

# Windhill Children's Centre Network

Windhill Children's Centre Network, Windhill Primary School, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 3QJ

**Inspection date** 8–9 May 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of practice and services		<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This children's centre group is good.

- The highly effective leaders have established exceptionally strong partnerships at local levels, especially with health partners. They regularly and rigorously analyse data and information resulting in targeted and precise actions that support vulnerable families and those most in need. As a result the network is improving rapidly.
- Precise targets in the service development plan feed into staff individual performance plans. They are discussed during both individual and team meetings and used astutely to inform and identify development and training needs for the centre's staff.
- Families experiencing difficulties in their lives are extremely well supported. Parents gave specific examples of how high-quality input from centre workers prevented issues escalating and ensured their family's safety.
- Effective sharing of information and rigorous analysis of data ensures that most families with young children and those who are pregnant are known to the network. Those who are most in need of support are identified and receive the help they need.

### It is not outstanding because:

- Recording is not always precise enough to show how information from evaluations is used to inform future planning or the intended and actual outcomes of work with families who receive support from the network.
- The system for gaining feedback from adult learning providers is not precise enough. As a result some providers do not give feedback to the network about requests for additional programmes or further training that would enhance learners' progress even further.

**Information about this inspection**

The inspection of this children’s centre group was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. The centres that form part of this children’s centre group are Windhill Children’s Centre, Little Squirrels Children’s Centre, Buttercups Children’s Centre.

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty’s Inspectors and an additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with leaders and managers of the network; management committee members; centre staff; the local authority; childminders; headteachers; representatives from voluntary services, Homestart, Safer Places and local pre-schools and nurseries; social care staff; parents and volunteers; partners from health, adult learning and Jobcentre Plus.

The inspectors visited the three main network sites as well as a selection of community venues used namely Manorfields Primary School, Pelhams Pre-school, Thorley Manor Toddler Group and Havers Community Centre.

They observed the centres’ work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

**Inspection team**

Denise Blackwell Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Marianick Ellender-Gele	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Lesley Talbot-Strettle	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the group

The Windhill Children's Centre Network serves the immediate community of Bishop's Stortford along with a large rural footprint encompassing the villages of Albury, Little Hadham, Furneux and Stocking Pelham. The network is made up of three main centres. Windhill and Little Squirrels Children's Centres operate from a new eco canopy building located on the site of Windhill Primary School. There is additional administration capacity and access to a large meeting room within the school. The centres also utilise a range of community venues. Buttercups Children's Centre is co-located with Summercroft Primary School who host the centre within its premises. The schools are inspected under separate arrangements. Their reports can be found on the Ofsted website [www.Ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.Ofsted.gov.uk)

There are approximately 2488 children under five years of age in the area served by the children's centre network. The governing body of Windhill Primary School manage children's centres services on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council. A recently re-structured children's centre management committee acts as the advisory board and consists of Governors, key partnership representatives and parent representatives. Midwifery and Health Visitor services are delivered through the centres. Outreach work to support vulnerable families and families in need of additional support is provided by the network. Adult learning and parenting sessions are provided in centre buildings and local community venues. Children are generally at or above expected levels of development on entry to early years provision.

There are increasing numbers of Black and minority ethnic families in the area served by the centres. The area served by the network is largely a less disadvantaged area. The reach area also contains dispersed and isolated communities as it covers a large rural footprint where transport links are poor. The area has diverse deprivation indicators with 10% of children served by the children's centre network living in the most deprived area. The percentage of low income families and those in receipt of out of work benefits is low compared to the national average.

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

- Improve recording on case files and evaluations so that the network can show the difference they make to the lives of families. In particular ensure:
  - case files about intervention work with families clearly show the intended and actual outcomes of this work
  - the analysis of evaluations of activities and services identify any actions taken or changes made as a result of feedback from families
  - information about learners clearly identifies the progress they make, any changes made in response to their requests and how their feedback impacts on and informs future planning.
- Develop the system for feedback from adult learning providers so that it is consistently precise enough to: ensure the network is aware of any requests from learners for additional learning inform the network about future courses learners intend to and/or actually take
  - ensure the network is aware of any requests from learners for additional learning inform the network about future courses learners intend to and/or actually take.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

**Good**

- Partners talk very positively about their work with the network. Sharing of information, including pre-birth information, results in the engagement of families who would otherwise be unlikely to access services. The strong relationships established with pre-schools, schools and parent and toddler groups in more rural areas ensures families who live there are well supported and their needs are met.
- A good range of relevant services are provided for families including those in target groups. This has resulted in very good access to the universal 'play and learn' session which is based in a local community centre in one of the network's more deprived areas. Baby 'play and learn' sessions are run alongside health clinics resulting in increasing numbers of under one-year-olds engaging in activities provided by the network.
- Close and effective working with Youth Connexions has resulted in cross referrals and collaborative working on a number of projects. The 'social media project' removed barriers and pre-conceptions of young parents as they supported grandparents to use modern technology such as Skype to keep in contact with their families. This has resulted in a more positive view of young parents in the community.
- Outreach work is effective in engaging families with high levels of need, for example families with a child protection or children in need plan. Attendance at activities is closely monitored. Partnership working with specialist providers ensures families have access to a wide variety of support and training services to meet their specific needs.
- Numerical data shows an increasingly positive picture of registration and engagement rates across the network. Data is broken down into areas of deprivation and need enabling leaders to identify priority groups and their participation rates. Targets based on accurate information are developed helping to drive improvement in the number of families engaging with services across the network.
- The take up rate of three- and four-year-old funding is high with 99 percent of children in the most deprived area accessing early education. Over 83 percent of families with two year olds who are eligible for free early education remain involved in services and activities. A high number of Black and minority ethnic families, low income and workless households are registered and engaged with the network.

