

Sutterton and Swineshead Children's Centre

Sutterton Fourfields CE Primary School, Park Avenue, Boston, PE20 2JN

Inspection date 13–14 November 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.

- Highly successful monitoring and assessment strategies ensure that almost all of the families who are most in need of support are identified and registered with the centre. Family support workers tirelessly work with the most reluctant families on an individual basis or they support them to attend groups resulting in the overwhelming majority of these families engaging with the centre.
- Assessment is used very well to make sure that families receive the help and support they need to make positive changes to their lives from the most relevant team or worker and in the most effective way. Support packages are good quality and delivered expertly. Consequently, adults learn and use skills to help them become better parents and the wellbeing of families is improved.
- Leaders and managers have very high expectations of staff, partners and organisations delivering activities and services on behalf of the children's centre. As a result of this good leadership and governance the impact the centre is having is improving.
- Service specifications and agreements contain regularly monitored, measureable targets. Managers at all levels make setting staff development targets and checking the quality of their work a high priority. Families in the area are supported by a highly motivated and well-qualified team of people because of this.
- Reducing the risk of harm to children is deeply embedded in the centre's work and procedures are rigorously applied and understood by all who work with children and families.

It is not outstanding because:

- Managers' analysis of the data available to them is not as strong as it could be to devise clear and measureable development plans and self-evaluation. This means they are not always aware of the precise attendance profile of centre users or of outcomes for adult learners.
- The strategic decision to suspend monitoring of early years groups delivered by commissioned partners following new contracts being awarded led to managers being unaware of a decline in the quality of some activities.

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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with managers, parents, centre staff and representatives of the local authority, health and social care partners and commissioned services delivery partners.

The inspectors visited Sutterton Children's Centre and Swineshead Children's Centre.

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

Inspection team

Joanne Smith Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Catherine Hairsine

Additional inspector

Anthony Mundy

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Sutterton and Swineshead Children's Centre operates from two sites. The Sutterton site is accommodated in Sutterton Fourfields CE Primary School and the Swineshead site is accommodated in Swineshead St Mary's CE Primary School. The centre is part of the Boston collaboration of children's centres and is managed by Lincolnshire County Council. The centre shares some service delivery and an advisory board with Boston, Carlton Road and Old Leake Children's Centre. The schools and Boston, Carlton Road and Old Leake Children's Centre are subject to separate inspections and their reports can be found on the Ofsted website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Sutterton and Swineshead Children's Centre opened as two independent centres in 2008 and 2009 respectively. They were merged as one centre in autumn 2012. The area served by the centre is overwhelmingly rural and many parts of the area have poor public transport services. Sutterton and Swineshead villages are approximately seven miles away from each other and from the nearest town, which is Boston.

The centre is an integral part of the locality integrated Targeted and Family Assessment Support team and offers parenting advice and support, parents and child activity groups, adult learning and health appointments alongside one to one work with Family Support workers and the social care team. Early years groups and adult family learning are delivered by commissioned partners. Families from across the Boston collaboration of children's centres access services at both the centres in the collaboration. Staff from the children's centres share training and development opportunities.

There are around 1040 children aged under five years living in the area served by Sutterton and Swineshead Children's Centre and the very large majority are from White British background. In recent years there has been an increase in families from eastern Europe using the centre's services but these families are mostly settled in the Boston area. The area is socially diverse with some relatively affluent neighbourhoods and small pockets of high level deprivation.

Agriculture is the main source of employment in the area. Worklessness is low, however, many of the employment opportunities are poorly paid. Around 3% of children in the area live in households dependent on workless benefits. Families whose circumstances may make them vulnerable and those living in the more isolated rural areas are the centres priority for their targeted work. Children enter school Early Years Foundation Stage provision with skills and knowledge in line with those expected for their age.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Use data more efficiently to:
 - gain a much more precise overview of which families are attending the centre and where they live;
 - set more easily measurable targets for the centre in the same way they are set for partners who deliver services;
 - monitor the outcomes of adult learning to better celebrate successes, inform planning and extend provision.
- Reinstate quality assurance monitoring of services and activities delivered by commissioned partners, in particular the early years groups and activities.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- Every effort is made to give families the help and support they need in the most useful way for them. Parenting courses are skilfully adapted to meet the needs of a group or are delivered in the

home to families who, for whatever reason, cannot attend a group. Family support workers have devised a work book for families for whom more formal parenting courses are not yet suitable so that they are not disadvantaged. Interpreters and translation services are routinely used when working with families who speak English as an additional language.

