

# Rural Haywards Heath Children and Family Centre

Unit 1 Highlands Farm, London Road, Bolney, West Sussex, RH17 5PX

**Inspection date** 1–2 July 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</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>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This centre requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Families from some priority groups are not using services often enough to make a difference in their lives.
- The planning, assessment and evaluation of outreach activities, including 'Play and learn together', are not sharply focused on children's learning and progress. Some groups of children are not doing as well as other children in their age group, especially in some village locations, and boys are not achieving as well as girls.
- The centre does not receive information from children's social care regarding children in need in the area. This hampers their ability to give this group priority and meet their needs.
- Links with adult training providers and colleges are underdeveloped, which limits the range of opportunities available for adult learning.
- Leadership, management and governance of the centre are improving, particularly in the quality of information sharing, but this not yet established well for all partners. New members have joined the advisory board, the centre partnership group, in the last six months. However, it is too soon to see the impact of its work in challenging and driving the centre's performance.

### This children's centre has the following strengths:

- The team manager leads the staff group with an inspiring vision of service and inclusion that has driven a rapid increase in the number of families using the centre's services, especially among teenage parents and other families who are most in need of support in the area.
- Play and learning resources are diverse, of high quality and used with great care by all staff. Toy library and sensory toy library resources are made available flexibly to individuals and community groups to support disabled children and low-income families particularly well.
- The information provided by the county and partner organisations is becoming more precise and relevant. This is helping the centre to accurately target services for prospective parents and families.
- Individual family support work is improving outcomes for families that engage with the service.
- The centre is encouraging the development of parent-led groups and volunteering opportunities.

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

- Ensure the centre partnership group engages all partners consistently well and provides the challenge needed to drive improvement.
- Narrow achievement gaps at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly for children from geographical areas where achievement is lowest, children from poorer backgrounds and boys, by improving systems to plan, assess and evaluate children's learning and progress.
- Establish better links with colleges and training providers so there are more opportunities for adults to progress onto vocational courses, which can lead to employment.
- Increase the regular uptake of services by all families engaged with the centre, particularly families on low incomes, and those with lone parents and teenage parents.
- Ensure children's social care services provide the centre with information about 'children in need' who live in the area.

### 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 of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector.

The inspectors had discussions with the centre manager, centre coordinator and representatives of the local authority. Inspectors spoke with health and education professionals; the centre's staff and staff in collaborating children's centres; parents; volunteers; childminders; and the chair and members of the centre partnership group for the district.

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

Inspectors visited outreach work at St Augustine's Church Café, Scaynes Hill, and the Scout Hut, Cuckfield, and visited Haywards Heath Children and Family Centre.

### Inspection team

Christine Davies	Her Majesty's Inspector, Lead Inspector
Penny Fisher	Her Majesty's Inspector
Dave Baber	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Rural Haywards Heath Children and Family Centre serves the villages of Cuckfield, Scaynes Hill, Horsted Keynes, Lindfield and Bolnore Village, and the rural areas around the town of Haywards Heath. The centre was designated in February 2008. It is led and managed by West Sussex County Council. The centre is one of eight children's centres in the Mid Sussex District, which comprises an urban cluster of five centres and rural cluster of three centres. The centre works collaboratively with Haywards Heath Children and Family Centre in the urban cluster. This inspection was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the Haywards Heath Children and Family Centre, which has a separate report. Published inspection reports for Haywards Heath and other centres in the district can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Governance is provided by a joint centre partnership group for the Haywards Heath and Rural Haywards Heath centres, with representation from the family forum of each centre. The rural cluster team manager leads the centre. She is supported by a part-time centre coordinator, two rural outreach coordinators (equivalent to one-and-a-half posts) and a family information service assistant, and has the support of a volunteer coordinator who works across the cluster. The centre delivers services entirely by outreach, using a range of vans and three converted 17-seater buses, including one equipped as a sensory room. These are used as mobile venues and to transport equipment to individual homes, pre-schools and other community settings. The centre provides access to health, family support, child development, early education, and adult and family learning services. The centre does not provide registered early years provision.

The Rural Haywards Heath centre serves approximately 1,255 children under the age of five, and prospective parents. Mid Sussex is mostly rural and relatively affluent. Most families are economically active and the proportion of families claiming benefits is below national and regional averages. However, a very small minority of families dispersed around the Rural Haywards Heath area are on low incomes. The majority of families in the area are White British; about 9% are from minority ethnic groups, with the largest among these being White European, representing families of a wide range of nationalities and language groups. The main challenges facing young families are social isolation and distance from health, early education, and children and family services locations. Families use services in a variety of centres according to their preferences. Children move on to schools inside and outside the centre's immediate reach area. Children's skills and abilities on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are broadly in line with those expected for their age.

