

Horsell Village Children's Centre

Church Hill, Horsell, Woking, Surrey, GU21 4QQ

Inspection date 21–22 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
		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 children's centre requires improvement. It is not good because:

- The centre has worked effectively to ensure that the large majority of children under five in the area it serves are registered but there are not enough who take part in the services from two of the centre's priority groups, namely lone parents who are out of work and armed forces families.
- There are no consistent systems in place to monitor the centre's impact. This is especially in relation to children's progress when they are at the centre and when they move on to school or nursery. This is partly because links with early years settings are not fully developed. Similarly, monitoring of the longer-term impact on supporting adults in their education or back into employment is patchy.
- Parents have very positive views of the centre but not enough are involved formally through the Friends of Horsell Village Children's Centre (parents' forum), as volunteers or through attending the local advisory board.
- The centre has only recently been provided with data by the local authority in relation to how well priority groups use the centre's services. This information is not being used well enough by the local authority, the governing body or the local advisory board to set precise, challenging targets. This is especially so in relation to the impact of services on families who need most support.

This children's centre has the following strengths:

- Staff work hard to overcome the hurdles of being a part-time, one-room centre serving a widespread area. Taking services out into the community has been effective in ensuring the large majority of children from the most disadvantaged area engage with children's centre services.
- Families who are most in need and receive intensive support from the centre benefit significantly from this and the effective way the centre acts as a link to other agencies such as health, social care and housing associations. This is shown by comments such as 'Because of the team, my life is so much better'.
- Sessions such as 'Play and Learn' are well planned and led and much enjoyed by families. There is a strong focus on developing children's early skills and ensuring parents engage with their children.

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 leader and the head of centre, who is also the headteacher of Horsell Village School, officers from the local authority, representatives from several branches of the health services and other key partners, including those from social care. They held discussions with parents and members of the local advisory board and the governing body.

A Play and Learn session was observed by an inspector. The head of centre and the centre leader attended all team meetings. Inspectors looked at the centre's self-evaluation, service delivery plan, a sample of case studies, safeguarding policies and procedures and a range of other documentation.

Inspection team

Joan Lindsay	Additional Inspector, Lead Inspector
Graham Saltmarsh	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

The centre was designated in 2007, as a phase two stand-alone centre but it did not open fully until March 2010. It supports and delivers access to a range of services in conjunction with other children's centres which it borders. The centre is open from Monday to Wednesday 48 weeks of the year for 18 hours each week. There is also a monthly Saturday Dads' Club and a weekly mobile bus session in the local area for one hour on Wednesdays. The centre operates from one room adjacent to Horsell Village School (URN 140084) which is subject to a separate inspection. The governing body of the school manages the centre on behalf of the local authority. The headteacher is the head of centre and line manages the centre leader.

There are 720 children under the age of five living in the centre's reach area. Children enter early years provision at levels expected for their age. The centre operates in the borough of Woking and is situated in an affluent area. Of the nine defined areas it serves, only one is considered to be relatively disadvantaged. It covers a relatively large geographic area, including a semi-rural part located some distance from the centre where there are properties owned by the armed forces. Approximately 6% of children from birth to four years of age are living in out of work benefit claimant households. White British heritage families account for 72% of the population.

The centre has identified its priority groups as lone parents in workless households, those who live in the least affluent area and families living in relatively isolated armed forces properties.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of families who use the centre, especially lone parents who are out of work and armed forces families by identifying what their specific needs are and providing the most appropriate services.
- Develop consistent systems to check the impact of the centre's work with children and adults so services can be finely tuned to meet needs by:
 - working closely with early years settings and other schools to monitor children when they move on
 - developing a method to check the progress of children who regularly attend centre activities
 - tracking the longer term benefits to adults from the initial support provided by the centre to measure its impact and identify where support is most needed.
- Encourage more active involvement of parents in the running of the centre through rigorously promoting volunteering, and participation on the parents' forum and at the local advisory board.
- Ensure that the local authority, the governing body and the local advisory board use the information that is now available to set precise, measurable, challenging targets, especially in relation to the centre's identified priority groups' engagement with centre services.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- The number of lone parents out of work who engage with the centre, and those from the small amount of armed forces families, both identified as groups that need specific support, is not high enough to enable access to be judged good.
- The centre has identified the groups most in need of support in the local area but has not finely tuned services that would best meet their needs, especially in relation to out of work lone parents.
- Over the last year, however, there has been an increase in the number of families registered at the centre through initiatives such as using the Sure Start bus to reach outlying districts and the most

disadvantaged area, and staff attending baby clinics and toddler groups. This has led to the large majority of children from the least affluent area now accessing centre services.