- The large majority of families in the area served by the centre use its services. This is a marked improvement on the position in March 2012 when only around 14% of families used centre services. The increase is the result of carefully targeted marketing in the more isolated parts of the area and much improved relationships with health partners that have enabled much better information sharing about new babies living in the area.
- A very high proportion of two-, three- and four-year-old children who are eligible to receive funded nursery education are benefitting from the offer and are attending a good quality childcare setting. When the centre staff receive the list of eligible two-year-olds they methodically contact each child's parents to make sure they understand what they are being offered and to provide help to parents with applications and finding a place in a good quality setting.
- High priority is given to maintaining a good range of parent and child activity sessions at the centre on different days and at different times. Families who are most in need of support who do not have access to a car or public transport are provided with transport to attend courses and activities. These are vital services which successfully help to alleviate feelings of isolation felt by families from the more remote parts of the area.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- Good partnership working successfully promotes and increases the take-up of adult learning opportunities. The centre is leading a project to devise an adult learning advice map to provide all families with impartial information on the training and education available to support their learning and progress. Despite some well-documented successes, in general outcomes from adult learning are not monitored well enough in order to celebrate successes, inform planning and extend provision to support families even further.
- A dedicated and skilled team of children's centre teachers work with early years settings and partners delivering early years activities for families in the centre. The team monitors the quality of what is offered and supports development. Monitoring of the activities providers by partners in the centres had been suspended for several months following a change in how contracts are awarded to partners. This means that leaders and managers did not know that in some activities the quality of families' experiences is not good. On receipt of feedback there was a swift response and relevant action plan produced. In contrast local childcare providers offer good and better provision.
- Children have access to good quality early years settings. Robust tracking systems show that children who have used centre services or groups delivered in the centre are doing better at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage than their peers. In addition, a large majority of children have skills and knowledge in line with expectations at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The outcomes are significantly better than those seen nationally and the gap between those most in need of support and their peers is closing well.
- Assessment of the needs of families and the local area is effective. Commissioned services have very clear targets linked to the key priorities for the area, which include reducing the number of children who are obese and increasing the number of women who continue to breastfeed their babies for six to eight weeks after birth. As a result, a wide range of very relevant activities, such as 'cooking together' are provided for all families to use and good progress is being made against targets.

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

- The local authority and advisory board provide good levels of challenge for the centre. Parents have a very strong voice in the governance of the centre through membership of the advisory board. Their views are gathered in a number of ways including a 'fishes for wishes' comments box, parents' meetings and evaluations of their experiences. This means that even the most reluctant families make a contribution. Parents appreciate the clear responses they receive to their contributions to the advisory board.
- Managers have a wealth of data available to them which in the main they use well, especially when setting the targets for partners delivering services on behalf of the centre. There are very thorough systems to check the quality and effectiveness of commissioned services' work against their targets. However, the centre's own self-evaluation and target setting is not as rigorous and leads to less effective in-house monitoring.
- Arrangements for staff at all levels to have supervision with their manager are given high priority. Case supervision is a separate process to supervision about staff welfare and training needs. Case supervisions are very well recorded, which also includes the record forming part of the case record for a family which is accessed by social care teams because they contain progress reviews and action setting.
- Procedures to protect the welfare of children and adults whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are robust. The centre is an integral part of the family assessment and support team with social care colleagues. Communication between the teams is extremely strong, especially where children are subject to child protection, child in need or single assessment processes. If family support workers have any concerns about a family they are working with they do not hesitate to contact the social care team, which means prompt action can be taken to prevent any decline in a family's circumstances.
- The local authority has worked hard to preserve services and activities available to families with young children. As a result, a good number of drop-in and bookable activities are offered across the area. In an effort to make sure families in need of extra support can access these to support their development as parents some places are reserved, providing positive role models for parents who need help to develop their parenting skills.

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	23078
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	427563
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1040
Centre leader	Kate Richards
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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