

# Stanwell Sure Start Children's Centre

Hadrian Way, Stanwell, Middlesex, TW19 7HE

<b>Inspection dates</b>		17–18 September 2014	
Not previously inspected			
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
	Previous inspection:	Not applicable	
Access to services by young children and families		Inadequate	4
The quality of practice and services		Inadequate	4
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Inadequate	4

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This children's centre is inadequate

- Despite registration standing at 78%, only a minority of children and families living in the most deprived communities are using the centre's services regularly. The take-up of free education by eligible two-year-olds is well below the level seen nationally.
- Session planning lacks precision, and infrequent checks on children's learning by staff means that the centre cannot demonstrate they make good progress. Limited partnerships with early years providers reduce opportunities for supporting children's development.
- Leaders are not checking the longer term impact of the centre's work on improving parenting skills. Similarly, they are not finding out how well adults get on when they access further learning or training.
- Case files are poorly maintained and some risk assessments lack rigour. There has been no recent training on e-safety, which is not promoted with parents. Inconsistent tracking means centre staff are unable to show the impact of the centre's work to support families in greatest need.
- Staff are not confident in using the management information system and this limits their use of data to move the centre forward. The absence of a well-targeted action plan further limits the centre's capacity to drive improvement at a rapid pace.
- Not all advisory board members are fully aware of their role and responsibilities and the board does not challenge the centre's performance rigorously enough.
- Too few parents, including those from target groups, are consulted about priorities or the development of services.

### It has the following strengths:

- The new head of centre has undertaken an accurate evaluation of the centre's strengths and weaknesses. Staff identify that they are now clear about their roles, appreciate the new systems established and show positive commitment to doing their best for children and families.
- The centre is located in the heart of its community and provides a stimulating environment, including an excellent outdoor area. Collaborative work with some partners is raising awareness about the importance of family health and community safety. Families who use the centre have high levels of satisfaction in the quality of services they receive.

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

Increase the sustained engagement of priority groups so that the large majority benefit from appropriate services.

- Improve the way children are prepared for school by:
  - increasing the take up of free education by eligible two-year-olds so that most take up their place
  - planning activities that take into account the individual needs of children
  - ensuring parents receive timely advice that supports their children's learning
  - establishing systems to assess and track children's progress over time
  - strengthening the partnership with early years settings and schools, in order to support children's transition to the next stage of education.
- Establish systems to measure the difference the centre is making to improving parenting skills by checking how well all adults get on when they access further learning.
- Update staff skills in the use of the management information system to assist their monitoring of the centre's performance.
- Strengthen safeguarding arrangements by:
  - regularly reviewing risk assessments and increasing the attention given to e-safety
  - improving the quality of family case files so that they provide evidence of robust management oversight and the impact of family support work.
- Improve leadership, management and governance by:
  - establishing a robust action plan and associated resources to drive rapid improvement
  - ensuring that the advisory board is clear about its role and challenges the centre's performance rigorously.
- Increase the number of parents, including those from priority groups, who are involved in making decisions about centre priorities and the development of services.

## 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 head of centre, staff, representatives from Surrey Care Trust, local authority officers, partners, parents and members of the advisory board.

The inspectors visited a number of activities held in the centre including two adult learning sessions, crèche and 'Active Play and Learn'.

Inspectors took into account parents' views as expressed directly to them during the inspection, as well as through their recorded evaluations about the centre's work.

Inspectors also looked at a wide range of documentation.

## Inspection team

Christine Field, Lead Inspector

Additional Inspector

Janet Stacey

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Stanwell Children's Centre is a stand-alone centre which is managed by Surrey Care Trust on behalf of the local authority. It opened in 2007 and moved to its current purpose-built premises in 2010. It provides a range of services to support local needs, some in partnership with other local providers. The head of centre, appointed in June 2014, oversees the day-to-day running of the centre and the work of a small staff team. An advisory board is in place to support governance.

There are 1,027 children under five years old living in the area that the centre serves. Stanwell is a suburban area and has a high level of deprivation. Four of the eight communities the centre serves are in the least advantaged areas nationally. Overall, just under a third of children live in out-of-work and benefit dependent households. However, this rises to just under half in some communities. The large majority of children are of White British heritage; others are from a range of minority ethnic groups. Children generally enter early years education at levels below those expected for their age.

Target groups are defined as: children living in workless households; lone parents; families living in the most deprived areas and two-year-old children eligible for free education.

### Inspection judgements

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

#### Inadequate

- Access to services is inadequate. This is because only 41% of children and families living in the most deprived neighbourhoods engage with services regularly. Leaders have given limited attention to finding out precisely why only a minority of children and families from most priority groups use the centre.
- At 64%, the take up of free education by eligible two-year-olds is well below the level seen nationally. The centre is not working actively enough with early years partners to support children who are in danger of falling behind to make the best start to their education. Most four-year-olds take up their funded nursery place. However, at 45%, the proportion of reception-aged children who achieved a good level of development in 2013 was well below average. There is no information yet available for 2014. The centre does not know how well children who access children's centre services achieve when compared to their peers.
- Partnerships with health professionals are not strong. This is reflected in the very low number of families they refer to the centre for support. Local authority monitoring shows clearly the concerns raised about the limited involvement of health practitioners in supporting children's and families' access to centre services.
- Families who use the centre, including expectant parents, receive good quality support. One parent, typical of many, told inspectors, 'The centre gave me a reason to get out of bed and help me to love my child'. This and similar comments demonstrate parents' satisfaction with the centre.

