

# Hillside Children's Centre

Maidenhall Approach, Ipswich, IP2 8NY

**Inspection date** 18–19 March 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
	Previous inspection:	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 is a centre that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- While there has been some improvement in the number of families registered and the attendance of families whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable, only a minority of workless families regularly access centre services and groups.
- The centre does not systematically track the progress that children make in order to reach the levels expected for their age when they start nursery. A significant number of families do not take up their child's eligible free two- or three-year old preschool place.
- The centre does not track in detail adults' progress after attending work-based skills training and English and mathematics courses. As a result, the centre is not clear about how well they have supported this group of adults in improving their lives.
- Improvement targets do not always include measures to help leaders and managers evaluate precisely how successful groups and services are being and confirm that the budget is being spent as effectively as it could.
- Opportunities for parents to give their views about the services and groups that they would like are just restarting. There are no parent representatives from Hillside on the partnership advisory board.

### This centre has the following strengths:

- The centre is quick to identify and give effective outreach support to families and children who need extra help from time to time. As a result, the number of children supported by a child protection or child in need plan is reducing.
- The centre manager, integrated services manager and chair of the partnership advisory board are clear about the centre's strengths and areas requiring improvement. The centre has improved. Partners and staff are well informed and those families who attend receive good support.
- Relationships between staff and families who use the centre are positive and so these families are confident to ask for additional help and support if they need it.
- Disabled children and those who have special educational needs make good progress from their starting points by the end of the Reception year.
- Performance management arrangements are good. Staff undergo regular discussions with managers to ensure that the quality of services and groups for families and children who attend are good.
- The strong partnership with health services ensures that the centre contacts quickly families with new-born babies and those that have moved into the area. Registrations have increased as a result.

## 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. It was carried out at the same time as Hawthorn Children's Centre.

This inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the integrated services manager representing the local authority, centre staff, parents, health and social care partners, school and preschool leaders and members of the partnership advisory board including the chair.

The inspectors visited the play bus, outreach services, local housing for teenage mothers and the Tiny Tunes groups.

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

## Inspection team

Georgina Beasley, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Peter Towney

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Hillside Children's Centre is a phase two centre designated in December 2009. Premises share a site linked to Hillside Primary School, which is subject to a separate inspection. The report can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). There are no linked day-care providers.

The centre is governed and managed directly by the local authority through the integrated services manager. The centre manager also has responsibility for the two other children's centres, The Willows and Hawthorn, which serve the South Ipswich cluster area. The centres work together to provide shared services and to share resources and staff. The centres have recently reorganised governance into one partnership advisory board.

There are currently 846 children aged under five years living in the centre's reach area. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are below those expected for their age, particularly in their communication and language and health and self-care.

The reach area has above average levels of unemployment and high number of lone parents. The proportion of families on benefits is above average. The number of looked after children and children subject to protection plans is lower than the Suffolk average. Housing in the area is mainly social housing.

The large majority of families are White British with about 30 percent of other minority ethnic groups. A growing number are of Eastern European backgrounds. The percentage of families who speak English as an additional language is increasing.

The centre has identified its target groups as lone parents, workless families, fathers, teenage parents, families from minority ethnic backgrounds, and disabled children or children with disabled parents.

### What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen how the centre's leaders and managers check the centre's performance by:
  - agreeing and implementing challenging targets that enable the centre to measure its success;
  - ensuring data from the local authority supports the checking at regular intervals that the centre is on track to achieve them;
  - that budget decisions are effectively meeting the needs of children's and adults' learning and progress.
- Increase the number of families regularly attending centre services and activities by ensuring that:
  - at least two thirds of workless families attend;
  - most families take up their child's free preschool place at aged two if eligible and at aged three.
- Develop tracking systems that enable the centre to show that:
  - children make good progress in their learning especially in their communication and language ability and personal skills;
  - adults who attend training and English and mathematics courses improve their lives.
- Increase opportunities for parents to contribute to decision making about the centre's services, groups and performance including formally through the partnership advisory board.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

### Requires improvement

- The number of families registering with the centre has increased this year due to a greater number of expectant mothers accessing services at health clinics. The number of workless families registering with the centre has also increased this year. Nevertheless, only a minority regularly attend groups and activities.
- A majority of families with a two- or three-year-old child known to be eligible for a free pre-school place have taken it up this year. The centre has not been proactive enough in finding out who are not taking up the place that they are entitled to and why.
- A good number of families who speak English as an additional language regularly attend centre groups. A majority of teenage parents attend relevant groups and the centre ensures support is tailored to their specific needs. 'February for fathers' has raised the profile of the centre's activities resulting in an increase in the number of fathers registering with the centre this year.
- The centre works closely with its partners from school, health, social care and financial services team to identify and give good outreach support to families and children from family support practitioners. The number of children subject to a child protection or child in need plan is falling as a result of the centre's work.
- Assessments under the Common Assessment Framework are effective in identifying the needs of children at a young age so that effective early support can be put into place. A high number of disabled children attend centre activities.
- The commissioning of the play bus called 'Maggie' enables groups and activities to take place closer to where families live. Attendance at two-year-old checks (two year learning journeys) has increased significantly this year as a result of holding many on the bus.

