

Edgar Stammers Children's Centre

Harden Road, Coalpool, Walsall, WS31RQ

Inspection dates	13–14 January 2015
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
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.

- The centre, located in a prominent position on a school site, is a spacious, welcoming, secure place where families feel safe and valued.
- 100% of local families are registered with the centre and a large majority of families in most need of support access the centre's services on a regular basis.
- Most eligible two-, three- and four-year-olds take up their free early years education place.
- The quality of activities is good and attendance at sessions is consistently high.
- Centre staff and partners prepare children well for school. Transition arrangements are effective and help the children settle quickly into their new school setting.
- Staff provide very good support for families in crisis and work well with colleagues from health and social care to ensure well-coordinated early help to children and families.
- Strong partnerships with Jobcentre Plus and welfare advisers are helping the high number of workless families to enhance their financial well-being.
- Governance by the local authority is strong and the overall effectiveness of the centre is good. Leadership and management are good and there is secure capacity to sustain improvements in going forward.

It is not outstanding because:

- Too few families with children under five years old living in the most disadvantaged areas and children from minority ethnic communities access the centre on a regular basis.
- The proportion of mothers who continue to breastfeed their babies is well below the level seen nationally.
- The recently reconstituted advisory board does not provide sufficient challenge and support to the centre.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Enhance marketing strategies and better engage families with children under five years of age living in the most disadvantaged areas and children from minority ethnic communities, so that at least the large majority access the centre on a regular basis.
- Increase the number of women who breastfeed their babies to at least the level seen nationally, by working more effectively with health partners to break down the barriers that exist locally and educating families about the benefits of giving babies the best start in life.
- Strengthen and develop the advisory board by establishing a recognised chair-person, expanding membership with representatives from a broad range of organisations, and training all members to effectively challenge and support the centre.

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 centre manager and staff; parents and volunteers; partners in health, education, social care and community services; advisory board members and representatives from the local authority.

The inspectors visited the centre, observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation. Visits to activities, such as 'Stay and Play' and a 'Parenting' session, were jointly undertaken. The inspectors looked at the centre's self-evaluation, action planning, a sample of case files, safeguarding practice, policy and procedures and a range of documentation.

Inspection team

Alan Comerford-Dunbar, Lead Inspector	Additional inspector
Aileen King	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Edgar Stammers Children's Centre is a stand-alone centre located in the town of Walsall. The centre shares a site with Edgar Stammers Primary Academy (URN: 139610), which is subject to separate inspection arrangements. The report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Governance is by the Walsall local authority. Until April 2014, the centre was governed by the Edgar Stammers Primary School board of governors; however, when the school became an academy, a separate advisory board was formed. The advisory board is made up of members of the community, professional agencies and parents. There have been many recent staffing changes within the centre. A range of activities and services take place, including family support, work in the community, Stay and Play groups and welfare advice sessions. There are also breastfeeding support, child health clinics and outdoor activities offered by the centre.

The centre is based in an area with high levels of disadvantage. Currently, 632 children under the age of five years live in the area served by the centre. At 77%, the largest group of families is White British. A small number of families speak English as an additional language. Some 30% of children registered at the centre live in workless households. Most children enter early years provision with a range of skills and knowledge that are just below those typical for their age.

The centre has identified the following priority target groups as priorities: children under five years of age living in the most disadvantaged areas; two-year-olds who are eligible for a free early education place; children living with domestic abuse, parents with mental health issues or substance abuse; teenage mothers; pregnant teenagers; children from minority ethnic families and children with special needs or disabilities.

The local authority is currently conducting a review of all of the children's centres in Walsall and expects to publish its decisions in September 2015.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The centre is located in a prominent position within the area it serves. Situated on a shared site with a local school, it operates from a large, spacious, welcoming building. Information kept by the centre shows that all families living locally are registered and are known to staff. Families accessing the centre feel safe and valued.
- All children living with domestic abuse, parents with mental health issues or affected by substance abuse, two-year-olds who are eligible for a free early education place, teenage mothers, pregnant teenagers and children with special needs or disabilities access the centre on a regular basis.
- Centre staff and the local authority work well with a range of partners operating in the area served by the centre and this assists the high take-up of services. The information about families that the centre uses is accurate and up to date and comes from a variety of sources; this ensures decisions about what services to offer families are based on accurate information. Most activities are run to full capacity.
- Access to early childhood services is good, primarily as a result of the strong partnerships that exist between the centre and health partners. Families expecting children are accessing services well and receive good advice and guidance as they prepare for the birth of their baby. Most two-, three- and four-year-old children access their free entitlement to early education.
- The effectiveness of strategies for encouraging families to engage with the centre are good. The centre's website is user-friendly, and information, advice and guidance, in a wide range of languages, are available at the click of a button. Within the centre, good use is made of wall space