#### The quality of practice and services

#### Inadequate

- The range and relevance of services is inadequate because not enough children and families from priority groups use them regularly. The centre's checks on what difference services are making to improve children's and families' lives, and to reduce inequalities, are particularly weak.
- Too many children are starting school without the basic skills and competencies they need to achieve a good level of development. The gap in achievement between the 20% lowest achieving children and the rest is not reducing quickly enough over time. The centre does not give enough attention to helping children prepare for the next phase of education. Also, not enough help is given to parents to support their child's readiness for school.

- The planning of children's activities is not effective as it fails to take account of their individual needs. In addition, observations tend to focus on what a child is doing rather than what they are learning. This reduces staff's ability to plan children's next step forward.
- Information shows that a relatively large number of parents attend specific courses to help them build confidence and manage their child's behaviour positively. However, leaders do not check information accurately enough to see if parents have improved their parenting skills over time.
- The impact of the centre's work to assist adults, particularly those who are not working, to improve their economic well-being is unclear. This is because leaders do not monitor this aspect of the centre's work closely enough. A small group of non-English speakers are currently at a very early stage of learning English. A few parents are studying Level 2 literacy and numeracy, having previously successfully achieved entry level and Level 1 qualifications. However, there is no specific pathway for those parents who want to move on to work-related courses.
- Family support workers are highly committed to improving the lives of families. This is especially so for those who are isolated, as well as the increasing number experiencing domestic abuse. The support workers relate well to the children, parents and carers who attend sessions and work effectively with families through one-to-one support in the home.
- Until very recently, staff were unclear about key aspects of their role, such as how to record family case work; this is being addressed. However, case files are not well organised and do not show the progress that these families are making. It is therefore difficult to determine the benefits of this work for families.
- All activities observed by inspectors were well-resourced and of good quality. Children enjoy the familiarity of the crèche while their mothers are studying next door. Staff are good role models and encourage children to explore the environment. The focus on sensory play helps foster curiosity and gives children the skills to learn on their own.
- The good partnership with Relate enables families to gain practical tips, guidance and support to help them manage relationships. They also benefit from advice on family health and well-being as well as support for those facing separation and divorce. Effective partnership working with community police officers is helping to inform centre users how to keep safe. Joint events such as 'Halloween Howler' contribute to the reduction of incidents related to anti-social behaviour.

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

### **Inadequate**

- Leadership, management and governance are inadequate. This is because not enough attention is given to checking the quality of services and their impact on improving the outcomes for families most in need. The absence of an action plan with measurable targets and specific resources limits the capacity of the centre to build for sustained improvement. Although the advisory board has been working to increase its membership and partners' attendance, it does not hold leaders rigorously to account for the centre's performance.
- The local authority keeps the centre under close review through regular performance checks and the 'annual conversation' meeting. Targets are set but records show that few of these have been met. A new head of centre has recently been appointed. She has a proven track record of excellence in children's centre management and a strong focus on taking things forward.
- There has been some staff training in the use of the management information system used by the county council to keep track of key performance information about each of its children's centres. However, staff lack confidence in its use. The head of centre recognises this as a major barrier to the drive for improvement, and plans are in hand to address this speedily.
- Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding policies and procedures and leaders carry out appropriate staff vetting checks. Families identified as in need receive early help assessments and appropriate care plans are in place for children in need, looked after or subject to child protection procedures. However, the overall culture of safeguarding is not well-embedded in the day-to-day practice of the centre because risk assessments are incomplete. As a result, children are subject to potential hazards. The centre pays insufficient attention to e-safety, and staff have not undergone recent training in this area. Consequently they do not reinforce the dangers of the internet

sufficiently with users of the centre.

- Case file supervision is inadequate. Cases reviewed by inspectors had not been subject to rigorous management review; as a result, information was missing and actions were incomplete. In addition, the recording in case files fails to show the progress that families are making.
- The arrangements for staff supervision have recently been strengthened. New records show clear links with staff's personal targets and on-going training and development. Staff pull together as a team, committed to doing their best for the community they serve. They are upbeat about the opportunities and challenges ahead.
- There are no parents currently on the advisory board, although the centre volunteer, also a parent, has expressed a wish to take on this role. Parents complete evaluations following the sessions they attend, but only in very general terms. Until the survey circulated this June, there had been no consistent analysis of centre users' views to inform the shaping of future services.
- During August the centre building received a facelift, particularly the reception-area which provides a very positive first impression. Activity rooms are bright and stimulating with high quality displays. The outdoor space has been carefully thought out and provides an excellent learning resource for children. Parents and partners were mobilised by the head of centre to paint the shed and fences as a 'community project'. One parent told inspectors that they feel 'the centre is now listening to what I have to say'.

**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>	22918
<b>Local authority</b>	Surrey
<b>Inspection number</b>	451660
<b>Managed by</b>	Surrey Care Trust on behalf of the local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	1,027
<b>Head of centre</b>	Janette Breese
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01784 241407
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