

# Hillmorton Children's Centre

Watts Lane, Rugby, CV21 4PE

**Inspection date** 5–6 November 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b> Previous inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
		Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Requires improvement	3
The quality of practice and services		Requires improvement	3
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This is a centre that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- The proportion of lone and teenage parents accessing centre services is too low.
- Despite their good engagement, not enough is being done to enhance the economic well-being of workless families.
- There is too little use of data and other information to inform the setting of precise and measurable improvement targets. This impedes managers' on-going monitoring and evaluation and the local authority's and advisory board's checks on the centre's overall effectiveness.
- There is limited follow up about how well children who have accessed centre services get on in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and no system in place to find out how well the few adults who access training or further education progress.

### This centre has the following strengths:

- The centre successfully engages the large majority of families from its most disadvantaged community and most minority ethnic families. The needs of fathers are met particularly well.
- Good quality outreach work ensures that children and families in most need of help receive timely and effective support. 'Family Matters' meetings enable the regular exchange of information between different agencies working locally and this ensures the good protection of very vulnerable children.
- Strong partnerships with early years settings result in a shared approach to helping young children, including those in danger of underachieving, to prepare well for school, and particularly to build confident communication, language and literacy skills.
- Parents support the centre's life and development well through the active Parents Forum.
- Staff have come through an unsettled period positively: they work as a collaborative team who between them have the right skills and expertise to assist managers in moving the centre forward at a more rapid pace than previously.

## 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, head of centre, officers from the local authority, partners, and members of the governing body, advisory board and parents. Several activities were observed by the inspectors including one jointly with the centre manager who also attended all team meetings along with the head of centre.

Inspectors looked at the centre's self evaluation, development plan, a sample of case studies, safeguarding policies and procedures and a range of other documentation.

## Inspection team

Lead inspector, Christine Field

Additional inspector

Geoffrey Dorrity

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

The centre opened in 2007 as a phase 2 stand alone centre and delivers a range of services to meet its core purpose. It shares a site with Hillmorton Primary School (URN:130887) which is subject to a separate inspection. The centre manager oversees the work of a small team comprising a mix of full and part time early years workers and a part time family support worker. The centre manager reports to the head of centre who is also the headteacher of the adjacent school. The centre manager has very recently returned to work following prolonged absence, during which time the centre was led by an interim manager. The centre governance is provided by the governing body of the school on behalf of the local authority. An advisory board with partner, parent and governor representation is well established.

The centre serves an urban area on the outskirts of Rugby. Historically the reach area comprised mainly older residents but more recently new, young families have moved into the area. Families are predominantly White British although a rising number of families from other minority ethnic backgrounds are accessing the centre. The centre reach includes nine super output areas of which one falls into the 20-30% most deprived nationally (Hillmorton West). The percentage of families (12%) claiming out of work related benefits is lower than the county average. Some 6.8% of young children are assessed as living in poverty which is significantly less than the county figure of 11.9%.

There are 779 children under five years of age living in the centre's reach area. Children enter early years provision at levels below those expected for their age.

The centre has identified its priority groups as lone, teenage and young parents, workless families, families from minority ethnic backgrounds and fathers.

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

- Increase the proportion of lone and teenage parents accessing centre services to a large majority.
- Ensure that the needs of workless families are planned for and specific services developed that will enhance their employability and economic well-being.
- Establish a robust tracking system to check on the achievement of children who have accessed centre services at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, and put in place a process for checking up on the progress made by adults who access training or further education opportunities.
- Sharpen the use of data and other relevant information to inform the setting of precise and measurable improvement targets which are monitored rigorously by managers, the local authority and the advisory board, in order to keep a close check on the centre's overall effectiveness.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

### Requires improvement

- Too few lone or teenage families access the centre's services on a regular basis.
- Most eligible three and four year olds take up their entitlement to free early education but only two thirds of two years olds have done so to date.
- The strong partnership with health professionals results in the speedy follow up of all new births in the reach area and as a result 86% of young children are registered with the centre. Most families, including those expecting children, access early childhood services. A large majority of families living in the most disadvantaged community access services regularly, as do a large majority of families from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- A high number of parents access the courses available to extend their parenting skills. Records show the gains made in confidence and in building positive relationships with their children and better understanding their needs.
- Fathers say how much they enjoy attending the weekly 'Saturdays' session which has seen increased participation in the three years it has been established.
- The centre undertakes surveys to find out why some families are reluctant to take up its services and has increased its marketing activities through social networks such as 'Facebook'. Advisory Board members identify that more work is required to promote what is on offer to priority groups.