- The monthly Dads' Group is well attended and collaborative work with other children's centres ensures the specific needs of parents aged up to 23 years old are met through the weekly Young Parents' Group. The Baby Cafe, another joint venture held in a central Woking location, gives support that would be difficult to provide otherwise, due to limitations on space at the centre itself.
- The centre has been very successful in supporting eligible families to take up free early education for two-year-olds, which has had a positive impact on reducing inequalities. Most three- and four-year-olds locally are also receiving their entitlement to free early education.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The relevance of services requires improvement, especially in relation to meeting the needs of some of the centre's target groups, particularly where families are out of work. Sessions open to all have spaces reserved for priority families but their take-up is not always high enough.
- The centre's support for families to get back into work or improve their education is under-developed and consistent systems to track families' longer term benefits from contact with the centre are not in place. As a result, the quality and range of services also require improvement.
- The quality and the range of services relating specifically to families' health are good. This is because this small centre signposts effectively to other centres and works jointly with them and other partners such as health visitors and the Parent Infant Mental Health Specialist.
- Early Years Foundation Stage profile results for children in the centre's reach area were not as high as those seen nationally in 2013, a reverse of the usual outcome. Schools and the local authority believe this is due to changes in the assessment of children rather than a drop in attainment. However, links with early years settings and schools other than Horsell Village School are tenuous. This limits fine-tuning of where children's early development needs could be improved and in monitoring the impact of the centre on children's progress.
- Structured parenting programmes and especially tailor-made support for young parents have been effective in giving parents confidence, although the numbers who take part in these courses are relatively small.
- Parents rate the centre highly, especially the well-planned sessions such as 'Play and Learn' that help them support development of their children's communication skills and confidence. However, not enough parents are actively involved through volunteering, attending the Friends of Horsell Village Children's Centre meetings or representing parents on the local advisory board. This is especially so in relation to families from the centre's priority groups.
- Health outcomes for families in the centre's area are very good; breastfeeding rates at six to eight weeks are well above national levels and the area has very low childhood obesity levels. This reflects the good partnerships with health services and collaborative services such as the Baby Cafe.
- Families are appreciative of the support they receive from caring non-judgemental staff. Many feel their lives have improved as a result, evident through comments such as 'It's been really essential in keeping my life together.' Those with sometimes complex problems such as mental health or relationship difficulties benefit greatly from input from a variety of agencies. This support is instigated by the centre through referrals or via the Common Assessment Framework. Case files are very comprehensive and maintained to a high standard and reflect the views of the families well.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership, governance and management require improvement because some accurate reach area information about priority groups who use the services has only been available to the centre for a short time. Consequently, the local authority, the governing body and the local advisory board are not using the information effectively enough to measure the centre's impact; especially in relation to

groups who need most support.

- The current service delivery plan is too unwieldy and does not provide enough precisely measurable targets to set clear expectations for improvements.
- The governing body and the local advisory board are supportive and clear about their different responsibilities. They are aware that they now need to develop their roles further to use information about which families use the centre to be more effective in monitoring the centre's performance and to challenge it, especially in relation to families from priority groups accessing services.
- Daily management of the centre is good and there are strong working relationships between the head of centre, centre leader and the highly experienced and committed staff. These underpin the good care guidance and support families receive and ensure that those who use the centre feel welcome and have confidence in staff.
- The centre's limited space and resources are augmented well through good joint working with other centres and by using the Sure Start bus to help isolated families access services, thereby ironing out some inequalities for families without transport.
- Safeguarding children and vulnerable families is at the heart of the centre's work and the well-trained staff are alert to any possible concerns. Where the centre is aware of vulnerable children, such as those subject to child protection plans or who are deemed to be children in need, they provide high levels of support and have been instrumental in helping families 'step down' to less intensive support from social care.
- Regular parental evaluations of sessions and services show that parents have high levels of satisfaction with the centre. Their views are sought and acted on, such as providing trips out to a farm and swimming sessions, although more formal involvement of parents in the running of the centre is limited.

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.

Unique reference number	21560
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	430222
Managed by	The governing body of Horsell Village School on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	720
Centre leader	Kai Keers
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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