

D7 Windmill Children's Centre

Broadfield Primary School, Broadfield Road, Hemel Hempstead, HP2 4DW

Inspection dates	24–25 September 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.

- Most children and families are registered at the centre and the large majority regularly use services.
- The centre is quick to identify families experiencing difficulties in their lives and ensure outreach support gives them the precise help that they need.
- Highly effective use is made of all available information to plan good quality services that meet local needs well.
- The centre manager, in close partnership with the lead agency and local authority, measures the quality and effectiveness of the centre's activities and services rigorously to ensure they improve children's and families' lives.
- Good transition arrangements ensure children are ready for school. Children who live in the Traveller community receive excellent support to help them prepare well for school.
- Parents who attend groups have a good understanding of their children's development. This means they are able to support their learning at home through a variety of play activities.
- Almost all adults who attend parenting and adult education courses complete them and go on to attend higher-levels of study.
- Parents make a strong and active contribution to the running of the centre through the parents' forum and the frequent opportunities to give feedback about the services they receive.
- Exemplary systems for managing staff performance and on-going training ensure all staff are clear about what the centre does well. Everyone is determined to achieve the challenging targets. As a result there is good capacity to sustain improvements.

It is not outstanding because:

- Not enough children from priority groups living in the most deprived community access the centre regularly.
- Managers and staff are not working actively enough with early years' partners to close the gap in attainment between children eligible for free school meals and others.
- Breast feeding rates are below the national average and the level of childhood obesity is too high.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that most of the families living in the most deprived area, including from priority groups, are registered and use centre services regularly.
- Managers and staff should work with nursery, pre-school and school partners to:
 - rapidly close the gap in attainment between children eligible for free school meals and others
 - further improve the outcomes for Reception-age children.
- With health partners improve families' health and well-being by:
 - increasing the rates of breastfeeding to meet or better the national average
 - reducing the numbers of children classified as overweight or obese.

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 three Additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with staff, a group of parents, members of the management committee, pre-school and school staff. They spoke to health professionals, adult education partners and the money advice service on the telephone.

The inspectors visited activities run at the Traveller site and the health clinic and observed the 'Baby Beeps' session held at the centre.

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

Inspection team

Georgina Beasley, Lead Inspector	Additional inspector
Peter Towner	Additional inspector
Catherine Hairsine	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Windmill Children's Centre opened in 2007. It provides a range of services and groups including family support, adult learning and health services. The centre shares a site and is managed by Broadfield Primary School which is subject to separate inspection arrangements.

Governance is provided by a children's centre management committee made up of representatives from the school's governing body, partners, parents, health and education professionals, childminders, employment and adult education representatives. The local authority is in the process of tendering for the management of the centre from March 2015.

There are currently approximately 1478 children under the age of five years living in the centre's reach area. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are below those typical for their age. The large majority of families are White British with about a quarter from other minority ethnic groups, including Traveller backgrounds. A growing number of families are from Eastern Europe. Housing in the area is a mix of owner-occupied, privately rented and social housing. There are 355 children living in workless households (15.4%) which is broadly average. Some 90 lone parents are claiming out of work benefits.

The centre has identified its target groups as: Traveller children and families, lone parents who claim benefits, children living in workless families and the most vulnerable families including teenage parents and those experiencing drug abuse, domestic violence or mental illness.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The number of families registering and using centre services has increased each year since the centre opened. Most families who live in the area, including those still waiting for the arrival of their babies, are registered. The large majority regularly attend groups and activities.
- A very large majority of families identified as needing specific support regularly use services. This includes teenage parents, families experiencing particular health and welfare difficulties, lone parents receiving benefits and children living in workless households.
- The centre's work at the Traveller site is particularly effective and families' high registration has been sustained over time. Nearly all of the children attend the weekly activities run at the site.
- The centre works closely with pre-schools, schools, health and social care partners to identify and meet the needs of families who are experiencing major difficulties. Robust assessments, speedy actions and positive interventions ensure children's safety and well-being until their needs are met.
- There is good access to services that support the well-being of families in respect of mental health needs and in empowering parents to make positive changes in their lives. For example, the specific programme to support families suffering from domestic abuse has significantly improved the lives of both adults and the children.
- The centre checks registrations and the take up of services across the area to ensure that they are meeting the needs of target families. Managers are quick to make changes to groups and services if attendance of the most-needy families falls off or if additional needs emerge.
- The very large majority of families with two and three-year-old children have taken up a pre-school place this year. The centre works closely with early years' partners to check that two-year-olds are making the required progress.
- The large majority of families who live in the most disadvantaged area within the reach are registered but the centre is not completely sure whether this includes identified target groups. While managers are confident that major issues, such as mental health, will have been picked up through effective partnership work, more attention is needed to increase registration and attendance in this area to the same high level as in the highest socio-economic areas.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The centre offers good quality and relevant services, including outreach support for parents and children. As a result, those who use the centre's services make good progress from their starting points. Children from Traveller families receive excellent support to help them get ready for school.
- Sessions are well-planned and this helps parents to understand the significance of activities for their children's development which they continue to support at home. The 'Home Learning Passports' help parents to celebrate their own and their children's learning at home.
- Arrangements to help children get ready for school, which include familiarisation visits, are very positive. The summer holiday project held at Broadfields Primary School has been particularly effective in helping children to settle quickly into school routines.

