

Hurst Green and Holland Sure Start Children's Centre

Wolf's Wood, Hurst Green, Oxted, Surrey, RH8 0HJ

Inspection date 30–31 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
	Previous inspection:		
Access to services by young children and families		Inadequate	4
The quality of practice and services		Inadequate	4
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a centre that is inadequate. It is not good because:

- The centre is not providing sufficient support for the community it serves, particularly for those families it has identified as needing most support, namely mothers who are breastfeeding, single parents and fathers. Too few families from those groups currently access the centre and benefit from its services.
- The quality and range of the available information about the area served by the centre and its priority groups are insufficient. Some important statistics and information including live birth information are unavailable to the centre and other information is open to question. The centre is not always made aware of children who are receiving high levels of support from other services. This significantly limits the ability of the leaders of the centre and the local authority to plan effectively and to measure the centre's impact especially on families who need help the most.
- There is currently no adequate development plan at either local authority or centre level which sets out what the centre must do to improve its performance. It is also unclear how the local authority will help the centre to improve and check the impact it is having on reducing inequalities for children and families in the area it serves.
- Members of the governing body and the advisory board are not clear about government priorities for children's centres and have not been supported in how to monitor the performance of the centre. As a result, they are unable to sufficiently challenge the centre to make necessary improvements.

This centre has the following strengths:

- For those families who do access services provided by the centre, the quality of support they receive is either good or outstanding, depending on the services they access and the level of support. The centre's work clearly makes a very positive difference to their lives.

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 and other staff, parents and carers, representatives from health services such as a midwife and health visitor, charity workers, volunteers, members of the advisory board, governing body and the parents' forum and the headteacher of the on-site school. Account was also taken of the views of parents and carers expressed in their written evaluations of services received. A member of the Children in Need team was spoken to on the telephone.

Inspectors observed the centre's work including several activities and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Paul Armitage	Additional Inspector, Lead Inspector
Michael Blakey	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

The centre is in Hurst Green, Surrey, in the district of Tandridge. It is sited in the grounds of Hurst Green School (three to seven years). The school is subject to a separate inspection and its report can be found on the Ofsted website www.ofsted.gov.uk. The children's centre opened in 2008 as a phase two centre and moved to its present, new building in 2011. It is open from Monday to Thursday, 50 weeks a year. It also runs activities in halls in South Godstone, Hurst Green and on the Children's Centre Rural Bus which travels to different communities. The centre is not formally linked to other centres.

The governing body of Hurst Green School manages the centre on behalf of the local authority. There is also an advisory board which has representatives from organisations that work with the centre such as local schools, churches, health workers, and the police. There is one parent representative. There is a newly established parents' forum for the sharing of ideas for improvement.

The centre offers a wide range of services designed to help new mothers, growing children and adults. It seeks to focus its activities on three groups of people who need support. These are fathers, single parents and mothers who are breastfeeding or who wish to breastfeed.

The centre serves a mainly rural area which includes small towns such as Godstone and Oxted. There are 966 children under five years living in the area. The local community consists mainly of White British heritage families with small numbers from other ethnic groups. There is a mixed range of housing from social housing to large, detached properties. Eighty per cent of people own their own homes. The area is mostly prosperous, but there are pockets of poverty. Unemployment is low. In the district as a whole, 0.3% of families are claiming the childcare element of Working Tax Credit and 1.9% of children live in workless households. Pupils enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with ability levels in line with those expected for their age.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Establish why identified priority groups such as mothers who are breastfeeding, single parents and fathers are not accessing services in higher numbers. Once established, develop services to meet their needs.
- Work with the local authority, health representatives and children's services to ensure that the centre has sufficient, accurate data, particularly in relation to live births and where children are already being supported by other services so the engagement of those families increases and more benefit from the centre's services.
- Work with the local authority to:
 - produce a clear, realistic development plan with precise targets which sets out how the centre will increase its contact with the people it has defined as most in need
 - be clear in the plan how the performance of the centre will be evaluated
 - identify how the local authority will closely check the work of the centre and assist the centre in meeting the targets set out in the plan.
- Liaise with the local authority to provide appropriate support and training for governors and members of the advisory board so that they are able to form an accurate, independent view of the performance of the centre and are able to challenge the centre to improve.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Inadequate

- The centre is not enabling enough families to access its services, particularly those groups it has identified as needing most support, namely fathers, single parents and breastfeeding mothers.

