

Hawthorn Children's Centre

Hawthorn Drive, Ipswich, IP2 0QY

Inspection date 19–20 March 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 large majority of families are registered with the centre too few lone parents and children living in workless households are using the centre's services.
- There are not enough eligible two-year-olds taking up the free early education they are entitled to.
- The centre does not show the impact of its services on the progress made by children towards the stages of their development nor on that of adults moving into training and work. Parents do not have enough chances to gain qualifications to support them into employment.
- Parents do not formally contribute to how the centre is run and too few participate in the advisory board meetings.
- Improvement targets are not sufficiently precise and measurable. As a result the centre cannot measure and show clearly how its services are impacting positively on the lives of children and families.

This centre has the following strengths:

- The centre is welcoming and well organised with resources that are of a high quality. Leaders and managers and governors know the area well, are managing change effectively and the centre is improving.
- Support for families with the greatest need who use the services is timely, of a good quality, and delivered through effective joint working with other professionals and voluntary organisations.
- The centre's work to help children prepare for school is effective and assists their learning and development. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage the achievement gap is narrowing between the lowest-attaining children and their peers.
- Health outcomes for families are good because of high quality provision and effective partnerships with health workers.
- Parents and children benefit from attending groups such as 'Stay and Play'. Parent workshops help to build their confidence, improve parenting skills and enable them to manage their children's behaviour positively.

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 centre staff, the local authority, the children's centre manager; members of the governing body and advisory board; parents and users of the centre; and representatives of organisations who work in partnership with the centre.

The inspectors visited activities taking place in the centre. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a sample of case files and a range of relevant documentation. Inspectors jointly observed one activity with a centre leader.

Inspection team

Steve Nelson	Additional inspector, Lead Inspector
Ann Taylor	Additional Inspector
Deborah Sanders	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Hawthorn Children's Centre is a phase two children's centre. It operates in the Sprites ward from one site. The centre fulfils its core purpose by running a range of services for families, by commissioning services from a range of partners and by working in partnership with health visitors and midwives. Activities are planned with other local children's centres to ensure a full range of services is available to families.

The centre manager is responsible for the day-to-day running of the centre. The advisory body consists of representatives from partner organisations and key stakeholders that work with the children's centre, the local authority and parents.

The children's centre has 1,276 children aged under five in its reach area. The vast majority of the families living in the area are from White British backgrounds. About 25% of children and adults who live in the area come from homes that are dependent on benefits and where no-one is in work.

When they start early years provision, the majority of children have skills, knowledge and abilities that are below with those expected for their age.

The main priority groups assessed in need of the centre services are disabled children and those with special educational needs, minority ethnic families, teenage and young parents, families in workless households and lone parents.