The centre identifies its priority groups as: teenage parents; lone parents; disabled children; low-income families; women with low-level postnatal depression; and children receiving social care statutory services for child protection or as a child in need.

### Inspection judgements

#### Access to services by young children and families

**Good**

- The centre builds on partnership working with midwives and health visitors to gain an accurate picture of prospective parents, newborn children and families with children under five moving into the area. Registration rates have recently improved significantly across all groups. Health partners actively promote and register families to children's centres in the district so that Rural Haywards Heath centre establishes contact with the very large majority, 92%, of families.
- Health partners have improved the level of detail collected on the registration form. The centre checked the information against its contact and attendance data in the last year, so that it now has a much more accurate picture of the needs and number of families who are accessing services. The centre meets its own target for the regular take-up of services at least once a month by the large

majority of families.

- This sustained contact is achieved through the flexibility of the centre's mobile resources. Services are placed geographically where they are needed. Attendance is high at the fortnightly 'Play and learn together' sessions at Cuckfield and at the regular round of outreach sessions at schools, pre-schools and toddler groups. The family information service assistant is often in attendance, giving families ready access to information, advice and guidance, and ensuring they are signposted to the family services that they need.
- Outreach sessions attract 40 to 50 families fortnightly at the rural health visitor clinic in Lindfield village hall. It is held in the highest regard by parents and professionals. The view that it is 'hub of the community' was echoed by many parents. The expertise available means that families' needs are assessed, giving prompt access to a range of specialist health services for children and to 'Time to Talk' services for those with low-level postnatal depression.
- Services are exceptionally accessible for disabled children. Specially adapted buses provide play venues on families' driveways, in school car parks and on the streets. The centre identifies the needs of children with sensory impairment and physical disabilities through working with health, statutory children's services and voluntary sector organisations. Almost all of the 23 children known at the time of the inspection were engaging regularly and their development is improving.
- With increasingly accurate targeting, the centre is successful in sustaining engagement for the large majority of families in priority groups. All families from minority ethnic backgrounds and who speak English as an additional language are engaging at good levels in universal services so that they are no longer a priority group for outreach services. Other previously targeted groups who are now engaging in increasing numbers include fathers and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families.
- Although no complete information is available for the centre to know the number of low-income households, it gathers local intelligence on worklessness, fuel poverty and social housing as approximate indicators of levels of need in the community so that services are placed where the need is highest. All activities provided in outreach take affordability into account. Use of the toy library is promoted and taken up well in the areas identified in need. The centre promotes community foodbanks and signposts families to debt and financial advice services.
- All of the very small number of families receiving child protection services sustained contact in the last year. Information is not available to the centre to check whether it is in contact with all children in need.
- The centre has improved the regular engagement of lone parent families rapidly to the large majority, 71%. The centre remains focused on contacting and engaging with the small number of teenage parents moving in and out of the county, and on ensuring that the take-up of services continues at a good level.
- Families are well supported to attend services. For example, transport is provided so that they can access the teenage parent groups, 'Time to Talk', and parenting programmes in Haywards Heath urban centre or other centres in the district. A crèche is provided to support parents' attendance at family forum meetings. Parents are reminded by email and phone calls about services that may be of interest to them, such as the parent-led multiple-birth group and the childminder drop-ins at the Haywards Heath centre, although their attendance is variable.
- The centre increased the uptake of funded early education places by eligible two-year-olds in the 2013/14 year so that all but two of 12 are now taking up their entitlement. Most three- and four-year-olds take up their places, including almost all children who are most in need of support. All early education provision in the area is good or outstanding.

### The quality of practice and services

### Requires improvement

- Planning, assessment and evaluation are not sharply focused on children's learning and progress.
- Overall, children from the area achieve well at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, the variation in achievement in 2013 was very wide. For example, there are two village locations where the proportion of children reaching a good level of development was as low as 33% or 44%, compared with 80% in some other locations. Collaborative effort by the centre, a school, and private and voluntary sector providers in one location, with close tracking of current under-fives'

achievement, shows improvement this year.

