

# Norfolk - AfC Broadland North East (Lots 13 and 17)

Sproston Infant School, Recreation Ground Road, Norwich, NR7 8EW

<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–4 July 2014
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b> Previous inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
		Not applicable	
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 group of centres is good.

- The group is led and managed well with a highly conscientious and hardworking staff team. Effective support from the management organisations and local authority, along with a very committed staff team, has ensured that together they are continuously improving the quality of practice and services.
- Staff know the local community very well and provide an extremely welcoming environment where all families feel at ease. They listen well and accurately tailor good quality support to the needs of individual families. Parents value highly the skills of staff and there are many examples of how their advice has changed lives for the better.
- Access to the centres is good. Registration and participation rates are high due to a range of successful approaches, including strong partnership with health visitors and effective collation and use of data.
- The effective use of resources, and the use of a variety of venues across the locality, has enabled families to access appropriate services and improve their well-being.

### It is not outstanding because:

- The advisory boards have not been functioning as effectively as they have in the past.
- Systems to track the impact of centre services on vulnerable children's learning and development in the short and longer term are not fully effective.
- More work is needed to improve the available opportunities for adult learning, such as literacy and numeracy courses, and for adults to benefit from volunteering.

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

- Develop volunteering opportunities and the services available to enhance the learning, skills and employability of parents, especially those who are out of work.
- Continue with the drive to re-establish the advisory boards so they have a membership which is representative of the local community and provide challenge and support to the centres' leadership and management team.
- Review the procedures for monitoring to ensure there is a system to rigorously measure the impact of the group's services on improving the learning and development of vulnerable children who attend centre activities.

## 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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre leadership team, staff, members of the local advisory boards, a representative from the local authority, headteachers, parents and representatives of the centre's key partners.

The inspectors visited a range of services offered, including 'Stay and Play', 'Arts and Crafts', Weaning group, 'About Boys' course and the Young parents group.

The inspectors visited each of the children's centres. They observed the group's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including case files.

## Inspection team

Susan Smith Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ann Taylor

Additional inspector

Anthony Mundy

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the group

AfC Broadland North East (Lots 13 and 17) is a group of children's centres in Norfolk run by the charity Action for Children on behalf of the local authority. The group is made up of three centres: Stalham and Sutton; Hoveton and Broadland; and Spixworth and Sprowston. Action for Children has been responsible for running the centres since October 2012. The centres operated as two separate 'lots'; however, in July 2013, the decision was made to run the centres as a group managed by one centre coordinator. In April 2014, a new centre coordinator, who was previously the manager of a group of centres in Norfolk for Action for Children, joined the group.

There are two advisory groups in the children's centre area to reflect the differing needs of each 'lot'. The group offers a range of services for families and children aged under five years, including family support, adult learning and health services. Services are provided at a variety of outreach venues, including village halls, community centres, toddler groups and pre-schools. Outreach work within families' homes is a key feature of the group's work.

The centres are open each week day from 9am to 5pm for 51 weeks of the year. Currently there are 2311 children aged under five years old living in the community the centres serve with a mixture of rural and more urban areas. There are areas considered to be more affluent as well as areas of deprivation. While the proportion of children living in families where no adults are working is relatively small, low income employment and a dependency on benefits is a feature of some households. Transport links are limited and can be a barrier to accessing services. The population for the area is predominantly white British with a small percentage of families from minority ethnic groups. Children's skills, knowledge and ability on entry to early education vary but generally are at the levels slightly below those expected for their age.

Priority group families identified by the centre include: children living in the most disadvantaged communities; vulnerable children; children living in workless homes; children from minority ethnic backgrounds; lone parents; fathers, young mothers and teenage parents.

### Inspection judgements

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

- The very large majority of families, including those expecting children, are registered with the group. The large majority of families living in the areas of most need, lone parents, and families with a disabled parent or child, teenage and young parents are registered with the centres and are benefiting from using services.
- Outreach work is highly effective in establishing and maintaining contact with families in most need of intervention and in meeting their specific needs. Home visits are an integral part of the group's work. Staff use effective strategies to ensure families have access to services and activities. For example, delivering services from a variety of community venues and visits to individual families homes by the toy library.
- Good use is made of a 'hardship fund' to support families who have trouble accessing

services due to poor transport links and rural isolation. The use of taxis and purchasing day bus passes ensures families attend appointments and services and gain a better awareness of the possible transport options available to them.

- Good information and support in finding suitable good quality childcare is provided for families eligible for free early education entitlement for disadvantaged two, three and four-year-olds. As a result, the take-up is very high.
- Those families who experience problems are swiftly identified by health visitors who share information routinely with centre staff. This leads to the timely offer of help and support for children and families at the early onset of difficulties.
- Users have good access to advice and support regarding weaning and breastfeeding. The group offers a range of sessions such as baby massage, health drop-in and weaning groups. As a result, breastfeeding rates have remained around the national average.
- While activities provided by staff, such as 'Wiggle and Jiggle' promote the benefits of physical activities for young children and their parents successfully, the centre recognises that more needs to be done in other areas, particularly in Stalham and Broadland.

