

Hale Sure Start Children's Centre

Upper Hale Road, Farnham, Surrey. GU9 0LR

Inspection date		23–24 January 2014	
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.

- This welcoming and friendly centre reaches the large majority of families, especially of those in most need and, in particular, those who are from the most disadvantaged areas. As a result of a concerted effort by all centre staff, registrations have risen dramatically over the past three years and now include the large majority of local children and families.
- Strong partnerships, particularly with schools, neighbouring centres and health professionals, ensure that families receive the help and support they need at the right time.
- Staff utilise every opportunity to identify each family's individual need and support them with carefully tailored help and advice. As one parent commented, 'This is an amazing place, non-judgemental with a great variety of activities for children and adults.'
- The centre is well led and managed. Staff are committed to improving the opportunities for all families, particularly those in the priority groups. They know the local community well and are always available to listen to parents' queries and concerns.
- The local authority, together with the governing body and advisory board, works well together to both challenge and support staff to drive improvements. Together, they set realistic targets for the centre in order to improve the lives of families it serves.

It is not outstanding because:

- Not all families who are in most need attend centre activities regularly enough, and the centre leaders recognise this as an area for improvement.
- The checks on monitoring and tracking of progress, particularly of adults accessing further education or moving into or seeking employment, are not fully developed.

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 inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, headteacher, two representatives from the local authority, and partners from health, education and the local community. They also met parents, volunteers and two representatives from the governing body and advisory board. The centre manager, the headteacher and two representatives from the local authority attended all meetings of the inspection team.

Visits to activities such as 'Music Makers', 'Baby Massage', 'Parenting Puzzle' and 'Bumps and Babes - Play and Learn' were undertaken. Almost all observations were undertaken jointly with centre staff. The inspectors looked at the centre's self-evaluation, action planning, a sample of case files, safeguarding practice, policy and procedures, and a range of other relevant documentation.

Inspection team

David Scott, Lead Inspector

Additional Inspector

Anthony Mundy

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Hale Sure Start Children's Centre was designated in February 2010 as a phase two stand-alone centre and delivers a range of services to meet the core purpose, including health, parent and play and learn groups, crèche services, family support, antenatal services and adult learning.

The centre opens for 50 weeks of the year, from Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm. The children's centre shares its site with Hale Primary School and Hale Nursery School (URN 125133), both of which are subject to separate inspection arrangements.

The centre is managed by the governing body of Hale Primary School, made up of local community, local authority and parent representatives, to provide strategic leadership. An advisory board comprising key partners is established. Day-to-day management of the children's centre is delegated to the headteacher of Hale Primary School.

The centre's reach area includes 754 children under five years of age. It is mixed socially and economically with pockets of high deprivation within a relatively affluent area. Most families are White British with a few from minority ethnic backgrounds, predominantly of East European heritage. The children's centre is situated in one of the most economically disadvantaged wards in Hale. For example, 14% of all children in the reach area live in the top 30% most deprived areas in the country. Information shows that 13% of children live in workless households. Children's skills and abilities on entry to early education are below the levels expected for their age.

The centre has identified lone parents, those from workless households, and children living in poverty as its main target groups.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Move swiftly to increase the percentage of priority families engaging in the services of the centre, particularly those families most in need from the most disadvantaged areas.
- Refine systems to check the progress of different groups still further so that the centre has a very clear view of the progress made, particularly for those who go on to further education or employment and can use this to chart their progress and help shape future activities.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The centre provides a welcoming, warm and friendly environment for parents and their children who benefit from the wide range of activities on offer. Partnerships with health professionals are excellent. Every family with a newborn baby receives a visit within 21 days of the birth. Through its highly effective work with its key partners in health and housing, the centre staff have a detailed knowledge of the local community.
- As a result of staff going out into the community to promote its activities and services, registrations have risen dramatically in the three years that the centre has been open. At 61%, leaders realise that further work is required to ensure even more families use the centre, including those who may be reluctant to do so, and are working effectively to bring this about by targeting the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
- At over two thirds, there is particularly good engagement of lone parents, those from workless households, and children living in poverty, most of whom live in the most economically deprived areas, and are high priority families for the centre.
- The strong partnership with health professionals means that most expectant and new mothers are

known to the centre. Staff are sensitive to the specific needs of families and visit them in their own homes, and do all they can to help them live more positive lives and stay safe. The centre is also working in successful partnership to break down cultural and religious barriers to access, for example with the Eastern European communities.

