

Holsworthy and District Children's Centre

Off Sanders Lane, Great Oak Meadow, Holsworthy, EX22 6EX

Inspection date

30–31 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 centre manager's energy and enthusiasm inspire centre staff and partners to provide a good quality service and have high aspirations, particularly for those in most need. Well-led and highly committed staff provide a professional and improving service that keeps children and families safe and promotes health and well-being for all families.
- Families feel safe and very welcome at the centre. A significant difference is made to the lives of children most in need and their families, including those living with domestic abuse and those living on a limited budget. Parents say that the centre is a 'life saver'.
- Strong partnerships with other agencies, especially health, and good strategies are used well to ensure the majority of families from vulnerable groups are registered with the centre. Effective relationships with the local school and early years providers ensure families receive good support.
- Excellent opportunities are provided for adults to volunteer their services so that they can make useful contributions to the centre and develop their confidence and skills whilst supporting others.

It is not outstanding because:

- It is not always clear to all workers what each child needs to achieve to ensure they are ready for school or what sustained impact courses or activities have in getting children prepared for school. Whilst plans are in place to develop improved recording and monitoring, it is too early to fully assess the impact of these systems on improving the quality of services.
- Although a large majority of adults who access courses complete them and adults are developing a range of skills, their learning and development are not fully recorded so they can see their achievements over time and plan their future learning.

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 senior leaders, a manager from the local authority and centre staff. They also met health, housing, education and social care partners, police, parents, early years practitioners, volunteers and representatives from the advisory board.

The inspectors visited a mother and baby unit, undertook a joint observation and had discussions with the childminder support group and members of the parents' forum.

They observed the centre's self-evaluation, action planning, a sample of case studies, safeguarding procedures and a range of other documentation.

Inspection team

Penny Mathers

Additional Inspector, Lead Inspector

Teresa Kiely

Additional Inspector

Full report

This phase two stand-alone centre started providing services in the community in 2007 and moved into the current building in 2009. It is open Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm and some evenings and weekends. The centre is located within the campus of Holsworthy Primary School (URN 113379), which is subject to a separate inspection. The centre is one of a cluster of four, managed by Action for Children on behalf of the local authority. An advisory board oversees the running of the centre. A centre manager and a team of full-time and part-time workers offer a mixture of universal provision and targeted services to meet the core purpose, including Play and Learn, Being Babies, baby massage and parenting support groups, as well as working with families in their own homes. The centre also works with health agencies to offer clinics, antenatal sessions, breastfeeding support and parenting craft.

The centre covers a large rural area of 172 square miles and makes use of buildings in the community to offer services. The area has 553 children under five years old. The centre has identified children in need of protection, children with delayed speech development, teenage parents and families in rural isolation as priority groups. Almost all of the families are of White British heritage. There are two geographical pockets of deprivation. A few children live in workless households and a few are eligible for the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. Children's skill levels on entry to early years provision are slightly below those expected for their age.

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

- Improve the monitoring and recording:
 - of the development and achievements of children who are most in need so that it is clear what they require to develop their early learning in preparation for school
 - to check the extent to which services are improving the development of children, particularly those in need, so that the centre knows what long term difference they are making in preparing children for school.
- Record the the learning and development of adults as they progress through the centre and monitor the long-term outcomes of those most in need so that services can be finely-tuned to support their future learning.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- Registrations rates have increased over the last three years so that the vast majority of families and those in target groups are now registered. The centre manager is passionate about the service, uses good interpersonal skills and creative methods to ensure even the most isolated children and families are reached. A strong partnership with health ensures those expecting children and families get to know about the centre at the earliest opportunity through the antenatal and health clinics run on site.
- Work with families and children most in need is seen as a priority and the centre has identified that the numbers of children subject to child protection plans are increasing. Staff establish and maintain trusting relationships with families. As a result, the large majority of families who require support continue involvement with the centre until their needs are met effectively.
- Referrals, observations and assessments are all used sensitively to match families to the services they require to improve their lives. The staff know the families and communities well and they are able to ensure the specific needs of families new to the area are quickly met. Families' views are listened to and activities are provided according to identified need, for example the Play and Learn sessions at St Giles on the Heath and the support to foster carers who provide care for mothers and babies.
- Quality services are taken out to community venues so that although many families do not have their own transport, and public transport is limited, they can access services wherever they live. A van is used to transport toys and equipment so that children have access to a wide range of

resources and activities. Parents told inspectors how much they valued this and the positive difference it made to the children's development.

