

# Worcestershire - Wychavon

Westland First School, Farmers Way, Droitwich, WR9 9EQ

**Inspection date** 18–19 September 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
	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 children's centre group is good.

- The well-qualified and highly committed staff team and some key professionals work extremely well together to provide a good service to children and families, particularly those most in need.
- The local authority has a strong commitment to improving the lives of families and children in the Wychavon area. It provides good support, sets challenging targets which have ensured improvement, and checks closely to make sure the centres deliver high quality services that are matched to users' needs.
- Staff use information well to support parents so that almost all three and four-year-old children access their free entitlement to good quality early education. As a result, children make good progress in their learning and development overall.
- The children's centre group provides good care, guidance and support to all parents, particularly those who are most vulnerable. This is achieved through effective one-to-one support, parenting programmes, and opportunities for parents to gain necessary skills and knowledge. This builds self-confidence and has resulted in parents' greater resilience and support to their children.
- Safeguarding and the welfare of children are at the forefront of the work of the centres.

### It is not outstanding because:

- A small minority of families with children aged under five years, including those most in need of support, such as Romani, Traveller and Polish families, remain difficult to engage and are not benefiting from the services offered by the group.
- The centres do not have access to data to show how many children and families with disabilities are living in their area, which means they cannot be sure that they are making contact with or offering support to all members of this vulnerable group.
- The centres do not effectively check the difference they are making for those families who access education and training opportunities or those who receive support and help with housing and benefits advice.

## 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. The centres that form part of this children's centre group are WANDS Children's Centre, Blossom Vale Children's Centre, and Orchard Vale Children's Centre.

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the senior improvement adviser and data officer from the local authority, the children's centre group district manager, centre area managers, health and education professionals, partner agencies, outreach workers, early years practitioners, volunteers and representatives from the advisory board. They also spoke to partner agencies and parents, and looked at outcomes of satisfaction surveys.

The inspectors visited WANDS Children's Centre, Blossom Vale Children's Centre, and Orchard Vale Children's Centre. Visits to activities were undertaken jointly with the centre managers, who also attended all team meetings.

They observed the centres' work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centres' self-evaluation, needs analysis, delivery plan, a sample of case studies, safeguarding procedures and children's development records.

## Inspection team

Joy Law	Her Majesty's Inspector, Lead Inspector
Susan Crawford	Her Majesty's Inspector
Catherine Hairsine	Additional Inspector
Deborah Sanders	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the group

Wychavon is a group of children's centres in Worcestershire managed by the local authority. The district of Wychavon covers 256 square miles of the southern and eastern part of the county of Worcestershire. The group is made up of three area teams located at three main centres: WANDS (Droitwich area), a phase one children's centre; Blossom Vale (Persore area) and Orchard Vale (Evesham area), both phase two centres. The centres became established as a group in April 2013 resulting in some changes in the location of staff. They are managed by a district manager. There have been significant staffing issues over the past two years due to eight staff pregnancies and long term sickness.

There are three advisory boards, which include key partners and parents. The children's centre group offers a range of services to meet its core purpose, including family support, adult learning and health services. In addition to the centres, services are also delivered directly in the community, where parents are able to access them easily. For example, in village and church halls, community centres and local medical centres. Outreach work within family's homes is a key feature of the centres' work.

The centres are open each week day from 9.00am to 5.00pm, for 50 weeks of the year. WANDS Children's Centre is located on the site of Westlands First School and is co-located with Wands Day Nursery, Blossom Vale is on the site of Abbey Park First and Nursery School and co-located with Abbey Road Playgroup, and Orchard Vale is on the site of Evesham Nursery School. There are 24 full daycare settings and 52 pre-school playgroups who offer childcare places across the Wychavon district. These providers are subject to different inspection arrangements. Reports can be found at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>.

There are 5,743 children under five years of age living in the area the centres serve. The area is largely rural. The three main towns of Droitwich Spa, Evesham and Persore, along with the large Cotswold village of Broadway, account for almost half of the district's population. The rest of the district is sparsely populated and includes nearly 100 smaller villages and hamlets.

The economy and local employment are largely based on agriculture. There is a wide geographical variation in levels of child poverty across the Wychavon reach area. Although the area is not identified as deprived overall, there are pockets of deprivation among areas considered to be more affluent. Droitwich West, Harvington and Norton, and Evesham North are in the top 30% most deprived areas nationally. Around 13% of children in Wychavon are living in households dependent on workless benefits. Transport links are limited and can be a barrier to accessing services.

Most of the population is White British with 3% of families from minority ethnic groups. Romani people and Travellers are the district's largest ethnic minority (700-800 families), closely followed by the increasing number of Polish families.

When they start in early years provision most children's skills and knowledge are generally at the level expected for their age but these vary with communication and language skills often being weaker.

