

# EH9 Hertford Selections Children's Centre

c/o The Sele School, Welwyn Road, Hertford, SG14 2DG

<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 November 2014
Previous inspection date	Not Previously Inspected

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
	Previous inspection:	Not applicable	
Access to services by young children and families		Outstanding	1
The quality of practice and services		Outstanding	1
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This is an outstanding centre.

- The centre is firmly established as the hub of the community where many family activities take place. It is also described by parents as the 'heart' of a community where families are always warmly welcomed and feel exceptionally well supported.
- Participation rates are very high with most local families accessing and using services regularly. Many families from outside the area the centre serves also enjoy the benefits of the wide variety of activities and make the centre their number one choice.
- Parents praise the centre highly for the excellent care, support and guidance they receive and the positive improvements in the quality of their lives. A group of parents concluded that the centre is 'A One Stop Problem Shop'. They confirmed, 'You can come here frantic with problems and leave with solutions and real hope'. They describe the support as particularly special because it is unconditional, non-judgemental. They likened the centre to being a 'big happy family'.
- A real strength is the outstanding partnerships with a large number of community groups and organisations. Links with health partners enable nearly all children to receive early help and support from birth onwards. Links with adult learning services as the lead agency, local colleges and other training or employment services have improved parents' employability and helped many to get jobs.
- Almost all eligible children take up their entitlement to free early education. The centre carefully supports parents' applications for free places and follows this up by termly progress updates to make sure children are all making at least good progress. This is a model of exemplary practice.
- Leadership, governance and management are outstanding. There is a relentless drive for improving children's life chances by continuously improving the centre in the pursuit of excellence in all areas. Centre staff never give up in their determination to engage with the 'hardest to reach' families. They are very successful in helping priority families including the high number of lone parents, children with additional needs and White British families many of whom are living in poverty.

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

- Gather all the evaluations from all the various sources of adult learning and training and measure their full impact.

## 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 representatives from the local authority, health partners, social care partners, adult learning and training services groups, children's centre staff, the lead agency, members of the partnership board, executive board, governing body and parents.

The inspectors visited a range of activities and sessions, a local outreach centre, Hollybush Under 5s, St Andrew's and St Joseph's Playgroups. The centre manager attended all team meetings.

The inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the self-evaluation form, action plans, a sample of case files, parents' satisfaction surveys, safeguarding policies and procedures, and a variety of files about the range of activities delivered.

## Inspection team

Catherine Stormonth, Lead Inspector	Additional Inspector
Michael Miller	Additional Inspector
Lesley Talbot-Strettle	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Hertford Selections Children's Centre opened in 2007 and operates from a purpose-built premises situated on the grounds of the lead agency, The Sele School (URN 138484) which is subject to separate inspection arrangements. The report can be found on the Ofsted website, [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). The centre serves families in the town of Hertford and uses a variety of outreach centres based in community centres in the wider area served by the centre.

The centre is governed by a partnership board comprising key partners and a parent. The partnership board is further supported by the governing body of The Sele School and a strategic executive board. The headteacher of the lead agency line manages the centre manager. The centre aims to meet its core purpose by providing early education, childcare, health services, family support and adult learning opportunities. Most children enter early education with skills that are broadly at the level expected for their age.

Some 1,251 children under five years of age live in the area served by the centre, the majority of whom are White British. There are very small numbers of Asian, African and Eastern European families. The area is very mixed socially and economically, and there are pockets of deprivation. For example, one of the lower super output areas where the centre is located in East Hertford is among the 30% most deprived in England. There is a high proportion of lone parents and children identified as having additional needs. Children who live in poverty account for 11.7% of the reach area.

The centre's key priority groups include vulnerable children and mothers, families where there is a recognised disability, victims of domestic abuse, and families with adults who have mental health issues or where there is substance abuse.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

### Outstanding

- Staff have outstanding knowledge of the entire area served by the centre and the local population. They use information from key partners to make sure nearly all families are registered and the large majority of priority families come to the centre regularly. This means that they benefit significantly from attending both targeted and universal services.
- The centre has clear targets for engaging with all families both at the centre or the variety of childcare and pre-school settings and schools with which the centre works.
- Strategies to promote early childhood services are outstanding. The team of outreach workers work closely with the health and social care teams and have very effective ways of engaging with families in greatest need that would normally not use the centre.
- The centre promotes and markets the range of services for both universal activities and more targeted services successfully and attracts large numbers to attend a full weekly timetable of activities as well as community festivals, the summer carnival and holiday events.
- Excellent links with health services enable the centre's early contact with expectant parents. Accurate identification of additional needs and well-timed interventions are major strengths of the centre's work. Most families come to the centre to use the baby clinics and baby services, the speech and language drop-in sessions and seek support and guidance for their

disabled children with excellent results. The speech and language drop-in service was well attended at the excellent 'Out to Play' session.