- Parents benefit from activities such as 'Parenting Puzzle' and 'Bumps and Babes' play session that help them to give their children the best start through programmes that are specifically designed to improve their parenting skills. Information shows that a very large majority (88%) of eligible two-year-old children take up their free entitlement to early years education and are successfully helped to get ready for school.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The centre actively promotes a good range of well-located services. Highly effective work takes place to promote the benefits of how to live a healthy lifestyle. A range of initiatives such as fitness activities, cookery programmes and the active promotion of the benefits of new mothers breastfeeding at specific workshops enables impressive health outcomes. For example, at 65%, the proportion of mothers who continue breastfeeding at six to eight weeks is well above local and national averages.
- Similarly, the percentage of children in the Reception Year that were recorded as obese, at 5.9%, is well below the level seen nationally. The centre's close partnership with health professionals enables detailed and prompt assessment of needs, and strong multi-agency planning and cooperation for the coordinated care of families in most need, often in times of crisis.
- Adult learning courses and referrals for employment advice such as 'Job Club' help improve the economic well-being of the majority of families. The centre holds some information about the achievements of adults. For example, case studies indicate good individual support and training where the majority of adults gain some form of qualification or progress to further training, education or paid employment. However, the collection and analysis of data to check the impact of the centre's actions on improving the lives of families across target groups are not yet fully developed.
- Children enter the centre with skills that are below those expected for their age, and often lack confidence and skill in the areas of communication and language. Sessions such as 'Mini Music Makers' assist their learning and development well. Over time, centre staff have become increasingly successful in making sure that children are ready for school, and in reducing inequalities of access, so that a large majority of children achieve a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Working closely with the local authority's early language department, the centre has focused on improving children's early language, communication and social skills through well-planned activities and the good role modelling by staff. 'Music Makers – for walkers' and 'Baby Massage' sessions are very popular with parents, who are encouraged to understand how their child learns through play and exploration, and this extends their skills as co-educators as a result.
- The centre successfully engages with the majority of its key target groups to help them overcome personal challenges in their lives. Domestic violence is a particular issue in the area and, as a result of staff expertise, women experiencing domestic violence can safely access the activities and receive timely and effective support.
- Parents' awareness about health and safety in their homes is raised through the centre's useful practical help, home visits, safety kits, advice and first aid training. As a result, families have become more self-assured and confident in managing risks and ensuring their families' well-being.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The centre manager is greatly respected by staff and families alike, leading a friendly and highly skilled team. The headteacher is a passionate advocate of the children's centre in meeting the needs of the families it serves. With the centre manager's complementary skills, they are a formidable

team.

- Key partners, parents and leaders meet regularly, including the annual conversation to review and agree action plans which include clear targets in the development plan to ensure the continuing success of the centre. The local authority is supportive of the centre's work and sets challenging future priorities which are rooted in improving the lives of families who are in most need.
- Resources and services are evaluated effectively to ensure the needs of targeted children are fully met. The centre manager is held to account for the centre's performance and is supported well by the headteacher and the local authority. Good professional supervision and management arrangements are in place to check on the performance of staff, ensure their safety and well-being, and assist their training and development.
- Governance arrangements are clear. The governing body and advisory board are made up of a range of professional partners as well as a good number of parents and who provide support and challenge to ensure the centre is reducing the inequalities among different priority groups in the area. Parents have the opportunity to shape and improve the range of services and activities on offer by sharing their views through the Parent Forum. For example, they have suggested alternative times or venues for various activities, so as to ensure greater levels of attendance.
- The safeguarding of children and their families is of the highest priority for all staff and permeates the work of the centre. Staff use the Common Assessment Framework well to assess families' needs and use the Team Around the Family meetings to intervene early, coordinate support and prevent issues escalating. Children who are subject to child protection plans, those deemed to be children in need and looked after children are supported well through close working with children's social care services.

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.

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Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	754
Centre leader	Sue Rustell
Date of previous inspection	N/A
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