

Stoneycroft Children's Centre

38 Scotia Road, Liverpool, Merseyside, L13 6QJ

Inspection date

11–12 December 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.

- Close partnership working, particularly with health colleagues, ensures a large majority of young children and families from the local community, including families living in the most deprived areas, access the good quality services the centre provides.
- The centre is well known and highly valued in the community. Parents typically say, 'staff are all really friendly and understanding'. They know that if they come to the centre the staff will 'always help you to smile and feel better'. Families know that their views are always listened to and are used well to adapt a good range of high-quality services to meet their individual needs.
- A clear focus on developing children's communication skills, and the early identification of any child with a speech delay, are in place. There is good support to encourage parents to read to young children and groups such as 'Chatterbox' further aid the development of children's language. Staff are skilled in knowing when they need to refer children to specialist services.
- The well-established 'Starting School' transition programme, which is delivered at all schools in the area, is helping to prepare children to be ready to engage in a learning environment. As result, from some low starting points, many children are making good progress and the gap in children's attainment is narrowing each year.
- Leaders, managers and governors are passionate about maintaining and continually improving the services they provide. The centre coordinator is extremely efficient and effective; she leads a small, but dynamic multi-skilled team, who have built good relationships with a wide range of partners.

It is not outstanding because:

- Breastfeeding is well promoted but only a small minority of mothers choose to do this for a significant length of time and, despite support from the centre, a very high proportion of mothers continue to smoke during pregnancy.
- Most three- and-four-year-olds access high-quality funded nursery places but only a minority of two-year-olds are taking up this opportunity.

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 three additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher of the school, the children's centre coordinator and staff. They met a representative from the local authority, members of the advisory board and key partners. The inspectors reviewed satisfaction surveys and they took into account parents' views as expressed directly to them during the inspection. They conducted an observation of an activity jointly with the centre coordinator.

The inspectors visited the activities which took place at the centre and they reviewed evaluations of the centre's work.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, such as the centre's improvement plan, data and a selection of case files.

Inspection team

Sue Pepper, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Tara Street	Additional inspector
Jackie Phillips	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Stoneycroft Children's Centre is situated in the Old Swan area in Liverpool. It is a stand-alone, phase one children's centre which was established in 2007. It is attached to the linked childcare provision also called Stoneycroft Children's Centre and shares some premises with Corinthian Community Primary School. These provisions are subject to separate inspection arrangements and the reports can be found on our website at www.ofsted.gov.uk. The board of governors at the school are commissioned to run the centre by the local authority with the aid of the school head teacher and an established advisory board. The centre provides a range of services, which include family support, health and parenting services, volunteering opportunities and adult education services.

The majority of families living in the area are of White British heritage; however, the number of families from other ethnicities moving into the area is slowly increasing. There are approximately 1130 children under five years of age living in the community. Most children enter early years provision with a range of experiences and skills below those expected for their age.

The majority of families live in an area ranked amongst the 10% most deprived nationally. There are significant levels of social and economic disadvantage in the area with high levels of unemployment. The majority of parents are in receipt of benefits. Target groups include teenage parents, male carers and families most in need who face a varied range of challenges and issues, including substance misuse, domestic violence and mental health problems.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Increase the take up of the free entitlement to early education for two-year-olds, particularly children most in need from target groups.
- Build on close partnership working with health partners to:
 - reduce further the number of mothers smoking in pregnancy
 - increase further the number of mothers breastfeeding at six-to-eight weeks after their child's birth.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

good

- Health colleagues run their antenatal and postnatal clinics at the centre. Therefore, they are in a strong position to form good relationships with expectant parents who may be reluctant to participate in children's centre services. Consequently, they are helping to drive up the good attendance at universal and targeted services.
- The family support workers and family link workers have a good knowledge of the varied issues facing families in their community. Good early intervention and prevention work, in the homes of families, successfully ensures that many of those who are suffering from a complex range of difficulties are helped to improve their life chances.
- The centre appropriately uses venues across their community, such as schools and the Salvation Army base to make sure their high-quality range of services are easily accessible. Teenage parents have their own specific group which is well attended.
- 'Parent Champions' work hard to support staff to 'door knock' in the community to encourage families to access services. In addition, the centre has an informative website and it promotes funded nursery places. However, the number of two-year-olds taking up this offer is not yet high enough.
- Parents are fully involved in the assessment of their own needs. 'Baby Connect' provides them with a super opportunity to produce precious 'memory books' of their own child's individual

story.