- Weaknesses in sharing information and providing support between the centre and the different organisations that work in the community, notably health partners and children's services, have prevented the centre from increasing the number of families who engage in services. For example, the centre's outreach work is hampered by a lack of information about the most vulnerable families in the local area.
- Uncertainty about existing statistics and the lack of other pertinent information, such as live birth data, means that it is impossible for the centre to plan its activities properly and for the local authority to understand how much help it must provide.
- Good information is provided for families who do access the centre in relation to free early education, especially for disadvantaged two-year-olds and where any developmental problems are identified at the two-year health review. As a result, most children take up their entitlement to early education.
- Outstanding support is provided for families that access the baby clinics. They are highly valued by mothers and are very well attended. One said that she was very pleased to be able to use the centre and that 'she could not speak more highly of the support'. Another said, as a result of being encouraged to use the centre, 'They have helped an awful lot.' A health visitor commented, 'We would struggle without having the centre.' Attendance by those using the centre is carefully monitored and absences are quickly followed up.

The quality of practice and services

Inadequate

- The range and relevance of services is inadequate because too few families, including those from priority groups, are accessing the centre and are therefore unable to benefit from the good quality services on offer. For example, fathers using the centre speak of the isolation of being a single parent and welcome the recent initiatives taken by the centre to help them. But the number using the centre is still very low.
- Parents who take advantage of the excellent breastfeeding support available to all speak highly of the positive impact this is having on their lives. However, the number of those from key priority groups who benefit from this high level of care is too low.
- For those families that attend the centre, good quality sessions, such as Messy Play, provide well-planned and exciting activities for children to have fun and learn a lot. Parents and carers have good opportunities to socialise and learn from each other and from the good role modelling of staff. Staff at the local pre-school commented on how well children are prepared for their next stage of learning.
- Staff are very successful at helping those families who use the centre understand their difficulties and take control of them. They are skilled in finding others who will help, such as through excellent links with local charities. Successful examples include using local organisations for training volunteers and finding employment. The centre has had to be particularly adept in preserving these services because Jobcentre Plus no longer has the resource to provide the level of help required.
- Case files of families in contact with the centre are up to date and give clear indications of the involvement of relevant professionals. They also reflect the views and the wishes of the families that are helped.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Inadequate

- Leadership, governance and management are inadequate because too few families from the centre's identified priority groups benefit from services. Weaknesses in self-evaluation, a lack of clarity in the development plan and inadequate or unreliable data limit the centre's ability to know the difference services are making and plan necessary improvements.
- The local authority is not providing sufficient support for the centre. Too little information about the area served by the centre is provided to enable the centre to be precise about which families are

accessing services and most need support. There is little strategic direction, for example in how best to use limited resources, such as the outreach worker, or in ensuring the centre has the information it needs to measure its impact and support the families who most need help. This is because systems to share information with health services and children's services are not well established.

- The governing body and advisory board are supportive of the centre, but do not adequately evaluate the centre's performance. This is because members have had no training in how to understand the information available to them. As a result they are not able to challenge the centre to make improvements where these are needed.
- The day-to-day management of the centre, as well as the management of the services offered to the families that use the centre, is undertaken very well. The centre manager keeps a very close eye on the quality of what is offered and listens very carefully to families' opinions. A newly formed parents' forum offers useful ideas and organises activities.
- Safeguarding procedures including checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers are effective. The centre uses the Common Assessment Framework and child protection procedures effectively for those children and families it is in contact with. However, social workers do not always share information about children in need with the centre. If the centre is told, it is often just before the social worker withdraws from the case. The centre's outreach worker has to work fast to understand and work effectively with the child and family.

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.

Unique reference number	215953
Local authority	Surrey County Council
Inspection number	427463
Managed by	The governors of Hurst Green School (3 to 7 years) on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	966
Centre leader	Helen Acraman
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01883 723496
Email address	childcentre@hurst-green.surrey.sch.uk

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