

# Dragonflies Children's Centre

Wissett Road, Halesworth, IP19 8BT

**Inspection dates** 25–26 September 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
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 children's centre is good

- The large majority of children aged under five living in the area served by the centre are registered and access services. Of all young children in the area, approximately 60% have regular contact with the centre. This is despite the centre serving a very wide-spread rural area and the staff team being small in number.
- Staff have a very strong knowledge of the local community which has enabled them to identify the specific groups needing support the most. The centre has ensured that at least the large majority of most of these groups access services frequently.
- There are very effective partnerships, especially with health services and social care, that include high levels of information exchange. This ensures that families, who have complex issues, are provided with exemplary care, guidance and support. The centre's recent 'Families First' award recognises the positive impact of its work in this regard.
- The centre is proactive in providing good quality, relevant services in response to parents' requests, and to meet specific area needs such as relatively high childhood obesity levels. Music sessions and family fitness groups are examples of this. Also, taking services out into the widespread community such as to Bungay and Ilketshall, addresses the particular problems of a large rural area.
- The centre manager provides strong leadership. She is very ably supported by an experienced well-trained staff team, who have been resilient during times of staff illness and long term leave. Consequently resources are used very effectively to reduce inequalities and the centre has good capacity to continue to improve.

### It is not outstanding because:

- Not enough children, especially from priority groups, are being tracked during their time at the centre or when they move on to early years settings and then to school. Links with some of the schools and early years settings in the area have yet to be firmly established to enable the centre to support children's early development.
- Some of the information used by the centre, especially in relation to its priority groups, is relatively new. As a result it is not yet being used to fine-tune priorities in the improvement plan or to ensure targets are measurable, time-specific and challenging.
- Advisory board members are supportive but not yet challenging the centre effectively. Some do not attend regularly enough to enable them to have an in-depth knowledge of the centre.

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

- Work with partners to improve outcomes for children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
  - developing strong links with local schools and early years settings to identify the specific weaker areas of children's early development such as communication
  - helping more two year-olds to access good or better quality free education
  - implementing a method to track more children from priority families during their time at the centre and when they move on, to enable their progress, and the impact of the centre's interventions, to be measured.
- Ensure that leaders, governors and managers at all levels have a clear understanding of the centre's priority groups and the information used to measure their access and engagement with services. Use this information to fine-tune targets in the improvement plan to be measurable, time-specific and challenging.
- Encourage partners regular attendance at advisory board meetings. Ensure members are knowledgeable about the specific needs of the centre to enable them to provide high levels of challenge, especially in relation to the centre's impact on families who need support the most.

## 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 chair and other members of the advisory board and a representative of the local authority. They also spoke to staff and several partners, such as those from health, social care and the local housing association as well as parents and volunteers.

The inspectors visited sessions and activities taking place during the inspection, including 'Busy Bodies' and a music session as well as 'Weigh, Play and Stay' held at Bungay Health Surgery. They carried out a joint observation with the centre manager.

They looked at a range of documentation, including the centre's self-evaluation and improvement plan, a sample of case studies and safeguarding practice, policies and procedures. The centre manager and local authority representative attended all meetings of the inspection team.

## Inspection team

Joan Lindsay, Lead Inspector

Additional Inspector

Lesley Talbot-Strettle

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Dragonflies Children's Centre is a stand-alone centre that opened in September 2009. It provides family support, adult learning and health services. The centre occupies a purpose-built building on the site of Edgar Sewter Primary School. The centre manager also has management responsibility for two other children's centres, Butterflies and Reydon and Southwold that, along with Dragonflies Children's Centre, make up the Waveney and Blyth cluster. These centres and the school are subject to separate inspections. Their reports can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). The centre is managed directly by Suffolk County Council. There is an advisory board in place that is responsible for the governance of the three centres in the cluster.

There are 1,004 children under five years-old living in the area served by the centre. The area includes ten defined localities, none of which is considered to be amongst the most disadvantaged compared to the rest of the country. The centre serves the immediate community of Halesworth which has pockets of deprivation and the outlying town of Bungay as well as 31 rural villages. Most local children are from White British heritage families with approximately 5% from minority ethnic groups. The percentage of children under five years of age living in workless or low income households is 13.9% which is below the national average. There are 155 eligible families with children aged under five benefiting from the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. Children generally enter the Early Years Foundation Stage at levels in line with those expected for their age.

