

Hurst Green and Holland Sure Start Children's Centre

Wolf's Wood, Hurst Green, Oxted, Surrey. RH8 0HJ

Inspection dates	10–11 June 2014
Previous inspection date	30–31 July 2013

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

- Parents do not have enough say in how the centre is run.
- Levels of attendance are not yet good for all those likely to benefit from services, although the number of families from prioritised groups who make use of the centre is steadily increasing.
- There are too many services that are available to everyone and not enough resources are dedicated to helping those most in need.
- Systems used by staff to show the difference activities make to families are basic. They do not show in detail what works best and what needs to be changed in order to give families the best possible services.
- Records about how staff work with individual families are not always completed to a high standard. Some do not present important information clearly to show how these families are getting on.
- Social care colleagues share some, but not all, relevant information that would enable centre staff to support families more effectively.
- There are not enough services available at the centre to help families apply for jobs or get help with benefits, finance or housing difficulties.

This centre has the following strengths:

- The local authority and governing body have done a good job in taking the necessary steps to understand the needs of the local community and improve the effectiveness of the centre.
- Many more families know about and use services now than was the case a year ago.
- Premises and play sessions are of good quality. Parents and their children appreciate the friendly welcome all staff give them, saying 'nothing seems like too much trouble for them'.
- Partnership working with health services works very well. Good communication with health visitors and midwives means staff find out about families who need support and start helping them quickly.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of families from priority groups who make use of centre services.
- Make the best use of available resources by amending the balance between services offered to all families and to identified families in need of support, so the very large majority of services are tailored to those most in need.
- Develop existing systems used to measure and monitor the difference services make so they accurately demonstrate how well children's learning and development and families' lives are improved because they use the centre.
- Include more parents, especially those from identified priority groups, in the work of the centre by increasing opportunities for them to volunteer and including more parents in centre governance.
- Improve case files so each facilitates high quality work with families and provides an accurate record of focused work by:
 - providing detailed information that shows the chronology, reasons, methods and results of any work undertaken with each family in each file
 - setting and recording clear actions and next steps
 - ensuring monitoring of files by the manager is thorough and frequent in order to spot further points for action and develop staff skills further.
- Work with the local authority and relevant partners to:
 - improve communication with social care so children's centre staff are fully informed about identified needs and families benefit from well-coordinated support
 - help improve families' economic circumstances by providing more opportunities for adult learning and advice about benefits, finance and housing issues.

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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with managers and staff. They spoke with parents, partners, members of the governing body and the advisory board, and representatives from the local authority. The inspectors observed a range of the centre's work consisting of one Stay and Play session, a baby weighing clinic, and a first aid course run for parents and other carers. They looked at a range of the centre's relevant documentation including evaluations, a local area consultation, parent feedback, policies and procedures, together with planning and evaluations. They carried out a scrutiny of six case files.

Inspection team

Susan Mann, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Anthony Mundy

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

The centre is in Hurst Green, Surrey, in the district of Tandridge. It is sited in the grounds of Hurst Green School (for children aged three to seven years). The school is subject to a separate inspection and its report can be found on the Ofsted website www.ofsted.gov.uk. The governing body of Hurst Green School manages the centre on behalf of the local authority. There is also an advisory board which has representatives from organisations that work with the centre, such as local schools, churches, health workers, and the police.

The children's centre opened in 2008 and moved to its present purpose-built building in 2011. It is open from Monday to Thursday, 50 weeks a year. The centre offers a range of services designed to help new mothers, young children and their parents. It seeks to focus its services on children from low-income or disadvantaged backgrounds, lone parents, and any individual families in need of support. There is no linked onsite childcare provision, and many children use the school's nursery or one of several early years settings located within the centre's catchment area. The centre is in the process of re-organising its use of additional venues and currently only runs services from the children's centre.

The centre serves a mainly rural area of 44 square miles, which includes small towns such as Godstone and Oxted. There are 989 children under five years living in the area. The local community consists mainly of White British heritage families, with a few families from other ethnic groups. There is a mixed range of housing from social housing to large, detached properties. Eighty per cent of people own their own homes. The area is mostly prosperous, but there are pockets of poverty. A very small minority of families are workless. Pupils enter early years provision with levels of learning and development broadly in line with those found nationally.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- The number of families who know about the centre has risen significantly in the last two years, and the large majority are now registered. Very good links with health services mean staff are kept informed about new births and families who move to the area from elsewhere.
- The majority of local families make use of what the centre has to offer, including those from groups the centre has identified as needing support. Those priority families living in and near Hurst Green make generally good use of the centre, and individual families from all areas are successfully involved with its services. However, there are still not enough families from some other parts of the centre's catchment, particularly the Godstone area.
- Most children take up their free place at nursery from the age of three years. The large majority of eligible two-year-old children use their funded nursery place to attend one of the good quality early years settings in the local area. Centre staff work individually with some parents to encourage and support them to use of their child's two-year-old funded place.
- Since the last inspection, the centre has reviewed the location of its services in the community. It has identified new families and groups to work with based on accurate information about the area. As a result, the centre has identified new locations to deliver activities closer to the families most in need, but these are not yet operating fully.
- Social care partners communicate the needs of vulnerable families well enough so that centre workers know when support is needed. However, there are a few occasions when social care is working with local families and the centre does not know. This prevents some families in greatest need benefiting from centre services from early on.
- Work with individual families is developing well. The member of staff responsible for community services has been in post for a few months, but has already established good relationships with many of the families. Together with the manager and centre receptionist, positive relationships are

