- Children are provided with stimulating and interesting activities, both in the community room and the outside play areas. These actively promote purposeful learning and provide plenty of opportunities for children to explore, be creative and learn independently. Children respond well to the high expectations of staff who present themselves as good role models. As a consequence, children are well prepared for nursery and their transition into school.
- Good partnerships with health services enable families to develop healthier lifestyles. The

weekly 'Healthy Lunch Club' promotes healthy eating effectively. Despite an improving picture, information supplied by the centre shows that at 40% the proportion of mothers sustaining breastfeeding is below the local average and is rightly a target for ongoing improvement.

- The centre works well with other agencies to support families who are most in need. Intervention for children subject to child protection plans, including looked after children, is very effective in ensuring vulnerable children are protected appropriately. Very well maintained case records show significant improvements in the outcomes for the children in these families.
- Parents attending the good-quality parenting courses say that they are better able to manage their children's behaviour and support their learning and development. Families in workless households are very appreciative of the financial advice and guidance provided by the centre, as this has improved their economic stability.
- The centre's volunteer programme makes a positive contribution to the life of the community. The programme has resulted in 23 adults progressing into further education and employment over the last three years. Most adults identified as needing help successfully complete their training courses. However, opportunities to improve the literacy, numeracy and computing skills of some parents are not fully developed.

### **The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management**

**Good**

- Leadership, management and governance arrangements are clear and effective. This enables the centre to work well towards meeting its priorities. The advisory board and local authority provide effective oversight of the centre's performance. Morale is high and support for the centre's drive for improvement is evident at all levels.
- Managers and staff form a committed team that is determined to improve provision and extend services to the wider community. They know the centre's strengths and are focused on improving areas still to be developed. The strong teamwork of staff and high levels of commitment by all stakeholders contribute effectively to improved outcomes for local families.
- Leaders work well with key partners which enables them to respond effectively and with flexibility in meeting the needs of families. The centre's expectations for the services delivered by commissioned providers are set out clearly and checked regularly.
- Governors and advisory board members have a wide range of skills that are used effectively to benefit the centre. They are supportive while ensuring the centre focuses closely on improving the outcomes for its priority groups. Staff are motivated to make improvements as their pay is linked to how successful they are in meeting performance targets. This has a positive impact in driving the centre forward.
- Policies, practices and procedures for safeguarding are fully effective. The Common Assessment Framework procedures are used thoroughly by key partners to provide on-going support for children and families who are most at risk. Checks on the suitability of adults to work with children are comprehensive. Robust risk assessments are undertaken prior to all activities.
- The quality and provision of resources and services to meet families' needs is good. Resources are used effectively and efficiently to allow the centre to meet its targets and improve outcomes for those most in need. The centre makes very good use of technology to promote

learning. For example, videoing parents' interactions with children to improve their skills in developing children's learning.

- Parents and children are consulted frequently and effectively through listening to the 'parent and children's voice'. Consequently, families contribute well to shaping the services provided. For example, the centre has extended the outdoor play area and built a pond at the suggestion of families.

**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/Children's Centre Group details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	21482
<b>Local authority</b>	Suffolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	423064
<b>Managed by</b>	The governing body of The Highfield Nursery School and Children's Centre.

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	1,277
<b>Centre manager</b>	Jannice Simpson
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01473 742534
<b>Email address</b>	admin@highfield.suffolk.sch.uk



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