- The centre has given good support to a group of Polish families to run their own group at the centre. Their increased confidence has resulted in many families attending other groups that the centre runs. Families report that their children have built friendships which help them to transfer to the next stage of education smoothly.
- Social workers have high levels of confidence in the work of the centre as key partners in ensuring families' and children's safety and well-being. Procedures work well because communication is clear, concise and timely.
- The centre works pro-actively with a range of partners to provide adult learning opportunities, money management and employment support, including for workless parents. Achievement rates on English and mathematics courses are high. Centre staff take notice of outcomes when planning and evaluating further courses and services.
- Volunteering is promoted well. A thorough induction programme places a strong emphasis on safeguarding and the boundaries of the volunteers' role. Support and supervision of volunteers are good and outcomes are positive and tracked efficiently.
- Parents and children benefit from a range of high quality parenting programmes, some of which are delivered on a one-to-one basis as required. Completion rates are high. The large majority of parents who attend, including lone parents, acknowledge the positive impact that the centre has on their knowledge of their children's development and increases their confidence in managing behaviour positively.
- Children who attend centre activities generally make good progress over time. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest is closing each year, albeit slowly. Outcomes at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage are average. However, fewer children eligible for free school meals reach the expected level compared to other children.
- The centre has run several courses to promote healthy eating, including breastfeeding support groups, introducing solids, cooking healthy meals and preparing healthy lunchboxes. Despite this, the number of mothers breastfeeding their babies for over six weeks is still too low, and the numbers of children classified as overweight or obese in the Reception year are still too high.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The centre manager gives clear and decisive leadership. Decisions about what to run, where and why, are made after an astute analysis of a range of information. This includes attendance at groups, children's progress the difference services make to families' lives and users' views. The centre's management committee and lead agency use the information to ensure the allocation of resources, including staffing, is efficient and effective.
- Procedures supervising staff performance and the planning of training to extend and build on individual skills and expertise are exemplary. Staff embrace the centre's targets as their own and understand why they form the basis of discussions during supervision meetings with the centre manager. Every member of staff takes full responsibility for their role in the drive for improving the centre's effectiveness.
- The management committee is well organised to ensure the centre's performance is monitored. Members are fully involved in self-review and improvement planning and so are clear about what is going well and what needs to be improved.

- Parents' views are sought in many ways and so parents feel fully involved in not only informing decisions about the services and activities that the centre offers but also in evaluating their effectiveness. The 'coffee and chat' sessions held every half term attract families from across the area and these 'forum' ideas put forward are always considered by the centre management. The involvement of parents on the management committee ensures that parents' views are shared at a governance level, included in decisions about where to allocate resources.
- The centre's effective partnership with pre-school settings has established a drive for raising the achievement of all children and particularly those who have specific needs. Assessments under the Common Assessment Framework ensure all those with a special educational need or a disability have their needs met as soon as they start pre-school or school. The centre rightly recognises that more needs to be done to reduce inequalities by closing the achievement gap for those children whose circumstances make them especially vulnerable.
- Safeguarding is strong and underpins all the work of the centre. Strong partnership work reduces the risk of harm to children subject to a child protection plan, in need or looked after. Risk assessments meet expected standards. All staff confidently deal with concerns quickly, as evidenced in the 'areas for concern' file. Social service staff have high levels of confidence in family support workers who regularly engage with families experiencing challenges in their lives.
- The local authority keeps a watchful eye through regular face-to-face discussions to check the centre's progress towards reaching the challenging targets set for users' achievement.

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	20900
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	447487
Managed by	The governing body of Broadfield Primary School on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,478
Centre manager	Caroline Merritt
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01442 426303
Email address	manager.windmill@hertschildrenscentres.org.uk

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