- The centre knows almost all families with young children, including teenage parents. Excellent information sharing between the centre and its partners is used well to plan joined-up services that support children and families well. Very effective systems are in place to identify those who are not benefiting from the services available and plans are made to involve them. Children most in need, including disadvantaged two-year olds, have good access to free early education.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- A good balance of services between those open to all and those supporting specific groups is provided to meet the carefully assessed needs of all families and children. As a result, the quality, range and relevance of services are all good. Timely support, help and advice are provided for children who may be at risk of harm. Parents are encouraged to make positive changes to keep their children safe; they say that the centre has changed their lives and helped them progress their children's development immensely.
- Strong partnerships with a wide range of organisations benefit families. The local housing association has a strong relationship with the centre and runs drop-in sessions giving advice and guidance on housing and, in one case, the centre was able to intervene and prevent a family from being evicted. Childminders across the area have a professional partnership with the centre and value the good quality training as well as access to the toy library.
- A large majority of adults attending the centre are improving their parenting capabilities, achieving new skills and growing in confidence and self-esteem. Adult Learning run a number of basic skills training courses from the centre and some adults have gone on to college and another three have returned to work. Attendance on formal training programmes is recorded, but the learning and achievements of adults are not fully recorded to aid them in planning their future learning.
- Highly effective collaborative working with health agencies places a strong emphasis on good health from pre-birth onwards and breastfeeding support is good. Families enjoy cooking healthy meals through sessions that build confidence. The outside play area, where tomatoes, potatoes and beans are grown, promotes an appreciation of growing vegetables, and activities such as Out and About also encourage a healthy outdoor lifestyle. Incidents of child obesity are low and breastfeeding rates are improving well.
- Excellent volunteering opportunities have been developed from a group of parents who worked particularly well together improving their literacy. They now contribute well to the running of the centre by providing very good networks of support for families; some have progressed to employment having gained confidence and new skills. Parents appreciate the trips out to visit farm animals and picnics organised by the volunteers, and report how beneficial they have been both to themselves and their children's development.
- A strong focus on developing children's speech runs through the services provided and evaluations show parents develop a good understanding of their children's development. Because of all that the centre offers, the numbers of children reaching the expected levels at the end of Reception are increasing. Children's development is monitored, but information on what each child needs to achieve to be well prepared for school is not always readily available, and systems have not been fully developed to monitor the impact attendance at the children's centre has on their achievements.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The local authority sets targets for improvement that are increasingly focused on the priorities of the reach area. Most targets are met and some are exceeded. The advisory board and parents' forum regularly challenge the centre and are effective in creating the centre's priorities. The centre has been very successful in encouraging parents to attend the advisory board and play an important part in shaping and delivering services.
- Very effective leadership is underpinned by a secure framework of policies and procedures that staff

understand well. Leaders are close to their staff and use supervision and observation well to develop them, set targets and give constructive feedback. Staff are highly committed and feel well supported through regular supervision and good access to training and development.

- Self-evaluation is rigorous and largely accurate. Changes in management in the past slowed the rate of improvement, but the current managers understand the data and effectively monitor progress so that the centre is now improving at a good rate.
- A good range of resources is used creatively to provide services in the rural areas and tackle associated isolation. Staff, who are drawn from a range of backgrounds and experience, work together effectively to develop high quality services. The centre works well within a tight budget and managers work hard to ensure this does not negatively affect services to families.
- A strong culture of safeguarding is well embedded. Clear procedures ensure that all necessary pre-employment checks are completed and risk assessments are routinely undertaken on the centre and its activities. Staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures and work closely with social care professionals who speak highly of the positive changes they see in the lives of children as a result of the sensitive and well informed work.

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	21539
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	423225
Managed by	Action for Children on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	553
Centre leader	Kayleigh Stringer
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01409 253508
Email address	kayleigh.stringer@actionforchildren.org.uk

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