### The quality of practice and services

### Requires improvement

- Children start nursery with skills and abilities below those expected for their age especially in their speaking and language, and their ability to recognise their own toileting needs. Groups and services focus on helping children improve and develop these skills. However, there is no clear system for checking that children make enough progress in group sessions or over time to help them start preschool and/or nursery with higher levels of skill.
- The gap between the attainment of children known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are not is closing when they start school. Nevertheless, a below average proportion of children reach the levels they should for their age by the end of the Reception year in personal, social and emotional development, physical development, communication and language, literacy and/or mathematics. This includes children eligible and not eligible for free school meals and those who have attended centre groups. Disabled children and those who have special educational needs make good progress.
- Adults who start courses and training to improve their English, mathematics and work-based skills usually complete the course. The centre does not track closely enough whether this attendance is helping them to learn to speak English, return to or find work and improve their own and their families' economic wellbeing overtime. Partnerships with Jobcentre Plus are still developing and not yet fully effective. Positive partnership working with the financial services team help families develop their budgeting skills and to spend the funds that they have wisely.

- The local authority or centre provides day-care for children to enable parents who require it to attend adult learning and parenting courses. This is helping to improve the ability of families to provide improved care for their children.
- The number of mothers who breastfeed their babies has increased for the last two years and targets that bring rates closer to the Suffolk average have been met this year. Parents follow the advice that they receive at health clinics and groups about healthy eating and leading active lives. As a result, most children who live in the reach are a healthy weight.
- Staff who lead groups and provide outreach have built strong and positive relationships with those families with whom they come into contact. 'Tiny Tunes' was enjoyed by adults and toddlers alike with a strong focus on speaking and listening skills. Adults feel welcome at the centre. One group of parents are continuing to run their own well-attended stay and play session because their children enjoy coming so much.
- Good care, guidance and support helps families who need additional support from time to time to grow in confidence about their ability to keep their children healthy and safe. Case files are detailed and comprehensive with individual family's views, wishes and needs making a strong contribution to the subsequently well-planned actions and support.

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

### **Requires improvement**

- The centre's evaluation of the quality of services and groups is variable. Leaders and managers evaluate robustly the difference the family support practitioners make to the lives of families that they support. Evaluation of the quality of groups and activities is not focused enough on how much progress children and adults make in their learning.
- While staff and partners contribute to the centre's service improvement plan, targets do not always have challenging measures that enable leaders to check whether it is being as successful as it needs to be. This is partly because the information provided by the local authority is not precise enough. The targets for increasing the number of mothers who breastfeed their babies are the exception. The centre has reached the targets for this and rates are increasing.
- The partnership advisory board has reformed this year into one board for the three children's centres in the locality. As a result, meetings are better attended. However, discussions do not focus enough on how well the centre is meeting its targets or on the use of information about attendance to find out which families are choosing not to come to the centre activities and why. The budget is checked for underspend and overspend but not yet evaluated sufficiently well for its effectiveness.
- Parents are asked for their views about centre services and groups at the end of every group and/or session which are discussed at team meetings and acted upon if possible. Feedback to parents is variable. There is still no parent representatives on the board from the Hillside reach area.
- The integrated services manager who is also the local authority lead, the centre manager and chair of the partnership advisory board know what the centre does well and what it needs to do to improve. They have shared a vision for improvement with staff and partners and are starting to share the vision with parents. Action plans have been implemented over the last year resulting in increasing numbers of families registering and accessing services across the reach.
- Performance management conversations take place every six weeks and focus on how successful staff are being in delivering groups and services for all families.

- There are robust systems in place for ensuring that staff know and follow consistently the policies and procedures for safeguarding children and adults both on and off the premises. Supervision is robust for this aspect of the centre's work. The centre contributes fully to the use of Common Assessment Framework processes to ensure that families received the early help they need. Children who are subject to child protection plans, children in need and children in care are well supported by the centre.
  
- The number of cases under the Common Assessment Framework for team around the child and looked-after children are discussed fully and full reasons given for both opening and closing cases. This ensures good oversight by managers.

**What inspection judgements mean**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
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**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	21506
<b>Local authority</b>	Suffolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	430216
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority
<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	846
<b>Centre leader</b>	Amber Begg
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01473 786630
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