

# WH8 De Havilland Children's Centre

De Havilland Primary School, Travellers Lane, Hatfield, AL10 8TQ

<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 October 2014
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>Previous inspection:</b>	Not applicable	
Access to services by young children and families		Good	2
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 centre is insufficiently focused on improving childrens' learning and readiness for school. Planning of activities, evaluation of sessions and tracking childrens' progress are insufficiently developed.
- Expectations of what should be delivered by commissioned crèche services are not clear and staff do not support or develop children's learning well enough to ensure they make good progress while in the centre.
- The centre is not able to demonstrate the impact it has made in contributing to improving health outcomes for children and families.
- The centre does not have a current development plan with measurable targets that sets out clear priorities for its work. As a result it is not readily able to demonstrate improvement.
- Local authority and governance monitoring of the centre, particularly its work with children, has been insufficiently rigorous, with the result that there has been a lack of support to help the centre improve.

### It has the following strengths:

- Almost all under fives in the area are registered with the centre and the large majority of families identified as needing support are accessing its services.
- A good range of high quality adult learning opportunities are enjoyed by the majority of parents, through which they acquire skills and knowledge to help improve their chances of employment.
- Children and families who may be experiencing difficulties in their lives are well supported by the centre staffs' work.
- Staff know the families in the area well and most parents are actively engaged in designing centre services.

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

- Improve the quality of services to children in order to raise childrens' levels of attainment by:
  - improving planning so that it focuses more on the individual learning needs of targeted children
  - ensuring evaluations of activities show childrens' progress and the next steps they need to take
  - implementing systems to record childrens' learning and demonstrate their progress
  - agreeing clear outcomes for childrens' learning with commissioned crèche providers.
- Develop a process to monitor better the centre's contribution to improving health outcomes, particularly breastfeeding at six-eight weeks and childhood obesity levels.
- Produce a development plan with measurable targets that sets out clear priorities for the centre's work.
- The local authority and governance undertake more effective monitoring of the centre and provide training and support for its work with children, to help the centre improve.

## 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 parents, centre staff, members of the management committee, the headteacher, representatives from professional partnerships including health, social care and early years providers, and officers from the local authority.

Inspectors observed the centre's work including two activities, one of which was a joint observation with centre staff.

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 analysed a range of relevant documentation such as the centre's checks on its performance, development plans and data, information relating to safeguarding and a selection of case files.

## Inspection team

Mary Dudley, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Ann Taylor

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

WH8 De Havilland Children's Centre is a stand-alone centre serving the area of South Hatfield and Welham Green in Hertfordshire. It shares a site with De Havilland Primary School (URN 134716) which manages the centre on behalf of the local authority, and the privately managed De Havilland Pre-school (URN EY310946) both of which are subject to separate inspection arrangements. Reports are available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). The school is also responsible for the governance of the centre supported by a centre management committee.

The centre delivers or supports access to a range of services including family support, adult and family learning, early education and health services, which are run from the centre. One group a week is run at St Mary's C of E Primary School (URN 117497). The centre's reach area is socially and economically diverse. South Hatfield is an urban, mainly deprived area, while Welham Green is a large village. The centre area also covers a large sparsely populated rural area. Just over a fifth (22%) of children under five years of age are living in households where families are in receipt of out of work benefits.

There are 741 children under five years of age living in the centre's reach area, of which the large majority are White British with a small percentage from other ethnic groups, including Eastern European, Chinese, African and Asian. Children enter early years provision with skills typically below those expected for their age.

Families face a varied range of challenge. The centre has identified its main priority groups as children and families living in workless households, families from minority ethnic backgrounds, two year old children who are eligible to take up the entitlement to free education, young parents, homeless families, and disabled children and those with special educational needs.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

