

Hamsey Green Children's Centre

Tithepit Shaw Lane, Warlingham, Surrey, CR6 9AP

Inspection dates	17–18 June 2014
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This 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:

- Not enough children under five years old are registered with, and access, the centre. Although the numbers are increasing, the local authority's target of 65% has not been met. The use of data to monitor access is underdeveloped and anomalies are not spotted quickly enough.
- Some of the groups the centre has identified as needing most support are not engaging regularly with its services. This is particularly the case for families in the Whyteleafe district.
- The centre does not provide sufficient information, advice and guidance for adults to help them improve their basic skills, education and employment opportunities. When adults have been signposted to other services, the tracking of the outcomes has been done on a piecemeal basis.
- Leaders, governors and managers have not made the best use of information about families in the area served by the centre to monitor and evaluate the centre's impact on the families who need support the most. This hampers the centre's capacity to improve.
- Leaders have not ensured that all the centre's safeguarding policies and procedures are rigorous.
- Adults who use the centre are not actively involved enough in shaping services because there is no parents' forum, too few volunteers and only one, newly-appointed parent representative on the advisory board.

It has the following strengths:

- Very good links with health services mean that families who are expecting babies and those with young children access good quality care, guidance and support.
- Other partnerships are strong, such as with the housing association, link school and some early years settings, with good information exchange assisting the centre in supporting families.
- The staff work hard to provide a warm welcome for all and good support for families, especially those living in the Whyteleafe temporary housing unit, despite the constraints of limited resources and time.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that more families overall, and especially from the centre's identified priority group living in the Whyteleafe district, access and engage with services by:
 - assessing the specific needs of families in areas where registrations are low and finding out why more are not using the centre
 - using information more effectively to monitor the access and engagement of families from groups who need most support.
- Enable more families, especially from priority groups, to improve their education and employability and monitor the outcomes by:
 - working with the local authority to develop more links with local adult education providers, Jobcentre Plus and other support agencies to provide adults with a wider range of information, guidance and opportunity
 - develop a consistent system to get feedback from partners and to monitor the benefits of the centre's support and signposting.
- The local authority, leaders, governors and managers should ensure that information about families' access and engagement is always clear, up to date and analysed effectively to ensure the needs of priority groups, in particular, are met.
- Those who lead, govern and manage the centre should ensure that all safeguarding policies relate specifically to those who use the centre, including vulnerable adults, and that regular fire drills are carried out when families are on the premises.
- Involve a higher number of families in shaping services by:
 - encouraging more volunteers from the area served by the centre
 - setting up a formal parents' group
 - increasing the number of parent representatives, especially from priority groups, on the advisory board.

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 two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, the school business manager and other staff. They met a wide range of partners including those from health services, early years settings, and schools. Discussions were also held with members of the governing body and the advisory board and with parents.

The inspectors visited sessions and activities taking place, such as a Stay and Play. One joint observation was conducted with the centre manager.

A range of relevant documentation was looked at by the inspectors, including the centre's self-evaluation, action plan and a sample of case studies as well as safeguarding practice, policies and procedures. The centre manager and the school business manager attended meetings of the inspection team.

Inspection team

Joan Lindsay, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Philida Schellekens

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Hamsey Green Children's Centre is a part-time, standalone centre that was first designated in June 2008. The centre offers services for families with young children, including health services as well as one-to-one support where there are more specific needs. There are three members of staff, all of whom are employed on a part-time basis. The centre is located adjacent to Hamsey Green Primary School. The governing body of the school manages the centre on behalf of the local authority. There is an advisory board in place. The school is subject to separate inspection and the latest report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

There are 839 children under five years in the area served by the centre. The area includes eight separate defined localities, none of which are considered to be disadvantaged compared to the rest of the country. There are pockets of social need and also areas of affluence. One of the areas includes a unit for families needing temporary housing. The centre is situated at the very edge of this area, bordering Croydon. As a result, almost half the children who use the centre are from out of its defined area and from another local authority.

Most children are from White British heritage families. The percentage of children aged up to four years living in workless households varies across the area served by the centre, but averages at 10% which is well below local and national levels. Children generally enter the Early Years Foundation Stage at levels slightly below those expected for their age.

The centre has identified priority groups needing most support as: families living in the unit of temporary housing; families living in one of the centre's relatively disadvantaged areas, Whyteleafe; and parents of new-born children.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families Requires improvement

- The centre is not ensuring that the large majority of all its identified priority groups are accessing and engaging effectively with services. The targeted work done with the Whyteleafe temporary housing unit has ensured that engagement levels are high for these families.
- Registrations overall are not meeting the local authority's target, although they are increasing rapidly, largely through the strong partnership with health services. For example, joint working with health professionals and the weekly New Parents' Group and antenatal and breastfeeding sessions for expectant and new parents have been key to this.
- Not enough has been done to find out why families are not accessing and engaging with services more or to measure the impact of the high number of 'out of area' families using the services.
- The centre is not analysing what specific services will meet the needs of all the priority groups, especially those living in the Whyteleafe area.
- There are good links and information exchange with health services. This starts from when expectant mothers first attend booking-in appointments with midwives, and continues through to health visitors conducting baby clinics in the centre. This means that access to early childhood services is good.
- Most children, including vulnerable two-year olds, take up the free entitlement to early education and the centre has supported families effectively in applying for places.

The quality of practice and services Requires improvement

- The quality, range and relevance of services open to all and those for priority groups require improvement. This is because the centre has not carried out in-depth analysis of what the area's

- specific needs are, nor is monitoring of the priority groups' access and engagement robust enough.
- There is not enough information or opportunities for adults to extend their education, skills and employability, because links with adult education and employment services are not strong. Where families have been signposted to other centres or partner agencies, the outcomes have not been recorded systematically to enable the centre to show the impact of this work, especially with priority groups such as families in the Whyteleafe district.
 - The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile results for the children living in the area served by the centre are slightly above national and local averages, although those for the link school are below average. The centre has not analysed this information carefully enough to ensure that the weaker areas of children's early development are planned for and clearly highlighted to parents at sessions such as Stay and Play.
 - Tracking of a small number of children while they attend the centre has just begun, but there are no consistent systems in place to follow the progress of priority group children when they move on. However, anecdotal evidence from the link school and other early years settings is that children who have attended the centre regularly are quick to settle and are confident.
 - Health outcomes are good in the local area, with more Reception age children assessed as being a healthy weight than the Surrey and England average. Some 66% of mothers are still breastfeeding at six to eight weeks, which is much higher than the national level.
 - Improving partnerships with social care mean that there is more information exchanged, especially in relation to vulnerable families such as those where children are subject to child protection plans, are looked after or are deemed to be children in need. One-to-one support for families referred to, or identified by, the centre is effective because it is designed to fit their needs; there is good involvement from other agencies to secure children's well-being.
 - Close working relationships with a neighbouring children's centre and a housing association provide good quality care, guidance and support for families, especially those living in the unit of temporary housing.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- Not enough use has been made of information about the numbers accessing and engaging with the centre by the local authority, leaders, governors and managers to ensure that priority groups are having their needs met and inequalities are reduced. For example, the impact of the high numbers using the centre, but who do not live in the local authority, has not been fully assessed.
- Targets set by the local authority are not specific enough to challenge the centre effectively, especially in relation to the access and engagement of the identified priority groups. Some of the information is newly available and leaders, governors and managers have not analysed it in sufficient depth. As a result, there has been an over-optimistic level of self-evaluation.
- The centre has mainly adopted the school's safeguarding and child protection policies, but they are not specific enough for the families and young children who use the centre. Fire drills are not frequent enough to ensure that as many families as possible are aware of what the evacuation procedure is.
- Safeguarding of families and children who are looked after, subject to child protection, considered to be in need or who have an Early Help Assessment is effective because of increasingly regular exchange of information. These families receive good support from the centre and other agencies.
- There are only three staff members at the centre, all of whom are employed part time, so staff resources are stretched to full capacity especially to meet the needs of the identified priority groups. The staff welcome everyone, but spend a relatively large proportion of their time on responding to the needs of the small number of families living in the unit of temporary housing. Members of the advisory board are rightly reviewing this aspect.
- The centre manager is a very visible presence and has been instrumental in forging key partnerships with other centres and agencies, despite the limited time available to her.
- The advisory board is clear about its governance role, is supportive and has representation from a wide range of key partners. Members provide some challenge to the centre, but they are not always clear about the centre's priority groups. Not enough families are represented on the advisory board.

- There is no formal parents' forum and only one volunteer who supports the centre every few weeks. Parents do have other means to voice their opinions, such as through evaluations at the end of sessions or via comments books, but it is not clear how those views are then passed on to the advisory board to enable them to be fully involved in shaping services.
- Parents spoken to during the inspection and the results of satisfaction surveys show that parents do have positive views of the centre and always feel warmly welcomed by staff. A common opinion voiced by parents is: 'This is a fantastic place!'

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.

Centre details

Unique reference number	21362
Local authority	Surrey County Council
Inspection number	442889
Managed by	The governing body of Hamsey Green Primary School on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	839
Centre manager	Jackie Bolton
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01883 625255
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