

# Friars Children's Centre

Friars Primary School, Constable Way, Shoeburyness, SS3 9XX

**Inspection date** 2–3 October 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
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 large majority of families are registered with the centre and have good access to services. Staff work particularly well with health professionals to ensure prospective and existing parents can quickly access the centre's services.
- Staff know their community well. They work together with other centres in Southend and with other organisations to share information so that services are relevant to families' needs.
- The centre provides a good balance between services that are available to all families and those that are more specialised to meet the specific needs of families such as those with the most needs. As a result outcomes for families are good and improving.
- Parents receive excellent care, support and guidance from the centre. This helps them to overcome significant personal barriers, raises their aspirations and increases their life chances.
- Safeguarding is a key priority for centre staff. This is very well reflected in all aspects of the centre's work. Case studies and personal testimonies from parents demonstrate the centre's success in keeping families with the most needs, to remain safe.
- The quality of leadership, management and governance is good. Leaders and managers are ambitious and totally committed to providing a good service for families. The centre's positive transformation since its previous inspection demonstrates the strength and effectiveness of the local authority's improvement plans.

### It is not outstanding because:

- Although the centre prioritises the development of children's speech and language skills, these are not yet in line with local or national averages.
- Not enough parents are involved in formal decision making or contribute to the way the centre is run.

## 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 centre staff, local authority staff, representatives from the local authority and the centre's advisory board. They also met representatives from the health services, education organisations, early years services and Jobcentre Plus. They met parents including those who sit on the advisory board.

The inspectors visited two sites used for outreach provision.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Inspection team

Priscilla McGuire, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Anthony Mundy	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Friars Centre is a phase two centre that was set up in 2007. It shares its site with Friars Primary and Nursery School which is subject to separate inspection arrangements. A report for the school can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). The centre fulfils its core purpose and services offered include health services, adult learning provision, family support and activities for children. The centre was previously inspected in May 2012 and judged inadequate. At the time, it was governed and managed by Friars Primary School. Since September 2012, the centre has been managed by the Pre-School Learning Alliance. It appointed a completely new staff team to manage and provide services at the centre. The advisory board provides governance for the centre and is supported in its work by a delivery board which is made up of representatives from different partner organisations which help the centre to plan and review services.

The centre's reach area is socially and economically diverse with pockets of deprivation. Most families live in either social housing or privately rented homes. The number of lone parents and workless families on benefits is above the national average. The proportion of families whose lives are affected by domestic abuse is higher than other parts of Southend. The majority of families are of White British heritage. On entry to early years provision, children's knowledge and skills are below levels expected for their age.

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

- Work together with early years practitioners to improve children's speech and language skills.
- Increase parents' involvement in decision making at the centre by actively promoting the role of the advisory board to all parents and ensuring the parents' forum is fully operational and is linked to the advisory board.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The large majority of families are registered with the centre and have good access to its services. Staff work exceptionally well with health partners, including health visitors and midwives, to identify new and prospective parents. As a result, they receive comprehensive information about the centre's services and early help when appropriate.
- Centre staff and their partners from different organisations and from other centres share information and data very effectively. This ensures that families with the most needs are identified early and receive the most appropriate means of support and help. 'Reflection meetings' are used particularly well by staff and their partners to review the progress of these families.
- Using a joint action plan, produced in partnership with other centres and through the work of the centre's delivery board, staff carefully plan and provide services that are relevant to the needs of families. As a result, overall participation rates are high and parents are highly satisfied with the centre.
- Staff have worked hard to promote the centre to the community and have successfully used leafleting and other promotional activities to raise awareness of the centre's work. They have also used outreach venues such as clinics, to ensure families living in different parts of the reach area can access services in places that are close to where they live.
- The centre has exceeded the target set by the local authority to increase the participation of families who live in deprived areas. As a result, the centre is reducing inequalities and increasing life chances of these families.
- Through effective work with partners and the local authority, the centre has successfully identified which target groups need the most support. These include those living in deprived areas, families

from workless households and those whose lives have been affected by domestic abuse. Services are well matched to their needs and as a result the proportion of families from these groups who participate in activities is good and improving.

### **The quality of practice and services**

Good

- The centre offers an appropriate balance of good quality universal services such as health clinics and more specialised services such as counselling support and programmes designed to help families who are living with or whose lives have been affected by domestic violence.
- Good quality parenting training is instrumental in helping parents, particularly those with the most needs, to improve their ability to support their children's development and manage their behaviour. Case study examples and testimonies from parents demonstrate how they effectively apply what they have learnt from their training to manage their children's behaviour and support their development.
- Activities for children such as 'Baby Crew' are well planned and successfully promote children's learning, development and enjoyment.
- The excellent care, quality and guidance the centre provides enables parents to overcome significant barriers and improves their life chances. 'You're not just a statistic at this centre, you're a name' and 'They're sensitive to your needs' are just some of the comments from parents which reflect the views of many. Parents also commented about how the centre's non-judgemental approach has helped them to feel confident to disclose problems and as a consequence receive the support they need.
- Through effective links with Jobcentre Plus, parents receive good quality guidance that helps them become better prepared for employment and training. Data shows that parents make good progress into training, further education and employment as a result of the support they receive.
- Although the centre recognises the improvement of speech and language skills of children as a priority, not enough children have reached age expected levels by the time they progress to school.

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

Good

- Arrangements for governance, leadership and management are very effective. Since the centre's previous inspection, the local authority has taken decisive and very successful action to improve management arrangements at the centre. A highly motivated and ambitious new staff team has been appointed and have been instrumental in improving the quality of the centre's services and improving outcomes for families. Staff have worked hard to re-establish the centre's key role in the community.
- Monitoring of the centre's work by the local authority, the advisory board and the Pre-School Learning Alliance is a thorough, coherent and rigorous process. It involves close analysis of data and a planned sequence of regular reporting arrangements.
- Strategies to improve the quality of the centre's work are effective. The local authority has worked very well with the Pre-School Learning Alliance to respond to all actions for improvement identified at the previous inspection. The result of their determined efforts are seen in the successful transformation of the centre into one that parents trust and that effectively meets the needs of families and the wider community.
- Staff are well qualified for their roles and the Pre-School Learning Alliance invests well in their training and development. Objectives are regularly set for staff. Supervision meetings and reporting arrangements are used well to monitor their performance.
- Resources are used well to provide services and support for families. Accommodation and facilities at the centre are of a high quality. Through highly effective partnership working with other professionals and with other centres, the centre provides a good range of services and support to ensure families' needs are well met.

- Safeguarding is a key part of all aspects of centre's work. Policies and procedures to ensure families remain safe are rigorously applied and well promoted. Centre staff receive regular data and information about which children are subject to child protection plans. They work closely with social care partners and use tools such as the Common Assessment Framework to thoroughly assess the needs of families and provide the necessary support.
- The centre is effectively reducing inequalities by working with an increasing number of families who live in deprived parts of the community. By helping these families achieve positive outcomes and by raising their aspirations, their life chances are improving.
- Parents are highly satisfied with the centre and routinely contribute their views through evaluations and feedback to staff. However, the centre has only recently started to involve parents at advisory board level and the parents' forum is in the process of being re-constituted.

**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**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	22459
<b>Local authority</b>	Southend-On-Sea
<b>Inspection number</b>	427442
<b>Managed by</b>	The Pre-School Learning Alliance on behalf of the local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	600
<b>Centre leader</b>	Jane Pancutt
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 May 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01702-292109
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