- The centre considers the access of both mothers and fathers well. Mothers have a 'Just 4 Mums' group and fathers have their own 'Just 4 Dads' club.

The quality of practice and services

good

- A strong drive is in place to promote healthy lifestyles. Families can buy low-cost fruit and vegetables and a range of parenting programmes support healthy eating. Activities, such as 'Active Kids', help children to enjoy more exercise.
- The centre is 'breastfeeding friendly' and 'Bambis' provide good support for those mothers who choose to breastfeed. The number of mothers who sustain breastfeeding at six-to-eight weeks is increasing but overall the percentage remains low. In addition, despite a steady rise in the numbers of parents ceasing to smoke, the number of mothers smoking in pregnancy is high.
- Partnerships with all schools in the area, with childminders and with childcare providers, particularly the linked nursery on site, are good. Together, they share 'good' practice and have high aspirations for improving the lives of children and their families. Observations, assessment and tracking of children show improved outcomes for all those who use the centre's services. Disabled children and those with special educational needs are extremely well supported and they have a dedicated 'STEPS' group to help reduce inequalities.
- Children are welcomed into the centre by huge, attractive tactile mosaics and interactive equipment which they can touch and explore. The child-friendly environment actively promotes purposeful learning through fun, imaginative and creative experiences. Children respond well to staff who act as good role models. As a result, they develop positive behaviour as well as their independence so they are more ready for school.
- Partnership with Jobcentre Plus is strong. Parents regularly receive support with benefit and debt advice enabling them to manage their finances more effectively. Parents are well supported to become volunteers and to access a wide range of courses. For example, 'Baby Connect', 'English for Speakers of Other Languages' (ESOL), basic information and communication technology (ICT) and 'Prepare 2 Work' classes. This has led to some parents being supported into employment.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

good

- Performance monitoring of staff is very effective. Staff have clear targets and areas of responsibility, most have completed 'Preparing to Teach in Lifelong Learning Sector' (PTLLS) training. The sharing of the centre's expertise and superb resources, such as the sensory equipment, ensures that the centre meets the needs of a wide range of young children and families.
- Leaders of the centre analyse data well and accurately evaluate what the centre's strengths are and where it could further improve. For instance, in improving sustained breastfeeding rates and the uptake of funded nursery places for two-year-olds and in reducing the numbers of expectant mothers who smoke. The extremely well-organised centre coordinator is highly visible and she successfully uses a 'value for money' toolkit to closely review centre's services. This ensures that the centre performs well.
- The advisory board and local authority oversee the information that the centre collates so that they are in a good position to know what is happening in the centre and the quality of services. They set the centre realistic, challenging targets to improve further and to reduce inequalities for children and families.
- The advisory board annually renews its membership to further enhance and strengthen its role. Parents who are not ready to express their ideas and views formally attend the less formal parent focus group which enables them to be actively involved in decision-making. As a result, users of the centre express very high levels of satisfaction and their views are helped to shape services.
- Effective monitoring, particularly of target groups, ensures the centre staff remove any

perceived barriers to engagement and helps to reduce inequalities. Staff support parents to access training by offering crèche facilities, and they sensitively offer this service for children in the same room if parents are nervous about leaving their child.

- Attention to keeping children and families safe is a high priority. A single central record is in place to ensure careful monitoring of staff suitability to work with children. A range of policies and procedures are followed which cover safer recruitment of staff.
- Very good support is provided for families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Staff are well trained to use the Common Assessment Framework and their work with children subject to child protection plans or who are identified as in need is very effective. Consequently, staff develop trusting relationships with parents to help them reduce the risk of harm to their children.

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	22949
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	427486
Managed by	The Governing Body of Corinthian Community Primary School on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1130
Centre manager	Joanne Smith
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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