- Children's achievement at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2013 showed gaps between boys and girls. It also shows that children from poorer families did far less well than those from more affluent backgrounds. The centre is beginning to target activities to help close these gaps. For example, the play resources are used well at 'Play and learn together' in Cuckfield to excite boys' imaginative mark-making, and the resources demonstrate affordable play materials for families on low incomes. Transition work to prepare children for starting school is starting earlier this year. However, it is too soon to see the impact of these measures.
- 'Play and learn together' sessions are enjoyed and valued by children and parents who attend. Many parents complete the learning journals with enthusiasm. Children have access to a wide range of good-quality resources, and parents are encouraged to interact and play with their children. Children's safety is well promoted.
- Parents speak passionately about the individual support they receive from knowledgeable rural outreach coordinators and in parenting courses. Teenage parents find the confidence to attend clinics with their children. Parents with anxiety make great strides in relaxation through baby massage groups and 'Time to Talk' groups. Evaluations of these programmes show that all parents gained confidence in their understanding of their child's development and behaviour.
- The healthy children's centre programme ensures that targets are set to improve health outcomes. Sustained breastfeeding and obesity are at good levels, and better than found in the county as a whole. The setting contributes to healthy lifestyles, for example, through the provision of information, advice and guidance, and by providing healthy snacks at 'Play and learn together' sessions. Joint work with health partners is promoting immunisations for two-year-olds in the area, as performance in this aspect is below target.
- Direct work with families and the delivery of effective parenting programmes are contributing to the safety and well-being of vulnerable children and families. Staff at the centre are lead professionals for a very small number of Common Assessment Framework plans. The centre makes referrals promptly to children's services for children in need of help or protection. The centre uses the 'family star' tool for all other families receiving one-to-one support. In the cases seen, these assessments show improving outcomes for families, with some no longer needing statutory intervention.
- A valuable work readiness programme aimed at providing parents with the necessary skills to gain employment has been successful with several positive outcomes. However, the centre lacks firm links with an adequate number of training providers and colleges. This restricts the choice of vocational courses and progression opportunities for those wishing to continue study.
- Recently introduced case liaison meetings held jointly with the local health visitor team ensure that families are accessing appropriate support and making progress. However, schools, the Jobcentre Plus and training providers do not feed back enough useful information for the centre to track how well children and adults are doing when they move on, and whether they have benefited from the centre's support.

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

### **Requires improvement**

- It is too soon to see if the new governance arrangements are sustainable or if they will provide robust challenge to help drive the centre's improvement. Governance arrangements are clear and understood by partners. New members have been appointed to the advisory board, the centre partnership group. An enthusiastic parent chair is now in place and terms of reference have been agreed.
- The current safeguarding document requires some updating to ensure all procedures are kept together. An overarching early childhood services safeguarding policy is being introduced to replace it. Safe recruitment procedures are implemented for all paid staff and volunteers. Risk assessments for all vehicles, venues and activities are thoroughly implemented. Rural outreach coordinators work alongside other agencies, as requested, to support children where common assessments have been undertaken or where child protection plans are in place. However, the centre is not receiving information regarding children in need living in the area.

- The centre has tried several different ways to ensure that parents contribute to the design and delivery of services. Parents contribute their ideas through Family Forum meetings. Parents have led the initiatives to set up a twins and multiple-births group and the fortnightly 'Play and learn together' session at Cuckfield.
- The rural cluster manager is highly experienced in outreach work and, in dialogue with the strategic service manager, has sharpened the use of evidence and data to shape the centre's priorities. With a clear vision of inclusion for families, the cluster manager has improved greatly the processes for registering families so that access is now good.
- The local authority is providing data which is increasingly accurate and useful to centre leaders. Better-quality information is helping the centre to meet the needs of the area. For example, a detailed analysis of children's achievements in the Early Years Foundation Stage is clearly presented to ensure the centre is able to focus on those areas of learning where children need more support. The centre sets relevant targets for priority groups and is developing a detailed tracking system.
- Performance development reviews are undertaken regularly and reflect the priorities of the centre well. Case supervision is appropriately prioritised and staff value the additional group supervision to share expertise in collaboration with their peers from other centres in the district. All staff have attended mandatory training, including child protection and safer recruitment.
- Some effective partnerships have been established, particularly with health professionals. The centre makes efficient and effective use of its mobile venues, and its excellent range of play and learning resources, to meet a great range of needs. The centre is adding to its resources and helping families to develop skills by developing parent-led groups and increasing the number of volunteers contributing to services.
- The centre's self-evaluation is accurate, reflecting a manager who knows well its strengths and those areas that require further improvement. However, the centre does not measure its effectiveness in depth because it does not track outcomes for some adults in key target groups as they move on from the centre's services to employment, and for children as they move into school.
- The local authority implements a systematic performance management cycle, with clear links to the centre's self-evaluation and development plan. The centre is on track to meet most of the targets for improvement in the area and a review is due in July 2014.

**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.

**Centre details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	22585
<b>Local authority</b>	West Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	444740
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority
<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	1,255
<b>Centre leader, Rural Cluster Team Manager</b>	Alison Robinson
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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