and displays to promote key messages. Early childhood health promotion activities are constantly reinforced by staff, and a good range of literature is available to centre users.

- Although the numbers involved are now improving rapidly, too few families with children under five years of age living in the most disadvantaged areas and children from minority ethnic communities access the centre on a regular basis. This issue was clearly identified by the centre during its self-evaluation process. The centre has appropriate plans to improve the situation but it has yet to implement its marketing and engagement strategies

The quality of practice and services

Good

- Parents benefit from a wide range of good quality services intended for all and those aimed at the needs of specific families, including group and individual work with teenage mothers. For example, home visits include the Jobcentre Plus outreach worker on hand to give specialist advice. Services clearly have a positive impact on those who attend.
- Centre staff work well with schools and early years settings to promote and develop children's learning. Staff are highly effective at tracking the impact of their work on children who have attended the centre on a regular basis. Children's learning journals are of a high standard and reflect the progress made.
- There is good support to help children prepare well for school and reduce inequalities. There have been significant recent improvements in the number of Reception-age children achieving a good level of development.
- Families who use the centre regularly benefit from the expertise and compassion that dedicated staff provide. They receive good support, especially during times of crisis; case files are well maintained, carefully supervised and demonstrate clear, positive outcomes for families. Parenting courses are effective in improving parents' confidence in raising their children.
- Adults wishing to improve their self-esteem, education and employment chances receive good support from staff and specialists, such as a welfare rights advisor. They are effectively signposted to an appropriate range of organisations. However, the centre's recording of the impact of this support is too variable.
- Centre staff and colleagues from health have effectively reduced obesity rates for Reception age children, which are now in line with national rates. Information displayed on walls throughout the centre appropriately give a wide range of health-related advice and guidance for families. The centre recognises that there are barriers to breastfeeding locally and despite the consistency of positive messages promoted by staff, breast feeding rates at six to eight weeks are very low at 22%.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Effective leadership, management and governance are ensuring that the centre continues to improve, despite much recent upheaval to the running of the centre and many changes to personnel. Staff are extremely positive and provide caring, compassionate and effective support for families. Staff are well qualified and come from a range of relevant professional backgrounds. Supportive supervision and the centre's training plan ensures that individual and centre performance is good.
- The centre is a safe and secure place where families enjoy visiting. Policies, procedures and the practice of staff ensure that arrangements for safeguarding are robust and effective. The strong partnership between the centre staff, health and social care ensure that children who are looked after, subject to child protection plans, children in need and those families being supported through early help assessments are well supported.
- Partnership working is a particular strength of the centre. Staff work well with partners from health, social care, local schools and Jobcentre Plus to provide a wide range of effective support for families. The secondment of a Jobcentre Plus outreach worker has been highly effective in helping the centre to work with the high number of families affected by unemployment.
- The centre listens and responds well to parents' views through the effective use of the 'Chatterbox

Club'. Consultation with parents and other stakeholders about possible future changes to the running of the centre have been comprehensive. Parent representation on the advisory board is a positive feature and the development of parent volunteers is growing.

- The building used by the centre is bright, attractive and spacious. Rooms are large and well resourced. Services meet the needs of families well and all rooms are constantly in use for the benefit of local families.
- Governance is effective because the centre receives very good support, and is closely monitored, by the local authority through the 'annual conversation' meeting and on-going use of local data. Information about the area served by the centre is accurate and up to date and helps managers to make informed decisions, although the recently re-formed advisory board requires strengthening so that it can more effectively support and challenge the centre.

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.

Children's centre details

Unique reference number	21056
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	454039
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	632
Centre leader	Tahra Hussain
Telephone number	01922 471932
Email address	hussaintahra@walsall.gov.uk

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