

Happy Feet Children's Centre

Princecroft Primary School site, Princecroft Lane, Warminster, Wiltshire BA12 8NT

Inspection dates	16–17 July 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

- This welcoming, warm and friendly centre enables families to feel safe and secure, including at times of crisis. Parents and carers value the good care, guidance and support that centre staff provide.
- The centre's registration rates have risen in recent years. Almost all families, including those belonging to priority groups, are registered and the large majority regularly attend its services.
- Strong partnerships with health professionals enable the centre to provide support that is tailored to meet families' individual needs. Health outcomes are good.
- Centre staff work closely with professional partners to identify and address as early as possible any difficulties families and children might have.
- Effective partnership work to support the safeguarding of children helps to reduce the risk of harm to those who are in most need.
- The centre is proactive in helping families to access good quality free early education and a very large majority take up the opportunity for two-year-olds. This helps to prepare children for their next steps in education.
- Parents benefit from well-planned parenting courses. These develop parents' skills so they are more effective in their personal lives and in their interaction with their children.
- The strong focus on early learning and good partnerships with early years providers lead to children's improving outcomes on entry to school.
- Good leadership, governance and management ensure that the centre is continually monitoring, targeting and progressing. Consequently the centre has a good capacity to continue to improve.

It is not outstanding because:

- There are too few opportunities for adults to acquire skills that will improve their chances of gaining employment. Adult learning is not promoted well enough, especially for workless families.
- The local authority has not yet implemented its plans for helping the centre to readily evaluate its impact on raising children's attainment at the end of Reception, including those in workless households.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Develop a stronger partnership with providers of training for literacy, numeracy and work-related skills so that parents, particularly those from workless homes, improve their chances of gaining employment.
- The local authority should implement its plans for providing detailed information about children's attainment at the end of Reception so that the centre can more easily evaluate its impact on raising children's achievement, including those in workless households.

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.

It was carried out at the same time as the inspection of White Horse Children's Centre in Westbury, which has a separate report that can be found on the Ofsted website at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

This inspection was carried out by two Additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, parents, the assistant headteacher of Princecroft Primary School, pre-school providers, a representative of the military base, senior managers from the local authority and 4Children. They also met members of the advisory board, volunteers, the early years forum, and the centre's named social worker and health visitor. They took account of responses to the centre's recent survey and parents' feedback after group activities.

The inspectors visited a range of services, including Baby Massage and Mum2Mum, which is a breastfeeding support group.

They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including self-evaluation information. They also examined the centre's action plans, safeguarding policies and a sample of case files.

Inspection team

Eileen Chadwick, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Megan Dauksta	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Happy Feet Children's Centre opened in June 2009 as a stand-alone centre. It is one of 16 centres in Wiltshire managed by 4Children on behalf of the local authority. Happy Feet collaborates with another children's centre in the west of the county: White Horse, Westbury, which was inspected at the same time.

The centre is on the same site as Princecroft Primary School and Noah's Ark Pre-School. These settings are inspected separately and their reports can be found on the Ofsted website: <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

The two part-time centre managers manage both Happy Feet and White Horse Children's Centres. Happy Feet has its own advisory board and parents' forum. Services provided include: outreach family support, activities to promote early learning and well-being; child and family health; careers; adult learning and volunteering. The centre is open for 51 weeks of the year.

There are currently 1,200 children under five years old living in the centre's reach area. The centre serves families who live mostly in Warminster, including military families from the local garrison. A small minority of families live in outlying rural villages.

Housing is a mixture of private accommodation, military housing and the social housing area where the centre is located. The area is very mixed socially and economically, with pockets of deprivation. Sixteen per cent of children under the age of five are living in workless households, which is broadly average. The reach area has several pockets of high-level disadvantage.

Most families are of White British heritage. Most children start pre-school or nursery with skills at levels below those typical for their age, although this varies.

The centre has identified that those requiring particular support are families living in workless households, military families and teenage parents.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The centre provides a very warm and welcoming atmosphere which puts families at ease and encourages them to join activities. Families have good access to a wide range of important information. This is carefully displayed around the centre to offer good guidance to support families.
- Access to live birth data and strong partnerships with health practitioners and army staff at the garrison mean that expectant mothers and new parents are increasingly being made aware of the services available. This has led to virtually all families with children under five registering for centre services.
- As a result of the centre's successful actions, the number of families regularly using the centre's services is rising. The large majority of children and families living in the most disadvantaged households, military families and teenage parents use the centre's services regularly. The number of families in workless households who regularly use the centre's services has almost doubled in the last three years and currently stands at 80%.
- The proportion of military families joining in centre services is also increasing. Centre staff have developed closer links with military families by attending baby clinics at the garrison and by providing courses such as Baby Massage at the military base. Two thirds of military families are now regularly visiting the centre as well as attending garrison events, whereas only a half did so at the beginning of this year.
- Good sharing of information between health, education, social care and military partners enables

timely assessments so those needing extra support gain swift access to early help. This includes teenage parents, and families living with domestic abuse and violence, alcohol and substance misuse, isolation, mental health issues and financial crises.

