

Ash Grange Sure Start Children's Centre

Ash Church Road, Ash, Surrey, GU12 6LX

Inspection dates	1–3 July 2014
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
		Not applicable	
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:

- Although registrations are increasing, not enough priority families are using services.
- Just under a third of eligible two-year-olds do not take up their free nursery entitlement.
- The proportion of Reception-aged children who are at a healthy weight is too low; despite the otherwise good work to improve health outcomes, impact in this area has been limited.
- Systems for tracking, checking and analysing information on the progress of adults accessing further education or employment are not sufficiently developed.
- Information on priority groups is not always accurate, clearly presented and routinely checked, in order to provide centre leaders, governors and the advisory board with a clear picture of the impact of services on families in most need.

The children's centre has the following strengths:

- Leaders have successfully increased the number of families who register, access and engage with the centre. They have very good knowledge of the local community.
- Strong partnerships underpin the centre's effective work to improve most health outcomes, help children get ready for school and help families who are in most need.
- Families are very supportive of the work of the centre. They speak glowingly of the support they have received from staff, particularly at times of crisis.
- Although relatively new, governance is increasingly effective. The new subcommittee, specifically designated to look at centre's work, has made a good start.
- The skills of the centre leader and headteacher complement each other well. Together, they have introduced initiatives to improve the quality of the centre's services and activities.
- Resources are well managed across the collaboration, which has resulted in a good range of activities open to all and those aimed at specific groups.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Increase the engagement of families who live in the least advantaged area, two-year-olds who are eligible for a funded place, so as a minimum, the large majority (65%) regularly access services.
- Ensure that most two-year-old children who are eligible for free early education take up their place by working with partners and parents to promote this entitlement.
- Improve health outcomes by:
 - increasing the proportion of children who are at a healthy weight so that it is closer to those levels seen nationally.
- Extend opportunities for more adults, especially those seeking employment, to prepare for work by:
 - increasing participation rates in adult learning programmes to aid progression into further education and employment
 - developing systems for measuring the long term impact of the centre's work to demonstrate how well adults benefit from training courses in preparing them for work.
- Working with the local authority, ensure that information on all priority groups is up-to-date, timely, easily accessible and checked in sufficient detail, in order to give centre leaders, governors and the advisory board a clear picture of the impact of services on families in most need.

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.

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre leader, headteacher, representatives from the local authority, and partners from health, education, and the local community. They also met parents, volunteers and representatives from the governing body, advisory board and parents' forum. The centre leader attended all meetings of the inspection team.

Visits to activities, such as Bumps and Babies and Play and Learn, were undertaken. All observations were undertaken jointly with centre staff. The inspectors looked at the centre's self-evaluation, action planning, a sample of case files, safeguarding practice, policy and procedures and a range of other relevant documentation.

Inspection team

David Scott, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Graham Saltmarsh

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Ash Grange Children's Centre was designated in 2009 as a stand-alone centre and delivers a range of services including health, parenting classes, play and learn groups, family support, and adult learning. The children's centre shares its site with Ash Grange Primary School (URN 125116) and Ash Grange Children's Centre Day Care (EY 375066), which are subject to separate inspection arrangements. The reports can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

The centre is managed by the governing body of Ash Grange Primary School, made up of local community, local authority and parent representatives, to provide strategic leadership. There is also an advisory board and parents' forum, comprising of key partners and parents. The centre works in collaboration with four other children's centres in Guildford, and offers a number of shared resources. Boxgrove (URN 20380) and The Spinney (URN 23257) children's centres were also inspected at the same time as Ash Grange. In addition, the centre works in partnership with a federation of schools and a children's centres.

The community the centre serves includes 844 children under five years of age. It is situated in one of the most densely populated areas nationally. Just over one in 10 families in the area served by the centre is deemed to live in the least advantaged area of the country. A similar proportion lives in workless households.

The majority of all families are of White British or Other White British heritage. Just under a third of children are from Traveller families. The proportion of minority ethnic groups is below average. Children's skills and abilities on entry to early education are below the levels expected for their age.