### The quality of practice and services

Good

- There is an appropriate balance of good quality targeted and universal provision to meet the diverse needs of the families in the community. Play-based activities are planned around the interests of the children attending. Although a useful start has been made in developing 'learning journeys' for children attending the crèche provision, they are not yet being used consistently to show the progress vulnerable children are making, or to share this with parents.
- Families' needs are assessed accurately and thoroughly. Monthly meetings with health and children's services professionals ensure that services are well-matched to the needs of families, particularly those in most need of support. As a result, when problems and crises arise in families' lives, intervention from family support practitioners and other professionals is swift and effective.
- Outcomes at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage were broadly in line with the national average in 2013 for most of the reach area. The exception to this was the Spixworth and Sprowston area which was significantly below. However, indications are that there is significant improvement across the reach area for 2014.
- The group has sensible and logical plans to continue to improve children's educational achievement. For example, building upon links with local schools and pre-schools to implement a transition programme to support children who have been identified as requiring additional support to ensure they have a smooth transfer into school.
- Good support is given to those most in need. Parents speak highly about the kindness, guidance and practical support they receive from the staff which helps them overcome personal barriers and access services that improve their quality of life and their children's life chances.

- The quality of practice and services provided by the centre is mostly good, such as in developing and extending parenting skills. New planning systems are providing a consistent approach across the group.
- Adult learning services are not aligned closely with volunteering opportunities. Case studies provide some evidence that a few users have undertaken volunteering opportunities which have lead into further learning or employment, but the group does not currently have an active volunteering programme of its own. Action for Children is in the process of introducing a volunteering programme across all of its centres but it is too early to assess how effective this is.
- The range of opportunities for developing employability skills is under-developed, particularly with regard to literacy and numeracy courses. Those parents that do take part in training do not always have their progress monitored. This has been identified as a priority area for development and plans are already being implemented to address this.

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

Good

- The effective leadership team has managed the very recent appointment of the children's centre group coordinator well. This has been underpinned by strong support from the local authority. The new coordinator is experienced in this role having previously managed a group of children's centre in Norfolk for Action for Children. She has already brought over the good practice she put in place at her previous group to the appreciative staff team.
- Lines of accountability are clearly defined and understood. The local authority officer carries out a robust annual conversation and quarterly monitoring visits based on areas of the service specification, which lead to specific, agreed targets being set. These targets have effectively driven behaviour which has increased the number of registered families and the proportion of priority families in contact with the centres.
- The quality of the information that the local authority provides to the group is continuously improving. The new information sharing protocol with children's services and health has ensured information is shared quickly, accurately and appropriately. Currently, work is well under way to secure agreement with midwives and adult learning providers to further enhance the work of the group in the provision of services for expectant mothers and adult learning opportunities.
- Supervision is undertaken regularly; it is supportive and links well to professional development training. Performance management is viewed positively by staff who identify that targets give focus to their work, and reviews provide opportunities to reward success or support development.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and implemented well. All staff are highly aware of what to do if there is a concern about a child's well-being or safety. Strong relations with children's services and health colleagues ensure close joint working and information-sharing.

- There are strong systems in place to support children who are looked after and those identified as being in need, as well as those subject to a child protection plan and the family support process procedures. A named social worker is in place for each of the two lots of children's centres within the group.
- Governance arrangements are developing at a good pace. There are two advisory boards for the locality; however, recently, they have not met regularly enough. Leaders and managers appreciate the role of the advisory boards in developing services and providing them with challenge. As a result, individual board meetings are programmed in, new chairs have been appointed and the group is quite rightly placing priority on ensuring that the boards have a membership which reflects all agencies working within the community.
- Parents who use the centre's services have good levels of satisfaction. They regularly share their views of the sessions and activities with staff and full consideration is given to the views of users. However, not enough parents are involved in the advisory boards.
- The centres manage their resources well. They makes flexible use of the various premises to meet the needs of families throughout the area. Staff are used effectively, utilising their considerable strengths well. The centre at Stalham is well-resourced and the well-designed outside area really enhances children's learning and sense of well-being.

## 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.

## Group details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	80320
<b>Local authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	442723
<b>Managed by</b>	Action for Children on behalf of the local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	2311
<b>Centre leader</b>	Lisa Nicholson
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected as a group
<b>Telephone number</b>	01603 784954
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:lisa.nicholson@actionforchildren.org.uk">lisa.nicholson@actionforchildren.org.uk</a>

### This group consists of the following children's centres:

- 21568 Hoveton and Broadland Children's Centre
- 22811 Spixworth and Sprowston Children's Centre
- 22904 Stalham and Sutton Children's Centre

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