The range of activities offered by the centre includes support at the local community baby clinic, antenatal birth clinic, breast-feeding support and baby massage. The centre has links with health visitors, community midwives and speech therapists. It signposts families to a range of providers that offer adult education, volunteering opportunities, and activities designed to support parents and carers back into employment and training.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Increase the engagement of families from workless households and lone parents throughout the area, so that the large majority regularly access appropriate services.
- Work with the local authority and early years partners to increase the take-up of free education by eligible two year olds.
- Extend opportunities for adults in workless households to access further training and development and monitor their subsequent progress.
- Improve tracking and assessment systems to more accurately measure the impact of provision on children's learning and development, and their readiness for school.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - setting precise and measurable targets for improvement to monitor and evaluate the centre's effectiveness
 - extending parents' involvement in the governance of the centre and increase their representation on the advisory board.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- The large majority of families with young children, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, young and teenage parents and those with disabled children and special education needs are registered with the centre. A majority of families from the most deprived areas are registered. The effective working with midwives increases access to services for expectant mothers who are encouraged to register with the centre at an early stage.
- Although the numbers are increasing, a minority of families from lone parents and workless households regularly use the centre's services. Leaders know the main trends in the area, and have used the information they receive to deliver directed services in the community. For example, weekly 'Toy Time' sessions provided at The Triangle area, are well attended by families from priority groups.
- Most three-year-olds known to be eligible for free early years education have taken it up, which supports improved learning and development. In contrast, not enough of eligible two-year-olds living in the area are taking up their entitlement to early education to support their learning and development at the earliest opportunity.
- The crèche facilities, which are often available during adult learning sessions, are highly valued by parents as they enable their families to attend the centre.
- Outreach work is matched well to the needs of families so that care, guidance and support make a positive difference to their lives. The centre promotes information on its services and other services of help and advice well, through its attractive displays and posters.
- The centre works in close partnership with health and other professionals to prioritise families most in need of support. The travelling 'Playbus' helps to ensure that nearly all families attend the two-year development checks. The centre holds regular speech and language drop-in sessions. Effective partnership working enables early identification of specific needs such as communication delay.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- Services are well planned to meet the needs of families and there is an appropriate range of good quality activities to those children and families who access services. This includes health and development, parenting courses and play-based groups such as 'Infant Massage' and the drop-in 'messy playgroup'. However, the impact of services requires improvement because not enough families who are most in need attend sessions regularly.
- The centre works well with the counselling service to deliver advice and support to help families get their lives back on track. Case files are maintained to a good standard, are kept up-to-date, and include families' views and opinions. These files provide compelling examples of strong multi-agency work and the positive impact this has on reducing inequalities and improving families' lives.
- Health outcomes are moving in the right direction, due to the centre's effective partnerships with health services. The rates for child obesity are lower than those seen nationally. Data supplied by the centre indicate that an increasing proportion of mothers, including those from priority groups, continue to breastfeed their children until they are six-to-eight weeks old. This is giving babies a healthy start to life.

- Parents attending parenting courses and the home-safety checks undertaken by staff, report confidence in managing their children's behaviour and in keeping them safe. The centre has been effective in assisting teenage, workless and lone parents to deal with housing and benefits issues, sort out debt problems and overcome feelings of isolation.
- The impact of centre services on families' economic well-being is not well established. There are examples where individuals have volunteered in the centre or have been supported back into work, but not enough families, particularly from workless households, have been helped to take up training. Where support has been given, it has not been followed up consistently by the centre.
- There are suitable opportunities for parents, childminders and children to play and learn together, such as the 'Friday Fun' and the 'Time with Dad' group. Information from primary schools shows clearly that children who have attended the centre make good progress by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, the centre does not track the individual progress of children who regularly attend sessions. As a result it is unable to fully demonstrate the impact of its work.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The local authority supports and challenges the centre through the annual conversation processes, regular visits and analysis of the centre's performance data. This has a positive impact on the centre's performance for example, by increasing the number of registered families from disadvantaged areas.
- The recently restructured advisory board provides appropriate oversight of the centre's performance. Their monitoring systems hold staff to account and assure the work of the centre's partners. There is insufficient representation of parents on the advisory board. Opportunities for others to formally contribute to the governance and decision-making process, for example through a parent's forum, are too limited.
- Self-evaluation appropriately identifies the centre's strengths and weaknesses. Key priorities are identified and the centre has a suitable improvement plan that includes clear intentions. However, there are insufficient quantifiable targets for improvement to enable the centre to measure its performance.
- Staff are supported well by the centre manager through supervision and appraisals and they are appropriately challenged and held to account. They have good access to a range on of training and support to promote their professional development and enable them to carry out their duties effectively. The centre manager has a clear understanding of how to monitor and identify the quality of activities delivered by staff.
- Safeguarding and safe recruiting arrangements are appropriate and staff have received relevant training. Policies and procedures to promote safeguarding meet requirements and are understood by staff. E-safety is appropriately promoted and adults are aware of the risks associated with using computers and social media.
- Home visits ensure support is tailor-made for vulnerable families. The centre works well with social care staff to ensure families remain safe and there is effective intervention for children in need, those subject to child protection plans and the support for children subject to a Common Assessment Framework, including looked after children.
- Premises and resources are of a good quality. The shared use of staff, services and activities with neighbour centres reduces costs and ensures there is an appropriate balance of universal and

targeted services to meet the needs of children and families in the area. For those families that use the centre, they have an enjoyable and positive experience.

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	21415
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	430215
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,276
Centre manager	Amber Begg
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01473-260882
Email address	amber.begg@suffolk.gov.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

(Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk