

Eye Children and Young People's Centre

Church Street, Eye, Suffolk, IP23 7BD

Inspection dates	16–17 July 2014
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Not applicable	
Access to services by young children and families		Good	2
The quality of practice and services		Good	2
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a good centre

- The very large majority of families most in need of help and support attend a good range of centre services. They speak with great feeling about the life-changing impact this has had.
- All children who are eligible in the reach area take up funding for free nursery education. As a result most make good progress and achieve better than other children of their age by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The centre has formed good partnerships with many key agencies including, for example, health services. As a result most mothers breastfeed their babies for at least six weeks and make sure they get the immunisations they need to keep them healthy.
- Family support workers provide excellent individual support to parents. They are highly skilled at understanding people's problems whilst giving them practical advice and support to overcome these.
- The children's centre manager has continued to drive forward improvement through a very difficult time of staff shortages. She knows the reach area very well and which families are most in need of support. As a result families receive good quality early help, guidance and support.

It is not outstanding because:

- Although outcomes are good at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, boys are not doing as well as girls and the gap between them is getting wider.
- Family support workers do not always understand when to start a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to support families.
- The Advisory Board and Local Authority are not providing enough challenge to the centre manager and not all key partners are represented or attend often enough.
- Action plans are sometimes over complicated and do not home in on precisely what the centre must do to improve further.

What does the centre/group need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of practice and outcomes for families by:
 - ensuring family support workers have a good understanding of when to use the Common Assessment Framework (CAF)
 - working with the local authority to support schools and early years providers in the reach area to close the attainment gap between boys and girls.

- Improve governance of the children's centre by ensuring that:
 - action plans are clear and state precisely what the centre must do to improve further
 - all key partners are represented on the advisory board, including parents and social care, and that meetings are consistently well attended
 - the advisory board understand how to give robust challenge and support to the children's centre manager
 - the local authority give robust challenge as well as good support to the children's centre manager.

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 an additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, the local authority, health visitors and midwives, the linked social worker, family support workers, members of the advisory board and parents.

The inspectors visited a number of sessions held during the inspection, including Little Stars and Baby Bistro delivered for all parents.

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

Inspection team

Julie Winyard, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ann Taylor

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Eye Children and Young People's Centre serves a largely rural area and provides most services on site. The centre is situated in the area with the largest number of disadvantaged families although overall the reach area is relatively affluent. Most families are from White British backgrounds. The centre is under the governance of Suffolk Local Authority.

The centre offers a range of universal and targeted services and works closely with other support services in the community for example, Eye Opportunity Group and Stradbroke Swimming Pool to help expand their offer for families locally.

The centre offers a weekly 'stay and play' session called Little Stars at Stradbroke Community Centre. The centre is open five days a week all-year-round and offers one weekend session on monthly basis, as well as activities outside of working hours and in school holidays. The centre offers outreach to targeted groups such as lone parents, children living in workless households and those who are disadvantaged as a result of rural isolation or poor transport links.

There has been considerable staff turbulence over the last year and a 40% cut in the centre's budget this year.

Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years provision are in line with those expected for their age.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- All families with children under five years, and those expecting children, are known to the centre and the very large majority of those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are receiving the help they need. This is because, during the severe staff shortages of last year, the centre rightly made these families their top priority. Since April there has been a dramatic rise in the numbers of all families who use centre services because the centre has more staff to work with them.
- The children's centre makes sure all eligible children receive the funding they are entitled to, at age two, three, and four and most children attend good early years provision. As a result education outcomes for young children are good in the reach area. There is a good focus on improving achievement for children eligible for free school meals and as a result the attainment gap between these and all children is closing rapidly. The centre recognises there is more to do to close the attainment gap between boys and girls.
- Good attention is given to working effectively with a wide range of partners, including the local Job Centre Plus, health professionals and private providers.
- The recent course for mothers with mental health issues resulted in good outcomes. One mother said: 'Since doing the course I've been able to see my life, the things around me and my past in a different light.'
- Families who are suffering from domestic abuse are a high priority for the centre. Good joined-up working with key agencies like the Police and social care mean the centre gives outstanding support where this is needed. For example, in one case where a parent was isolated and had no means of travelling to the centre, the family were given transport to and from groups.
- Careful thought is given to where the centre delivers activities and parents have good input into this. Although the majority of activities are based in Eye, there are very well attended groups taking place further afield to cater for those families who do not live close to the children's centre.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- Activities and groups for children and parents are of good quality. They are well planned and resourced, and have a clear focus. For example, at Baby Bistro family support workers give outstanding support and guidance to mothers about breastfeeding. This is because they are well-trained in how to help with any problems and can put parents at ease. They have built up excellent relationships with mothers who come to the Bistro and as a result they are confident to share their most intimate concerns.
- Babies and toddlers thrive in the friendly and stimulating environment. There are lots of good quality and appropriate toys for them to play with. Family support workers model how to use the toys when this is needed. Staff make sure that other venues are equally welcoming and the mobile 'Wow' board helps to celebrate children's and family's achievements.
- Carefully structured and nationally recognised parenting courses are offered to families and are well attended. After completing the course parents say they have a better understanding of their children, how to manage their behaviour and help them learn and develop well.
- Family support workers give excellent support to families in the centre and in their own homes. They are good at working with parents to identify what they need to do to keep their children safe and at

evaluating how well things are going. However, they are not clear about when to move from a children's centre action plan to the more formal Common Assessment Framework (CAF) plan. As a result, in a few cases where more than one agency are involved with families, a CAF is not in place.

- The majority of parents in the reach area are well-qualified and at work. However, the centre staff work effectively with other agencies including Job Centre Plus to help those who are not qualified or less confident to get back into training and work. For example, staff work well with young parents to help them make new friends, gain confidence and raise their aspirations.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The centre manager gives good leadership to her staff. She has developed robust tracking systems that enable staff to identify families in need of help and support quickly. The data she receives from key partners is up-to-date and accurate. As a result services are well planned, resources are used effectively and outcomes for all families are good and sometimes outstanding. However, this information and the evaluation of children's centre services does not always come across clearly enough in written evaluations, and action plans are sometimes over complicated and do not home in on precisely what the centre must do to improve further.
- The local authority and advisory board give good support to the centre manager but do not challenge written plans and evaluations robustly enough. This is because the advisory board does not include all key partners and those who are included do not always attend meetings.
- The local authority locality manager meets monthly with the centre manager to discuss action plans and training needs. However, although the written records of these meetings show that the local authority gives good support to the manager, there is no evidence of robust challenge particularly with regard to action planning or the numbers of families engaging with children's centre services.
- Staff are dedicated, experienced and well qualified. They benefit from the monthly one-to-one meetings with the centre manager where their welfare is a priority as well as the quality of the work they undertake with families. They also benefit from good quality training that is linked to their own development needs as well as to centre priorities.
- There is good communication and partnership working with agencies who support families who are subject to a child in need or child protection plan. Family support workers are clear about their role and responsibilities in these complex cases.
- There are good opportunities for parents to give their views about children's centre services. This happens informally in groups and through formal evaluations following a course. The centre also carefully monitors the information leaflets that parents take from the centre and this impacts on services offered. For example, because parents showed a keen interest in baby safety leaflets, the children's centre asked St John's Ambulance to put on a safety course for them. This proved very popular and will be run several times. However, there are no parent representatives on the advisory board.
- Safeguarding children and their families is a very high priority at all centre events and activities. There are robust policies and procedures to support this and staff know what to do and who to go to if children could be at risk. All children's centre activities and venues are robustly risk assessed and this underpins the warm and nurturing atmosphere that all staff successfully create.

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

Unique reference number	21122
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	442887
Managed by	Norfolk

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	912
Centre leader	Fran Bishop
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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