### The quality of practice and services

**Good**

- Excellent modelling of practice for parents in 'play and learn' (PALS) sessions, intelligent and precise tracking of funded two-year-olds and well-planned transition events ensure children make progress in their learning. Through effective links with early years providers, including childminders, the network has an excellent understanding of emerging concerns for individual children's development. As a result any additional support or training that is needed is quickly put into place.
- All parents that met with inspectors praised the work of staff and there were many examples of high quality input that prevented issues escalating. Strong partnerships with social care and 'Safer Places' ensure children subject to child protection or children in need plans, including unborn

child, are protected well. Planning for parenting courses looks at specific areas for parents to improve their knowledge and impacts positively on parents' lives.

- Case files provide detailed examples of improvement for families in difficulty. Overall case files are well ordered and show effective partnership working with health, education and social care services. Professional trust is evident and careful attention is given to ensuring that there is continuity for families as children get older. However, recording on action plans and evaluations is not precise enough to always identify the intended and actual outcomes of any intervention, the progress families make, or how feedback informs future planning.
- High quality services for adult learning are provided. There is clear evidence of parents who access courses continuing their learning or gaining employment, stopping the cycle of disadvantage. The main college provider collects information about requests for additional courses and the take up of places. However one adult and family learning provider files this useful information away without sharing it with the network as the system for feedback does not ensure this is automatically passed back.
- Effective support for volunteers enables parents to improve their employability and volunteers are involved in a range of centre services. For example one parent volunteer delivers weekly English classes to speakers of other languages and young parents are involved in a range of volunteer work. The good range of training and 'grow our own' attitude has resulted in two mothers starting as volunteers and moving on to full time work in the centres.

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

### **Outstanding**

- The highly effective leaders have developed strong and effective partnerships resulting in significant and notable improvements in access, provision and outcomes, especially for the most vulnerable families. The excellent knowledge held by centre leaders and staff ensures accurate and reliable signposting when needed. Centres are seen by partners as being proactive, taking the initiative and driving relationships, with families at the heart of all they do. Even partners who were initially reluctant to engage with the network say they cannot imagine what they would do without the knowledge, skills and support they provide.
- Precise targets in the service development plan, that flow into individual performance plans, are based on an excellent understanding of the area and the needs of families. A culture of reflective practice ensures all staff contribute consistently to self-evaluation that drives the continuous improvement of services and activities. Rigorous analysis of evaluations results in changes to services and consistently high levels of satisfaction.
- Robust analysis of data, supported by exemplary partnership working meant that there was nothing inspectors could tell leaders that they were not already aware of and taking action about. Service level agreements clearly set out what both the network and partners will do and results in a shared pursuit of excellence both within the centre and in the wider early childhood community. Resources are extremely well deployed. Innovative practice, such as the network vehicle, ensures resources are taken out into the community, especially in rural areas where access to centre buildings is difficult.
- Integrated and inclusive practice and collaborative working benefits all families, for example excellent partnerships with specialist providers supports children with additional learning needs and communication difficulties. Partners report that the centres are seen as safe places and as a result the network is able to engage with some communities and families that they have not able

to access. Staff make good use of incidental opportunities to raise awareness of equality and diversity during activities that aids harmonious relationships in the community.

- Local authority leaders work closely with network leaders to remove barriers to information sharing at all levels. They set precise and well-informed performance targets and regularly monitor progress, identifying any further action that the network needs to take. Governance arrangements are well-embedded and management committee members ask pertinent and challenging questions based on a secure and accurate analysis of the needs of families in the area.
- A culture of safeguarding is embedded in all the network does. Recruitment procedures are robust and a wide range of relevant training is available to staff including joint training with other agencies. Good procedures are in place to protect children through multi-agency working and social care services provide a monthly list of children known to them ensuring centre staff are aware of any child protection issues. Centre staff regularly attend case conferences in support of families they work with and provide guidance and support through the Common Assessment Framework process where it is appropriate for them to do so.

**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 group details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	80115
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire County Council
<b>Inspection number</b>	442716
<b>Managed by</b>	The Governing Body of Windhill Primary School on behalf of the local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	2488
<b>Network manager</b>	Odette Morgan
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01279 696853
<b>Email address</b>	Odette.morgan@windhill.herts.sch.uk

**This group consists of the following children's centres:**

- 21071 Buttercups Children's Centre
- 21072 Windhill Children's Centre
- 21073 Little Squirrels Children's Centre



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