The centre has identified priority groups needing most support as: vulnerable, pregnant mothers; children who are under one years old; parents with mental health problems; children subject to social care involvement and families living in the least advantaged area of Halesworth.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

**Good**

- The centre has established very strong links with health partners including midwives and health visitors. This has a significant impact on the number of expectant mothers and those with young children accessing the centre. Since the 5\* Clinic has run from the centre from April this year, 116 mothers have attended for antenatal appointments and all have registered.
- There is very effective partnership work between the specialist midwife, well-being practitioner and clinical psychologist. This ensures that two of the centre's priority groups, vulnerable pregnant mothers and parents with low mental health, sustain their engagement well.
- The centre also has very good levels of engagement with children under one years of age through providing baby clinics, a popular 'Baby Cafe' for breastfeeding support and several specific weekly sessions at different community venues.
- Because there are excellent links and rigorous information exchange with social care, the vast majority of children who are subject to child protection, are children in need or helped by the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) procedures, are known to and supported by, the centre. The centre manager attends multi-agency risk assessment conferences, which result in families who are most vulnerable having priority access to services to ensure their safety.
- Families living in Halesworth also access the centre regularly with 82% of children under five registered and the large majority engaging effectively with the centre. This is because the centre has been proactive in providing additional services in the community, including at the United Reformed Church.
- Approximately 70% of eligible two-year-olds take up their entitlement to free early education but not all of the children are in good or better quality settings, particularly in some rural villages. However the centre provides effective support to families to find good quality provision where it can but has yet to establish firm links with some early years settings to assist in this.

### The quality of practice and services

**Good**

- The levels of one-to-one care, support and guidance are exemplary. Some families have very complex needs but because staff develop high levels of trust and can call on excellent links with other agencies, very often these families' needs are fully met. Parents typically describe the centre as 'invaluable'. Case files are maintained to a very high standard.
- Most partnerships, especially with health services and the housing association, are strong. This has a significant impact on outcomes for families who need support the most. Where links are weaker, such as with employment services, the centre has addressed this through the appointment of the Parent Development Worker. She provides effective support to help parents access training, education and employment.
- The number of mothers who breastfeed their babies six to eight weeks after birth has recently increased considerably and is now in line with the national average. This is largely due to the popularity of the Baby Cafe and the support of staff and peer supporters who are trained to provide help. Antenatal clinics held in the centre are also assisting improvements. Immunisation rates are good. The number of young children who are obese, although declining, is still high compared to other parts of the county. The centre is pro-actively addressing this through providing keep fit

sessions, weaning advice and healthy eating sessions.

- Through close working with other centres in the cluster, commissioning out some sessions and using community venues, the centre is able to provide high quality, wide-ranging services. There is an appropriate balance between those open to all and those targeted at specific needs such as 'Fun With Mums', addressing new mothers low moods.
- There have been a substantial number of volunteers in the centre and for many it has been an effective springboard back into employment and training. For example of the 14 recent volunteers, five are still actively helping the centre and seven have gone on to work or further training.
- The unvalidated Early Years Foundation Stage profile for 2014 show the percentage of children achieving a good level of development declining on 2013 results. It is now below county and national levels. Results across the eight local schools vary considerably, partly because some schools have low numbers of children. Links with some of those schools have reduced, in some cases due to changing school leadership. The centre now sees re-establishing these links as a high priority and has recently appointed a new member of staff to lead on this.
- There are no consistent methods to track the progress of children from priority groups either when they access centre sessions or when they move on to nursery. However parents say their children make good progress especially with their social skills development through accessing the centre's services.

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

**Good**

- The centre manager provides strong leadership to a small, but highly committed staff team. They are proactive in piloting initiatives such as using video recordings to help develop parents' skills and confidence, and working with specialists to meet children and families' specific needs. Consequently, inequalities are reduced for many of the children and families from priority groups.
- The local authority provides regular monitoring and support to the centre. There is a clear understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for development. However, the centre's improvement plan is not using recently provided information, including data on priority groups, to consistently ensure targets are specific, measurable and linked closely to further improving outcomes.
- The advisory board is well established and supportive. However, some members attend more regularly than others. This limits the board's ability to effectively challenge the centre's performance, especially in relation to the impact of its work in supporting priority groups.
- Staff supervision arrangements and training are very effective. Staff are well supported to deal with families who have sensitive and complex issues.
- Resources are used very effectively to ensure the needs of most priority groups are well met. Staff deliver services across the community and do all they can to combat rural isolation. The centre itself is very clean, bright and welcoming. Families are unanimous in their positive views about the centre and especially the approachability of staff.
- Safeguarding children and families is embedded in all the centre's work. Parents receive very clear guidance about how to safeguard their children; staff are extremely well-trained in all aspects of safeguarding; policies and procedures are constantly updated and reviewed. The centre takes the lead in most of the CAFs that are raised in the area. Staff are fully involved in multi-agency meetings

for children who are subject to child protection plans, are children in need or who are looked after. This has been instrumental in reducing the risk of harm to these families, including those who are in crisis such as fleeing domestic abuse.

- Parents have very high levels of satisfaction with the centre. Parents' 'News and Views' surveys are conducted regularly at sessions across the centre's area so that a wide-spread number of families' views can be canvassed. Families feel they are listened to such as the centre providing messy play and music sessions to meet expressed needs.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	20980
<b>Local authority</b>	Suffolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	447515
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	1,004
<b>Centre manager</b>	Karina Irons
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01986 874865
<b>Email address</b>	karina.irons@suffolk.gov.uk



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