### The quality of practice and services

### Requires improvement

- There is limited tracking of the achievement of children who have been in regular contact with the centre when they move onto nursery. This means that the centre has no way of knowing how effective its early help is in the longer term.
- The progress made by adults who undertake courses is not routinely followed up and so information to inform the planning of appropriate future services is incomplete.
- Services provide an appropriate balance between those open to everyone and those specifically targeted at supporting families facing particular challenges such as social isolation, domestic violence, and debt and housing problems. However, the services provided for the large majority of workless families who attend the centre are not well enough focused on enhancing their employability or economic well-being. Very few parents are undertaking adult education courses.
- Specific groups such as the 'Young Parents Group' were highly successful in the past but more recently only a few families participate. Similarly, the volunteering programme was a strong pathway for local parents wanting to upskill and get back into the workplace. Two volunteers have very recently been recruited but neither lives in the centre's reach area or is a parent of young children.
- Weekly clinics held at the centre attract a high number of families who come to get their babies weighed and their children's development checked by health visitors. They value the opportunity to chat to centre staff about any other concerns or worries. A high number of parents and childminders attend first aid, cooking and food hygiene courses which improve families' well-being; almost all of the centre's health-related targets are met.
- Children enjoy the 'Messy Play' sessions where they experiment with different textures, tastes and smells as they play with shapes set in custard or go fishing in jelly. The centre's partnership with other early years settings enhances children's readiness for school to good effect. This is reflected in the proportion of local children reaching a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, which is above average.
- The gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and the rest is closing more rapidly than seen nationally. Through 'Chatter Matters', the centre works successfully with specialist agencies to promote children's confident communication, language and literacy development and reduce inequalities.

**The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management****Requires improvement**

- Over the past eighteen months the centre's leadership and management has been adversely affected by absence and changes in personnel and there has also been a high turnover of staff. This has resulted in a loss of impetus to improvement and a dip in some aspects of practice such as keeping up with information management systems and on top of paperwork. It is to the team's credit that resources have been used sensibly to meet the needs of the most vulnerable families and that the centre's programme of activities has continued intact. Parents who use the centre have a high level of satisfaction in their quality and impact.
- There is too little use made of the wealth of data available to help managers find out which groups are accessing services the most or to assist the setting of improvement priorities. Governance arrangements are well embedded; however, the lack of precise and measurable targets in the development plan makes it hard for the local authority and advisory board to check on progress and challenge the centre's performance.
- Staff supervision is regular and is viewed positively by staff who work as a collaborative team committed to doing their best for families. Appraisal takes place but is not as well organised as other staff support systems such as training. Staff are upbeat about the future and have the right skills and expertise to assist managers in moving the centre forward.
- Safeguarding is given high status in policy and procedures. Thorough suitability checks are made on staff and other adults working unsupervised with children, and training is up-to-date in respect of child protection matters.
- Very effective partnerships with health and social care professionals underpin the centre's good work with families most in need of support, including those supported using the Common Assessment Framework procedures, children in need, children who are looked after and those subject to a child protection plan. Bi-weekly 'Family Matters' meetings enable the regular exchange of information between different agencies and this ensures integrated and timely early help. The welfare of children has remained paramount during a period of unsettled staffing.
- Parents are consulted about services and feed back their views after sessions, group work and activities. They have a strong voice and are fully involved in the life and development of the centre through their active Forum, as governors and members of the advisory board.

**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 details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	21503
<b>Local authority</b>	Warwickshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	430226
<b>Managed by</b>	The governing body of Hillmorton Primary School on behalf of the local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	779
<b>Centre leader</b>	Andrea Brown
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01788 540588
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