

North & West Witney Children's Centre

West Witney Primary School, Edington Road, Witney, Oxfordshire, OX28 5FZ

Inspection dates

Previous inspection date

11–12 September 2014

Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Good	2
		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 centre works well with its partners to make sure that it knows most of the families in the area with children under five. A large majority take advantage of the support and activities offered by the centre and its partners, especially those most in need of help.
- The centre works very effectively to support families in their own homes in times of greatest need, and this improves family life and reduces the risk of harm to children.
- The centre provides a good range of services that help parents to support their children's early learning and development, and prepare them for school.
- The centre leader and staff, together with Action for Children, are very clear about the centre's role in improving the life chances of children and families. They are bringing about significant improvement to the range and quality of services the centre provides.
- All parents speak of the warm welcome they receive at the centre and the high levels of care, guidance and support it provides.

It is not outstanding because:

- There are still a small minority of families who are not benefiting from the support of the centre and its partners, including in the part of North Witney where there is most need.
- Not enough adults have the opportunity to volunteer and to take part in accredited adult learning in order to improve their chances of getting a job and the economic stability of their families.
- The advisory board offers strong support to the centre but its role of challenging it to improve is only just beginning.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Develop strategies to enable even more families to benefit from the services and support of the centre and its partners, especially in the part of North Witney where there is most need.
- Provide wider opportunities for parents to volunteer and to take part in accredited adult learning in order to improve their chances of getting a job and the economic stability of their families.
- Enhance the role of the advisory board so that it challenges the centre to improve as well as supporting its work.

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 leader and representatives of Action for Children and the local authority. They also spoke, either in person or by telephone, with key partners in early years provision, schools, adult education, social care and health. They also talked to members of the advisory board and a number of parents.

The inspectors visited one 'Baby Stay and Play' session at the Witney Children's Centre.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including information about the safeguarding of children and adults, evaluations of the centre's work and plans for improvement.

Inspection team

Graham Lee, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Christina Christou

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

North West Witney Children's Centre is a stand-alone centre serving the northern and western areas of the market town of Witney as well as the village of Ducklington. It originally operated from a variety of community venues before moving into its current purpose-built accommodation in May 2011. It shares the site with West Witney Primary School. The centre offers support for parents with children's early education and development. It also provides family support and outreach work, help for parents to enter training and employment, child and family health services, benefits advice and parent information services.

The centre has been managed by Action for Children on behalf of the local authority since April 2013. It works closely with Witney Children's Centre, the other centre in the town. The centre leader manages both establishments on a day-to-day basis. The centres share a joint advisory board, consisting of representatives of key partners. The centre is not part of the co-located school and the headteacher and governors have no role in its management.

There are approximately 647 children under five living in the area served by the centre. A very large majority of families are of White British heritage. The centre serves a largely affluent area, and proportions of children living in households reliant on benefits, and where their parents are out of work, are relatively low. One part of North Witney, however, has more social housing and a higher level of need than the rest of the area served by the centre. Children's levels of skills and understanding on entry to early years education are broadly typical or better for their age.

The centre has identified families in an area of North Witney, and the few families where no adult is working, as being those groups in need of particular support.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The centre knows most of the families in the area with children under five through the regular sharing of information with the County Council and the close liaison with its key partners in health, early years provision and social care.
- The number of families taking advantage of the centre's services, support and advice is improving steadily. As a result, more than four out of five are now taking advantage of the centre's activities and advice or that of its early years partners.
- The centre's strong partnership with health services means that many families are referred to the centre by health visitors and midwives. The pre-birth group offers support and advice to families expecting children. Parenting skills are then supported well through a range of other activities as the children get older.
- Intensive marketing of the centre's provision in the area of North Witney where there is greatest need has seen more families getting involved with the centre. Consequently, a large majority, but not all, are now benefiting from the centre's work.
- There are very few families in the area where no adult is working. A large majority of these families are now attending the sessions run by the centre or benefiting from the advice of its partners. The achieve economic well-being officer, for example, visits the centre regularly to offer advice on matters such as benefits and tax credits.
- The centre's work with families in their own homes is highly effective in getting them support quickly at the time of greatest need. As a result, these families join in the services of the centre and are able to make marked improvements to family life and the well-being of their children over time.
- There are very few families who are entitled to free early education. The centre approaches all of these families, often on several occasions, and a large majority of those eligible take up their places in good or improving early years settings.
- The centre has also focused successfully on the involvement of fathers and male carers, including grandfathers, in its work. A range of activities specifically for this group have been successful in involving many more of them in the centre's work to their children's advantage.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The centre, with its key partners, provides a range of services that increasingly meet the needs of most families in the area. The services benefit all families as well as those in need of particular help.
- The very well-qualified staff provide a wide range of services, such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Now I am Two', to promote children's early learning and development. Detailed 'learning journeys' show the good progress children make and involve parents in assessing their own children's gains in knowledge and understanding.
- The centre also works well with local pre-school settings and provides support and advice through its central role in the early years network. As a result, it is able to show that children make good progress and are ready to start school. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the proportions of children reaching a good level of development are above the national average and the gaps between groups of children, including those from the most disadvantaged families.
- The centre has a very effective partnership with the health services that enables it to provide a range of activities for parents to help their children develop healthy lifestyles. As a

result, targets for the sustaining of breastfeeding after 6–8 weeks and reducing obesity have been exceeded.

- There are isolated examples of successful volunteering at the centre leading to parents accessing higher education or securing employment in schools and early years settings. One has also become a parent champion. However, the opportunities for parents to volunteer have been limited.
- Similarly, the opportunities for adults to take part in further and higher education leading to accreditation to improve the well-being of their families are limited. Although the centre works with adult education and the child development team at Oxfordshire County Council to provide training courses, these opportunities are undeveloped.
- The centre is very welcoming for parents and children, and provides excellent care, guidance and support to families. This was acknowledged unanimously during the inspection. One parent who had come to the centre in need of help commented, 'I felt I could be a parent without being judged.'

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The centre leader, Action for Children and the local authority work well together and have high aspirations for children and their families in the area. Consequently, leadership is effective, lines of accountability are clear and the centre is improving well.
- Leaders use the information they receive about families in the area and work with key partners effectively. This ensures that the services they provide increasingly meet the needs of families in the area, especially those it identifies as most in need of help.
- The commitment to continual improvement is evident in the meeting of the challenging targets set for the centre, notably those related to health.
- The centre carefully analyses the impact of all its programmes, taking account of feedback from parents and children. Its services are checked regularly by the centre leader and local authority, leading to constructive feedback and improvement.
- The centre's staff are dedicated and well qualified. They are encouraged to continually improve performance through rigorous and supportive supervision, and targets allied to many opportunities for professional development and training.
- The advisory board are dedicated and representative of key partners. They are supportive of the centre and know what is happening. They know about the key groups identified by leaders as being in need of most help and feed useful information back to their respective services. However, their role in challenging the centre to improve its practice and reach even more families is at an early stage of development.
- Parents help to shape the services in the centre through their regular evaluations of the sessions they attend and the parents' forum. The chair of the advisory board is also a parent.
- The centre's commitment to keeping children safe is evident in all aspects of its work. There are detailed policies and procedures in place that are followed rigorously. The centre's work with children subject to the Common Assessment Framework, child protection plans or deemed to be in need is exemplary. This leads to considerable improvement for families and helps to keep the children safe.
- The centre makes effective use of its physical and human resources. The close partnership with the Witney Children's Centre enables it to use staff to best effect and deliver services in the place where they are most needed.

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	22078
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	442870
Managed by	Action for Children on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	647
Centre leader	Lorraine Hurdley
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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