**Good**

- Almost all children under five in the area are registered with the centre. Information from health professionals on parents expecting children, as well as all new born babies and new families moving into the area, means centre staff can make contact with families at an early stage and provide information on centre services.
- Activities provided by the centre are well attended. Some openly available sessions such as 'Stay and Play' are attended by very large numbers of children and parents, including disabled children and those with special educational needs. Parents say that they value the opportunity to play with their children in these friendly well-resourced sessions.
- Staff work well with a range of other professionals to identify families most in need of help in the area. Families who need additional support are successfully encouraged to use the services the centre offers and join in centre activities. This has led to the large majority of families in the area that need support using the centre.
- The attendance at sessions of families in most need of support is closely monitored. Absences are followed up in a timely manner and contact is made with families to ensure their well-being. However, the centre does not yet monitor attendance for all groups it has identified as being a priority, such as children and families in workless households.
- Families for whom English is an additional language are encouraged to join the programme of English classes the centre provides and attendance rates are high. In addition centre staff are always on hand to provide day to day support to help families understand official letters they receive and to address problems that may arise due to a families' lack of English. As a result parents are less isolated and better able to support their children's learning.
- Most children take up their free place at nursery provision in the area from the age of three years. The very large majority of two-year-old children use their funded nursery place to attend one of the early years settings in the local area.

### The quality of practice and services

**Requires improvement**

- Centre activities are insufficiently focused on improving childrens' learning and school readiness. Planning does not take sufficient account of the need to improve childrens' language and communication skills, or their personal social and emotional development. Session evaluations are too focused on whether participants are enjoying themselves, rather than the progress children are making. There is little recording or tracking of childrens' learning so the centre cannot demonstrate how much value it has contributed to raising achievement and ensuring children's readiness for school.
- Staff provide high levels of care, guidance and support to families in times of crisis. Work with other agencies and partners has a positive impact on reducing inequalities and improving families' lives. Families living in workless households, young parents and homeless families have been particularly well supported with debt counselling, grant applications and benefit entitlement advice.
- The centre works closely with health professionals to encourage mothers to breastfeed. Healthy lifestyles are encouraged through the centre's work to promote nutritious diets, and in activities such as 'Toddler Fit' and 'Caterpillar Music'. However, the centre does not measure the impact of the work it does and so does not know how effective its work is in contributing to improving health outcomes.

- Most parents say they are more confident in their parenting as a result of attending the children's centre. They benefit from a range of high-quality parenting courses, individual parenting support and role modelling by staff. Parents have shared with staff how they 'give more praise and communicate better' and 'listen more, and are much calmer' having completed parenting courses.
- The centre provides a good range of high-quality adult learning activities such as Basic English, Family Language, Interior Design and First Aid. Parents' achievements and progress are closely monitored and the majority progress to further training and volunteering opportunities. As a result, the majority of parents develop knowledge and skills that increase their chances of employment.

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

### **Requires improvement**

- Leaders and managers have done well to maintain services during a period of significant staff change. The centre has focused its efforts on supporting families in most need and developing adult learning provision, but activities to support children's learning and readiness for school are not demonstrably effective.
- A clear performance framework is in place as a basis of support and challenge by the local authority. However, this has not been rigorously applied in measuring the impact of the centre's work, tracking children's progress or supporting its development and improvement. As a result the centre's self evaluation is overly optimistic.
- The centre has no development plan in place for the coming year. Last year's plan, which it has added to, is not sufficiently detailed and lacks clear measurable targets and performance measures which would enable the management committee to monitor and support the centre's progress more effectively. Performance management arrangements are well established, but key objectives for the staff are not clearly linked to the centre's development plan targets, which impedes the centre's capacity for improvement.
- Safeguarding is given an appropriately high status and the centre works closely with social care and health professionals to reduce the risk of harm to children, including those subject to a child protection plan, in foster care or identified as in need. Effective joint working, including outreach work, results in enhanced families' well-being, including those whose problems have been assessed using the Common Assessment Framework.
- Parents and children are consulted frequently and effectively using a variety of techniques. Consequently, families contribute well to shaping the services provided. For example, the introduction of midwifery services at the centre, the choice of adult learning classes provided and the timing of activities have been influenced by parents' views.
- The majority of resources, including staff deployment, are used efficiently to meet the needs of families using the centre. There is an appropriate mix of highly individualised and universal services. However, the centre does not sufficiently articulate its expectations of crèche services which it commissions, with the result that staff do not recognise the importance of recording and supporting children's progress.
- The centre is seen as the hub of the community. The staff team has the trust of many families from diverse backgrounds who see the centre as the place to go if they need support. The annual survey responses and in-house evaluations demonstrate high levels of user satisfaction.

## 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>	23562
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	447496
<b>Managed by</b>	The governing body of De Havilland Primary School on behalf of the local authority.

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	741
<b>Centre leader</b>	Sarah Bowyer
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01707 346624
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