- All children living locally and who are looked after, identified as being in need or subject to a child protection plan are well known to the centre. There is regular contact with families to help them overcome the challenges they face.
- At 80%, the take-up of free early education by two-year-olds is higher than seen nationally and the vast majority of three-to four-year-olds also take up their entitlement. Centre staff have been proactive in encouraging families to take up the offer for both age groups and in ensuring the right placements have been found for disabled children and those with special educational needs.
- Families engage well in parenting programmes but access to accredited adult learning opportunities is not yet good enough. Too few workless or low income parents are enhancing their qualifications or work experience.
- Staff's active marketing helps to promote centre services well, for example by taking part in local events such as the 'Warminster Wobble', and staff demonstrate different activities, including for enriching children's learning.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The centre provides a good balance of courses between those available to everyone and those designed to meet families' specific needs. They have a positive impact on families' health and overall well-being. Staff listen carefully to parents and their analysis of parents' needs leads to sensitive, skilful encouragement and guidance. This helps parents to take charge of improving their lives. For example, after attending the centre's popular 'Fun with Food' course, families were encouraged to attend a certificated food hygiene course which could lead to employment.
- Parents significantly enhance their parenting skills and increase their understanding by attending specific courses such as 'The Incredible Years'. Parents are full of praise for these courses and identify how they have helped them improve their parenting techniques, relationships with their children and the way in which they manage their behaviour.
- In 2014, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of Reception was broadly average. Early analysis of results indicates improvement for those currently in Reception. Good partnerships with early years providers have enabled the centre to provide courses which address some weaker aspects of Reception children's achievement. This has led to the centre providing courses which heighten parents' awareness of how to enhance the development of children's communication and language skills through learning through play.
- Popular courses such as 'Music and Messy Play' enable parents to see how to help their children to make good progress in developing their vocabulary and speaking skills, and learning through play. Staff's good planning enables parents to understand how well their children are progressing and how to build on these experiences at home.
- Staff record children's progress well and use this information to plan the next steps and judge their own effectiveness. They also work closely with schools and, wherever possible, find out how children who have attended the centre have achieved. The local authority has plans to imminently increase its role in this by improving the information it provides to the centre. It intends to help the centre to check how different groups of children have achieved at the end of Reception, including those in workless households.
- Family health is strongly promoted and outcomes are good. For example, the number of mothers breastfeeding at six to eight weeks is improving and is now higher than the national rate. Childhood obesity rates are also falling and are now below the national level. The centre does its best to help parents understand how they can help their families live healthier lives through courses such as 'Healthier eating on a budget' and encouraging children's physical development through activities in the outdoor area.
- Family support work makes a good impact on improving families' lives. Several families were keen to tell inspectors personal stories of how the centre has enabled them to make positive changes in their lives. Case files are well maintained and regular audits ensure best practice is promoted. Staff skilfully

gain families' trust and create an environment where families feel confident to provide sensitive information and seek the help they need.

- Regular contact with workless families living in the area is maintained and there are opportunities for parents to volunteer or access some training and employability support. However, pathways to employment, including accessing literacy and numeracy courses, are not well established.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Leadership, management and governance are good. The leadership team has high ambitions to make the centre the best it can be and has the full support of committed staff in meeting local families' needs. Everyone is involved in reviewing what is working best and what needs to improve. Staff work well as a team to reduce inequalities.
- 4children leadership and management processes are well established and successful. Effective staff supervision and performance management have supported the well-qualified team to ensure good improvement, including in the high number of registrations during the last year. The cluster's managers are well supported by the county manager and the expertise of specialists within the 4children organisation. Staff are enabled to keep up to date and hone their expertise by professional training.
- The local authority effectively monitors the centre's performance through its annual review process and regular monitoring. Targets are set which challenge the centre to do better although, until recently, improving families' life chances by improving their employability has not received enough focus.
- Leaders, managers, governors and advisory board members are well aware of the centre's strengths and areas for further development. Governance arrangements are clearly understood. The advisory board contains a good mix of professional partners and representatives from the local community. The advisory board is both supportive and challenging.
- Centre leaders make good use of the available data to help their understanding of the local area and the issues affecting families, as well as the centre's effectiveness in reducing inequalities for children and families. However, the absence of more precise figures for end of Reception data for those groups who have attended the centre hampers leaders and advisory board members from monitoring the impact of centre services on improving children's life chances even more effectively.
- The parents' forum is well represented by different sections of the community. Parents have good opportunities to put forward their views, suggest improvements and shape services.
- All the required safeguarding policies and procedures are in place to ensure good practice. Staff are safely recruited and complete relevant safeguarding training. They have good understanding of what action to take if they are concerned about the safety of children and parents. They also use the Family Support Process as appropriate and, together with social care partners, provide support for children who may be looked after, identified as in need, or subject to a child protection plan or common assessment framework process.
- Finances and resources are used well. The centre is very well resourced with practical equipment to support babies' and children's development. Managers use staff flexibly across the two centres in the cluster as the need arises, for example to develop staff's expertise by working alongside other staff.

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 well-being 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

Unique reference number	23150
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	455113
Managed by	4Children on behalf of the local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,200
Centre leader	Kerry Morgan and Ruth Brooks-Martin
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01985 221020
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