

# Sunshine Children's Centre

Hillside, Stowmarket, IP14 2PD

## Inspection dates

Previous inspection date

7–8 October 2014

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:

- The number of families overall who regularly use the centre is not high enough. In particular too few families from the most deprived area in Stowmarket, access services.
- Leaders and managers have identified which groups of families have priority needs. However, this information is not accurately and consistently used and recorded in key processes such as the local authority's annual review and the centre's self-evaluation. This makes it difficult for leaders and managers to closely monitor and track the impact of the centre's work with all priority groups.
- There are too few opportunities for parents to improve their learning and skills through adult learning or training courses.

### It has the following strengths:

- The help for families who access one-to-one support, particularly those who are in most need, is often very effective.
- The centre actively promotes free early years education and has contributed to the high proportion of three-and four-year old children who access places.
- There is good representation from parents and a wide range of partner organisations on the advisory board.

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

- Increase the number of families regularly accessing services until their needs are met and in particular those living in the most deprived parts of Stowmarket.
- Work with adult education and other employment support organisations to extend opportunities for parents to participate in courses and training that will improve their economic circumstances and increase their chances of employment.
- Improve the capacity of leaders and managers to closely monitor the centre's performance by

-ensuring information and data about all priority groups and about the impact of work with these groups is routinely reviewed and consistently recorded in key documents such as the local authority's annual review report and the centre's self-evaluation report.

## 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 centre staff, representatives from the local authority, the Chair of the Advisory Board and partners from organisations such as health, education, social care, charities and community organisations. They also met parents.

The inspectors observed a 'Stay and Play' activity and a drop in session at the centre.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation. Parents' views were taken into account from interviews held and reviews of evaluations and surveys.

## Inspection team

Priscilla McGuire, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Ann Janssen

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Sunshine Children's Centre is a stand alone centre in Stowmarket, mid-Suffolk. It shares its site with a community centre. The local authority, supported by an advisory board, provides governance of the centre. The centre works closely with Acorns Children's Centre which is within the same central locality. The centre manager for Sunshine also manages Acorns. The centre is not designated as a group.

The centre is open five days a week. Services for families are offered at the centre, at the co-located community centre, at Acorns and other venues such as schools. Services available include health clinics, health information, antenatal support, parenting support, early years activities such as 'Stay and Play', and family support. Outreach work such as home visits are also offered.

Levels of deprivation vary across the area. However, the centre is located in the most deprived part of the community. Families live in a mix of both social housing and privately owned homes. There are 479 children under five in the area. Most families are of White British heritage. The percentage of children 0-4 living in households dependent on workless benefits is low compared to the rest of Suffolk.

The centre has identified families suffering domestic abuse, those living in deprived parts of Stowmarket, those with children on child protection plans and mothers with mental health needs as priority groups.

Children enter early provision at levels below those expected for their age.

### Inspection judgements

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

#### Requires improvement

- Too few families living in parts of Stowmarket identified as deprived, use the centre. As a result, the centre is not maximising opportunities for activities and services to contribute to narrowing inequalities for families from this area.
- Overall, not enough families from all priority groups regularly participate in activities or services. However, as a result of the hard work of centre staff, registration rates are continually increasing and a large majority of families are now registered with the centre.
- The centre works effectively with partners, particularly from social care and health, to identify expectant mums who need help and support. Through its successful 'Ante Natal Healthy Child Collaborative' (ANHCC) project, the centre has been able to identify early, expectant mothers with priority needs and provide services to support them.
- Through home visits and work in a range of venues within the area, the centre is increasing its engagement with families who may otherwise not engage in activities. However, it is too soon to measure the full impact of these activities.

- The centre actively promotes free early years education and when appropriate helps parents apply for places. As a result, take up rates of children aged three and four are good. A large majority of two year olds also access their places. However, there is still more work to do to ensure all children from this group access early education.

### **The quality of practice and services**

### **Requires improvement**

- The quality of practice and services requires improvement because despite the good balance between services available for all families and those that are more specialised, the number of families from some priority groups such as those living in the deprived parts of Stowmarket, and who regularly participate in activities is not good enough.
- The centre provides good support to families who use its services. Women whose lives are affected by domestic abuse, one of the centre's key priority groups, receive highly effective support. They gain significant benefits from a specialist domestic violence training programme that the centre provides. In addition, through its weekly 'legal surgery', they are also able to access specialist legal advice.
- Breastfeeding rates in the area are too low and have declined over the last year. The centre has identified this as a key area for improvement and is working closely with health visitors, midwives and peer support workers to stop the decline and increase rates. However, it is too early to see the impact of this work.
- The centre's 'Ready Steady School' project successfully helps children and their families to become better prepared for school. It helps to allay fears of parents and children about starting school and helps them learn what teachers expect from new pupils in relation to their learning and behaviour.
- The quality of parents' adult informal learning is good. For example, parents benefit well from parenting training. However, not enough formal adult learning or training courses are available to enable parents to improve their skills. This limits the centre's ability to improve outcomes for families living in the most deprived parts of the area.

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

### **Requires improvement**

- Leadership, governance and management require improvement because arrangements to monitor the impact of the centre's work are not rigorous enough. For example, in key documents such as the local authority's annual review and the self-evaluation report, reviews about the impact of the centre's work with all of its key priority groups are not evaluative enough and do not include enough evidence based on data collected.
- The local authority sets some performance targets but its review of the centre's performance against these targets is not rigorous enough. In addition, judgements made are too generous and not supported by enough evidence of impact.
- The centre's work to meet the needs of the most vulnerable families is highly effective. However, the local authority does not do enough to ensure centre staff routinely use data, local information and needs analyses to make accurate judgements about the

impact of its work with families from all key priority groups.

- Some of the centre's key areas for improvement are accurately identified in the centre's development plan and ambitious performance targets are set to drive improvement. This includes a measureable target to increase participation rates of families living in the most deprived area of Stowmarket.
- There is good representation from a wide range of stakeholders and partners on the advisory board. These include parents and professionals from organisations such as health, education, churches and charities. They contribute well to the centre's planning of services. However, the advisory board does not yet provide enough challenge or scrutiny of the centre's performance or quality of its work.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Centre staff work particularly well with social care staff and with their linked social worker. They work productively with them to identify and support all families with children subject to child protection plans or children in need. Centre staff also use the Common Assessment Framework effectively to assess families' needs.
- The leadership of the centre invest well in staff training and provide close supervision of their work with families. Staff regularly participate in a wide range of personal and professional development courses. The centre manager does her very best to look after her staff. Supervision is thorough and takes account of a range of factors that could affect staff performance such as their health.
- The quality of accommodation, equipment, information and display areas and other resources at the centre is good. Through its close working with its sister centre 'Acorns', the centre is able to offer a good range of services and support.

## 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>	23013
<b>Local authority</b>	Suffolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	453069
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	479
<b>Centre leader</b>	Phill Bell
<b>Telephone number</b>	01449 616091
<b>Email address</b>	Phill.bell@suffolk.gov.uk

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