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

- Increase the proportion of the most vulnerable families who engage with the services available to them, particularly disabled children, Romani, Traveller and Polish families.
- Work with the local authority to obtain data to support more effective identification and engagement with children and families with disabilities.
- More closely check the difference centres are making for those families who access education and training opportunities and those who receive support and help with housing and benefits advice.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

**Good**

- Good sharing of data and local information across the centres and agencies means that resources are used where they are most needed and are making a significant difference to the lives of some of the most vulnerable groups. The centres use outreach work very effectively to encourage families who otherwise may not access services. For example, 'Stay and Play' sessions were originally established to support Eastern European families moving into the area for the fruit picking season.
- A male worker links with the local authority 'Gypsy Roma Traveller' (GRT) team and meets monthly with these communities across the district. While this has been a major success in breaking down barriers, the centres' work with the Romani and Traveller community is still in its infancy.
- Staff work very closely with other agencies so that they can give help and support to those children who need it the most as early as possible.
- Centres tailor their education and training courses to the needs of their local communities, particularly those in most need of help and support. 'Taster programmes' help parents to take part in informal learning before moving on to accredited programmes. Where necessary, programmes are provided for specific groups in order to meet their particular needs and interests. For example, in Droitwich, maths and information technology programmes are adapted to meet the specific learning needs of the group following early diagnostic assessment.
- The centres are particularly successful with their parenting programmes where a vast majority of parents complete the course.
- The centres successfully support parents of very young children by providing a 'one-stop-shop' service through the baby cafe drop-in. Parents, both mothers and fathers, attend frequently to seek advice on weaning and breastfeeding. They are able to speak to the health visitor without an appointment. Centre staff are on hand to encourage new parents to register and to advise them on services available.
- 'Stay and Play' sessions run throughout the holidays to support children's transition on to school. These sessions help parents to feel more confident and give children the opportunity to try out school-type activities, as well as learning about healthy lunch boxes and using trays for eating.

### The quality of practice and services

**Good**

- The centres respond well to helping families to find employment. Family support staff work in partnership with the post-16 engagement officer to refer young parents to relevant education and training. A new coaching programme, which includes one to one support, is helping parents who are ready to seek work. All centres give adults opportunities to volunteer as a route to employment and were able to provide clear evidence of how these opportunities have enabled families to improve their lives by securing work.
- The children's centre group offers a good range of opportunities for parents and children to learn about food, nutrition and healthy eating in a practical way. Parents are improving their cooking skills through planning and preparing well-balanced meals to eat with their children.
- Children and parents engage in a wide range of well-planned and delivered sessions to support families' well-being, such as 'Structured Stay and Play', 'Messy Play' and 'Creative sessions'. Parents speak positively about the centres' services and how they are developing understanding of how to support their children's learning, particularly the importance of physical activity and promoting their communication and language skills.
- Centre staff check the progress made by some children who attend the centre, although this is relatively new and not widely used. Children who regularly attend the centres activities make good progress in their learning. Those moving onto school are supported well and attend 'ready for school' sessions. Schools report very positively about the difference the centres have made in preparing children for school.
- Effective procedures are in place to track and monitor the progress of families in the target groups and procedures are in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of courses provided which then

informs planning for future provision.

- Parents using the centres feel they are listened to, supported and welcomed. Several parents and carers spoke very positively about how the work of the centres are making a positive difference for them and their children. For example, one parent stated that the centre she regularly attends 'had been a life saver' and that 'they would not have known what they would have done without their help'. Another talked about how the staff had helped her to 'find herself' and about how much more confident she felt.

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

**Good**

- The centres use good self-evaluation systems to identify priorities and set challenging targets for improvement. However, the lack of a consistent system used by all of the centres makes evaluating the effectiveness of the group more difficult.
- The local authority routinely provides managers with a good range of high-quality, robust data and management information which is used well to ensure the services provided meet the needs of the local community.
- Governance is good. Very good links are in place between the advisory board, local partners and the local authority. Parents' forums are in place at all three centres. The volunteer 'parent champion' encourages other parents to share their views. Parents are represented on the advisory board and regular surveys and evaluations ensure the centres know the views of parents and use these well to improve access and to shape services.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Well qualified staff act quickly and make good use of the centres' detailed policies and procedures to make sure children are protected well. Children with additional needs are identified early and have tailored packages of support.
- Good partnership working with agencies to support vulnerable adults suffering domestic abuse have a significant impact on improving parents' lives. For example, a parent stated that the support she had received had given her strength, perception, and a quality of life she didn't have before. Accessing the centre opened up opportunities which resulted in her moving into employment. The parent told inspectors that the staff were so supportive, and that the centre 'was like a second home'.
- Performance management and professional supervision are well established and consistently applied across all centres and ensures families receive swift, appropriate and high quality support. Case files are closely monitored and maintained to a high standard.

**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 Group details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	80390
<b>Local authority</b>	Worcestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	428002
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority
<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	5,743
<b>Centre leader</b>	Kate Jones
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not Previously Inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01905 827391
<b>Email address</b>	kjjones@worcestershire.gov.uk

**This group consists of the following children's centres:**

- 23443 WANDS Children's Centre
- 20342 Blossom Vale Children's Centre
- 22268 Orchard Vale Children's Centre

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