- The quality of antenatal care and support for mothers-to-be and young and teenage mothers is exceptional and new mothers automatically attend baby sessions at the centre. For instance the breastfeeding groups observed by inspectors were packed because the support from the breastfeeding network is excellent.
- All of the two year-old children and most of the three and four year-old children are helped by centre staff to take up their free early education entitlement and are placed in high quality pre-school settings. Monitoring from transition shows clearly that nearly all of these children are making good progress. Any regression or developmental issues are picked up very quickly and addressed in monthly 'Family Matters' meetings with key partners. Exemplary monitoring is a key reason for children receiving such an outstanding start to their education.

### The quality of practice and services

### Outstanding

- The quality and range of services are excellent because they are having a significant impact on almost all of the targeted children's well-being and families' lives. The centre is remorseless in seeking the sustained engagement with those most in need.
- Monitoring data, reports and other tracking systems show that almost all children attending the range of early years provision make good progress in being prepared for school. Outstanding links with pre-school settings help to promote good practice. Shared training takes place to improve learning. Links with schools are particularly strong in supporting priority children and families.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage profile results show that by the end of their Reception year children achieve well above national averages. The achievement gap between the lowest achieving children is showing an improvement in the last year and inequalities have been significantly reduced for all groups of children. This includes disadvantaged children and boys from White backgrounds especially. Programmes including 'All About Boys' have helped to considerably narrow the gender gap.
- Most of the families identified as needing to develop and improve their parenting skills have attended courses which have had a major impact on improving the quality of family life. Specific programmes such as 'Parenting Puzzle' and 'Protective Behaviours' have helped some mothers manage their families and personal situations much more effectively. Parents receive excellent advice for adopting healthier and safer lifestyles. This is evident in the high sustained breastfeeding rates, the reduction of obesity levels and parents giving up smoking.
- There is a good range of learning opportunities delivered at the centre to build adult academic, personal, social and employability skills. These are through a wide range of adult and further education courses and the job centre and work club activities. Excellent partnership working with Jobcentre Plus, together with effective communication channels and rapid responses, often result in parents getting paid work. There are some excellent opportunities to volunteer and contribute to the running of the centre. Some parents were observed helping with centre activities.
- The centre has started to track some adult learning programmes but this is at an early

stage. This system does not yet to cover all activities and does not measure the full impact of how parents are becoming employment-ready.

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

### **Outstanding**

- Those responsible for governance, leaders and managers at all levels are ambitious and have successfully driven many of the recent improvements forward. The school as lead agency has been particularly supportive in providing access to many essential resources and services. For instance, the lead agency works closely with the centre to support policies, procedures and practice that underpin the excellent safeguarding arrangements.
- The local authority provides strong support to move improvement forward at a fast but manageable pace.
- Resources are used very efficiently to meet local needs. The buildings, grounds and equipment offer outstanding accommodation for all of the planned services. There is tight management control over limited finances and the centre offers exceptional value for money.
- The centre runs very smoothly with a highly skilled and knowledgeable staff that form a strong team devoted to helping families in most need. They are appropriately qualified from a range of professional backgrounds. The systems for supervision, performance management and the continuous professional development of staff are outstanding. The centre's staff training plan is closely linked to centre priorities and individual improvement targets.
- Staff successfully contribute to safeguarding families and reducing harm to children, particularly those families that are subject to child protection plans or assessed as children in need. Links with all relevant agencies are outstanding. Staff use assessment processes including the Common Assessment Framework effectively to assess the needs of families and coordinate timely multi-agency support.
- Partnerships with local groups and organisations help a very large number of vulnerable families to improve their well-being. Thriving Families and Homestart are among the many agencies that actively work with the centre to improve families' lives.
- The centre 'Monitoring Map' posted on the office wall is what all staff use to plan all the monitoring, tracking and quality assurance checks. This is an innovative and impressive checklist for all too consistently and regularly measure performance of activities and set further targets for improvement.
- Parents are often asked for their views through discussion groups, surveys and evaluations. There is no doubt that parents' views are heard and acted upon and help to shape services. Parents asked for a text messaging service to advertise services and flag alerts and this was introduced and is working very well.

## 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>	21077
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	447490
<b>Managed by</b>	The Sele School on behalf of the local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	1,251
<b>Centre leader</b>	Valerie Wrangles
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not Previously Inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01992 581258
<b>Email address</b>	manager.selections@hertschildrenscentres.org.uk

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