The centre has identified children living in the least advantaged area, two-year-olds who are eligible for a funded place, and children from families who are in most need, as its main priority groups.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Registrations stand at 59% and are rising, but the children and families, especially those from priority groups, who use the centre's services are not yet the large majority.
- The large majority of three-and four-year-olds and 69% of two-year-old children are accessing their funded early education place. They are successfully helped to get ready for school.
- The very large majority of children from families who are in most need engage increasingly well with the centre. However, only a majority of those children living in the least advantaged area, and two-year-olds who are eligible for a funded place, engage with the centre regularly.
- Staff who provide support and advice in the community, have a good knowledge of the area, and the often very difficult issues facing many families, including isolation and financial crisis. These, together with strong partnerships with health and other agencies, to provide services for expectant parents, have resulted in increasing registrations and

engagement.

- Centre leaders have a clear marketing strategy that is focussed on increasing the registration and engagement of families from priority groups. Through joint working with partners in the collaboration, positive improvements are beginning to be seen. However, due to the lack of administrative support, the speed of improvements has been reduced.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The centre delivers a range of services and there is a good balance between activities open to all and those aimed at specific groups. Parents benefit from activities, such as Bumps and Babies and Play and Learn, that are specially designed to improve their parenting skills.
- In 2013, a slightly lower percentage of children achieved a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage than that found nationally and locally. The centre's own information for 2014 shows that a higher proportion than last year are on target to achieve a good level of development.
- The promotion of the benefits for new mothers breastfeeding has resulted in a rising trend in outcomes. In the last year there has been an eight percentage point increase in the proportion of mothers who continue breastfeeding at six to eight weeks. At 50%, this is just above national, but below county averages. Immunisation rates have also improved, over the last year.
- Various initiatives, such as healthy lunchbox workshops and Saturday Swimming Sessions, have been designed to give families practical tips and advice on how to lead a more healthy lifestyle. However, centre leaders rightly recognise that these activities have only had a limited impact in increasing the healthy weight of Reception age children, which is currently above levels seen nationally and locally.
- Referrals for employment advice, such as Jobcentre Plus and other agencies, are at an early stage of development. The centre holds some information in the form of case studies about the short-term achievements of adults. However, the systems to track the longer term impact of these adult learning and employment opportunities are not yet fully in place. As a result, this restricts the centre helping adults to progress more quickly in developing their skills or to gain access to employment. Currently, there is only a small number of active volunteers at the centre.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The arrangements for governance are relatively new and evolving. For example, the governing body has only been established in its current form since May 2013, and the parents' forum since January 2014. Governors have recently convened a new committee to specifically evaluate the work of the centre. Training to support this has already been arranged. However, it is too early to assess the full impact of their work.
- The local authority conducts annual reviews and regularly checks the work of the centre. Partnership working has improved since the formation of the collaboration. However, although priorities for improvement are set, not all targets are sufficiently clear, precise and measurable, and this restricts their usefulness in driving positive change quickly. Also, information provided by the local authority is not always up to date, timely, easily accessible and checked in sufficient detail. This reduces centre leaders, governors and the advisory board's ability to measure the impact of services on priority families.
- The centre manager, in post for 18 months, with the whole-hearted support of

headteacher, has been very effective in steering the centre through a period of uncertainty and change. Procedures for professional supervision and the setting of targets for staff are well established. These have ensured that families in most need of support have received good levels of care, guidance and support.

- The centre runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis, but the lack of administrative support has been an ongoing challenge. This has impeded the speed in which routine tasks, such as the inputting of family information on the tracking systems, have been completed.
- The safeguarding of young children and their families is a very high priority for the centre. Staff use the electronic Common Assessment Framework processes (eCAF) well to assess families' needs and, as a result of close inter-agency working with health and children's social care services, are able to intervene early and prevent issues escalating. Children who are looked after, subject to child protection plans, and those deemed to be children in need are well supported.
- The centre is highly regarded by parents, with typical comments being, 'It's been absolutely fantastic and has helped me get my life back on track.' They also appreciate the high quality of resources used in sessions such as Play and Learn. The sharing of resources across the collaboration enables the highly efficient use of available funds to meet the needs of young children and their families.

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.

Group details

Unique reference number	20115
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	444503
Managed by	The governing body of Ash Grange Primary School on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	844
Centre leader	Pam Henry
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01252 350225
Email address	childrenscentre@ash-grange.surrey.sch.uk

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