established with families which help sustain regular contact and involvement.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The proportion of services tailored to the needs of identified groups and families has increased since the last inspection. Now the majority of services are for families most in need. Plans to increase the proportion of focused services further are in place, but at present resources are still not sufficiently well prioritised and too many are available to all.
- Sessions are of good quality. A variety of appropriate activities fosters children's learning and development well, and gives parents emotional and social support that is appreciated by most. At the popular Stay and Play, for example, children explore the story of *Little Red Riding Hood* through play, art activities and storytime.
- Children living in the local area do much better in their learning and development by the end of reception year than is found nationally or in the county. The progress of children attending Hurst Green School shows children who attended the centre do particularly well once they reach school. This indicates the value of the centre's work in helping them be ready for school, although the difference the centre has made for children who attend other schools in the area is not known.
- There are a few adult learning opportunities available at the centre. Parents and other carers learn life-saving skills by attending the regular first aid sessions provided, and parenting courses, such as Parenting Puzzle, are run from time to time. Individual parenting support makes a difference to families' lives and parents say they have happier home lives as a result.
- Strong partnerships with agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, Family Information Service and adult learning providers mean adults who need training or advice about benefits, finances, housing and employment access the help they need. However, there are few services available at the centre for parents to access this easily. Furthermore, the centre does not provide enough opportunities for parents to gain valuable experience through volunteering.
- Case files record the details of work done by the outreach worker with individual families. These files are variable in quality and do not always show enough detail about work planned or completed. For example, the reason why contact is paused, the actions planned with the family, or the improvements made are not routinely recorded. This makes it difficult to measure how well each family is doing. The manager checks files, but this process is not thorough and does not always identify all weaknesses in the files.
- Activity undertaken with families is evaluated. These evaluations show services make a positive difference to parents and children. However, they do not show the full extent of improvements in parents' understanding and knowledge or children's learning and development, and are not sufficiently detailed to show what services are most effective.
- Families engage well with health services, including at the centre in sessions such as the Healthy Child Clinic. As a result, measures used to determine children's health are good overall, with more mothers breastfeeding their children than found nationally and fewer obese children. The centre offers relevant services, such as healthy eating advice and access to breastfeeding support, to maintain families' health.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The local authority has responded effectively to last year's inadequate inspection judgement. They have taken prompt and considered action to drive improvement in all aspects of the children's centre, including training for the advisory board, use of an external adviser and consultation with the local area. As a result, many planned actions have been achieved and almost all other issues from the last inspection report are being addressed.
- Information about the centre's catchment area has greatly improved over the past year. Leaders now have a suitable range of accurate information about the needs and families living in the area. This helps them match services to local needs, and enables close monitoring of the effectiveness of

services.

- The governing body provides an exceptional level of scrutiny of centre effectiveness. It restructured its governance arrangements last year to form a dedicated sub-group of its main body. This group works with the 'link' governor to focus in depth on the performance of the centre and its manager reports. As a result, the governing body is very well informed and conducts in-depth debate on key issues such as the access of priority families to services and correct location of services in order to meet the needs of the area.
- The advisory board has taken on board the messages from its local authority training. Consequently, the Chair reports it is 'getting to grips' with its role well and has deepened its understanding of its purpose. Most relevant partner organisations are represented on the board, although parents are not always involved which limits their influence in governance.
- At present, staff take note of parents' views and make appropriate changes to services as a result. However, at present there is no parents' forum in place to collect views more formally. Not enough families from priority groups contribute to the running of the centre.
- The headteacher has steered the centre manager and staff team well to maintain attention on the correct priorities for improvement. This has led to well-planned and appropriate implementation of development plans. The headteacher has an accurate evaluation of the centre's strengths and weaknesses and monitors the work of the staff closely to keep progress on track.
- The local authority has been successful in driving improvements at a strategic level to improve key partnerships. Work on agreed communication guidance with social care to improve the information given to centre staff on relevant families is being finalised. Strategic links with Jobcentre Plus are developing well to improve provision for those families in need of employment and support, especially for lone parents.
- Children's safety and welfare are given high priority at the centre. Children subject to child protection plans known to the centre do well as a result of individual support given, although social care does not share information on all such children. Children and their families supported by the Early Help Assessment framework access the services they need through centre staff.
- Allocation of available resources is improving. Recent evaluation of the effectiveness of services and the needs of the local area has resulted in changes to serve families better. For example, some activities not accessed by priority families have been stopped so resources can be better used elsewhere.

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	21593
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	448879
Managed by	The governing body of Hurst Green School on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	989
Centre leader	Helen Acraman
Date of previous inspection	30–31 July 2013
Telephone number	01883 723496
Email address	childcentre@hurst-green.surrey.sch.uk

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