

Hudson Children's Centre

Moorhey Road, Liverpool, L31 5LE

Inspection date 13–14 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
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:

- Although the centre has ensured that the large majority of families with children under five in the area it serves are registered and using services, only a small minority of some of its priority groups, namely lone parents, children living in workless households and low-income families, are taking part in the centre's services.
- The centre and local authority have not until recently made use of data to gain a clear understanding of all of its priority groups and the extent to which they are taking part in the centre services. As a result, resources and services have not been targeted to meet the needs of some priority groups.
- Parents do not have enough opportunities to access sessions at the centre to help them gain qualifications that lead to employment. Opportunities for parents to volunteer at the centre are limited, although the centre has plans to increase these opportunities.

This centre has the following strengths:

- The well-established leadership, management and governance, together with the staff team, are highly committed to meeting the needs of families using the centre. They provide good quality services and ensure that the centre continues to improve.
- Clear systems are in place to regularly evaluate provision and its impact on families who are using the centre. As a result of evaluations, services are adapted to meet those families' needs more closely.
- 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.

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 centre leader and the headteacher of Hudson Primary 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 a member of the children's centre committee.

The inspectors visited a number of sessions held during the inspection, including 'chill 'n' chat' and 'messy play' They also involved the children's centre manager and Hudson Primary school headteacher in all team meetings.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the centre's self-evaluation and development plans, parents' evaluations, key policies, a sample of case files and safeguarding procedures.

Inspection team

Elaine White, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Barbara Wearing	Additional inspector
Jackie Hughes	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

This is a stand-alone centre that shares its site with Hudson Primary School. The centre is managed by the school on behalf of the local authority. A sub-committee of Hudson Primary School governing body and an advisory board oversee the work of the centre. The centre manager receives line management from the headteacher of the school. The centre offers a range of services which include child health services, family play sessions, parenting programmes, and family outreach services.

In 2012, the centre merged with the smaller Holy Rosary Children's Centre. The Holy Rosary building is used as a base for offering services. Further services are delivered through outreach working within local primary schools, health clinics and a commercial building.

The community served by the centre is mostly of White British heritage. There are 1509 children under five residing in the area and 41% of families fall within the 30% area of deprivation. The area is spread widely across farm land and older established communities and is less disadvantaged than other Sefton wards. A small minority of children lives in workless households. Children enter early years provision with skills below the levels expected for their age.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of lone parents, children in workless households and children in low income households who use the centre services regularly.
- Work with the local authority to make better use of data to monitor engagement levels across the reach area more effectively, and to identify families who do not yet use the centre's services.
- Increase opportunities for parents to gain qualifications and skills that lead to employment and enhanced life chances.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- The centre has identified children in low income or workless households, and also lone parents as priority groups, but it has not found ways to ensure that the large majority of these families meaningfully and regularly engage with the centre and benefit from its services.
- The centre is effective in engaging the vast majority of teen parents in the area, and families with children who have a disability.
- A good referral system for families eligible for the free entitlement to early education for two-year-olds ensures that they are supported well in accessing early education. As a result, there is a very high level of take-up of early education places.
- Partnerships with health services and other professionals improve access to services for expectant mothers, such as promoting attendance at the midwife-led 'Aqua-natal' and 'Parent-to-be' classes.
- Services are provided at outreach venues and community venues in order to engage a greater number of families. Services provided at the Holy Rosary site, local schools and a local children's retailer have helped to increase levels of engagement and meet the needs of families living furthest from the centre's main building.
- Centre staff know the families that attend well and ensure that these families are able to access the care, guidance and support they need, for example, by ensuring that families in need of support have priority access to centre services.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- Although the centre provides a good range of activities and resources for those who attend, the low number of families from some target groups engaging with the centre reduces its overall impact on improving outcomes for children and on reducing inequalities and improving life chances.
- The centre links with a local college to provide opportunities for adult education. This is effective for the small number of parents who engage in courses but, as there are few adults attending, the impact on improving life chances and employment is limited.
- The centre provides opportunities for a small number of parents to act as volunteers, which has a positive impact on promoting self-esteem, confidence and employability skills. Although the centre has plans to expand the number of volunteers and to offer training and support, this has yet to take effect.
- The centre works well with health professionals and to promote good health outcomes. Levels of sustained breastfeeding have increased from 25% in 2010/11 to 50% in 2012/13. Immunisation rates are high at 89%, and obesity rates have fallen from 11% in 2009/10 to 8.5% in 2013.
- The quality and range of services to promote healthy lifestyles are good. Sessions such as 'Bright Start breakfast', 'Little Lunches' and 'Little Chefs' develop families' awareness of healthy eating and contribute to better health outcomes.
- Parents and users of the centre are supportive of its work and happy with the quality of provision. Parents feel very well supported by the staff team. They value their advice on a variety of parenting issues and feel able to approach staff for support and guidance in times of crisis. For example, one parent stated that the centre she regularly attends had been 'a life saver', and that her family did not know what they would have done without the centre's help.
- Children living in the centre's reach area attain higher than national levels at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Sessions such as 'Messy Mondays', 'Start Rite' and 'Take 2' help to prepare children for nursery and school. Children who are identified as requiring targeted support make good progress from their starting points. The gap between the lowest-attaining children and their peers has narrowed from 34% in 2011 to 25% in 2012.
- Parents are able to state how they and their children benefit from attending the sessions and that they have an understanding of their children's development. Staff are positive role models,

demonstrating to parents how to develop their children's skill, for example, in taking turns and socialising.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership, governance and management require improvement because strategies to engage families have not ensured that the large majority of families from some of its priority groups, such as workless, low income or lone parent households, are accessing the centre and engaging with the centre's services.
- The local authority has recently provided centre leaders with data to enable them to identify all priority groups and the extent to which they are engaging in the centre's services accurately. This means that until recently, action-planning has not been informed by an accurate picture of priority groups and the extent to which they are involved in the centre and improving their life chances..
- Governance arrangements are well established. Both the children's centre committee and the advisory board have a clear idea of what is happening in the centre and the extent to which the centre is reducing inequalities for the families attending. The children's centre committee provides a good level of challenge to centre leaders to promote improvement. The advisory board also provides support and challenge and members are undertaking training to increase their effectiveness further.
- The children's centre committee and advisory board monitor the centre's success in achieving performance targets. They have a good awareness of how staff performance is managed and the quality of staff and the services provided.
- Services are evaluated effectively to ensure that they meet the needs of families attending the centre and are adapted to meet those needs. For example, timings and the nature of a session for families with disabled children were changed to meet parents' needs more fully.
- Safeguarding arrangements are appropriately robust. Case studies demonstrate that the centre's involvement has helped to improve outcomes for families and children. The centre works in effective partnership with social care to meet the needs of a small number of children subject to child protection plans, and the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process is used appropriately to reduce levels of risk.
- The centre manager provides strong, focused leadership for centre staff who work diligently to support local families. Staff receive regular supervision and have appropriate access to training which enables them to respond professionally to the challenge that their work presents.
- Partnership-working is good, especially with health professionals, which enables centre staff to provide good support to families.

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	21578
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	430211
Managed by	The governing body of Hudson Primary School on behalf of Sefton local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1509
Centre leader	Kelly Herron
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Telephone number	0151 531 0117
Email address	kelly.herron-hudson@schools.sefton.gov.uk

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