

# Inspection report for Steeple Claydon Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	383398
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 February 2012
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Steeple Claydon Primary School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Steeple Claydon Nursery (EY419755)

The inspection of this Sure Start children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

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## Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre coordinator, advisory board members, local authority representatives, childminders, family support workers, health, early years, employment and training professionals, and front-line staff. They met parents, observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

The centre was designated in 2007 as a phase two centre and has delivered a full core offer of integrated early learning, information and advice to parents, outreach, family support, health services and signposting to training and employment advice since Easter 2009. The centre shares a site with Steeple Claydon Nursery and Steeple Claydon Primary School and is open Monday to Friday, from 9am to 5.30pm for 52 weeks a year. A satellite centre in Winslow, four miles away, is used to deliver local services two-and-a-half days per week, together with outreach service provision in a number of villages.

Data show very small numbers of target groups living in the reach area. For example, at 5%, the proportion of workless households including those receiving work-related benefits is very low compared to the picture nationally. The vast majority of families living within the reach area are of White British heritage. The centre serves a reach area of 63 square miles and is considered to be 100% rural. There are pockets of disadvantage and recognised living environment deprivation, predominantly isolation due to poor transport links and poor access to services. Currently, the centre has direct contact with 63% of the 845 children under five living in the reach area. Children's skills and knowledge when they enter early education is generally at the level expected for their age but this varies across the locality.

The centre is managed in conjunction with another children's centre with which it shares a coordinator and an advisory board. The coordinator has assumed additional responsibilities, which involve the oversight of five more centres until March 2012. The family support workers for each centre work across both reach areas when appropriate and families access the centre which is most convenient for them. The local authority is the accountable body.

## Inspection judgements

**Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

### Overall effectiveness

**The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for families**

**2**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

**The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management**

**2**

## Main findings

The centre makes good provision for the majority of children and families living in its area. The number of children in direct contact with the centre has increased significantly over the last few years, and outcomes are good overall and improving. This is due to the highly effective leadership of the centre coordinator who has planned service delivery from the centre and skilfully tapped into a range of additional services at various locations across the reach area to best meet the needs of the most vulnerable families. Joint ventures with local schools, such as the 'strengthening families strengthening communities' programme, have brought tangible benefits to the high number involved. The centre is very successful in its work with teenage families with 100% having regular contact. Families were observed enjoying a wide range of activities during the inspection with outstanding outcomes evident in the 'Gymboree' sessions at Calvert that involve families exercising together, having fun and keeping fit.

Well-forged partnerships, including with health services, enable good integration, prompt intervention and good-quality provision that helps the vast majority of families using the centre to live healthier lives, keep safe, make a positive contribution and enjoy achieving. There is no direct involvement of Jobcentre Plus currently due to the perceived low level of need in the area. The centre engages with some families from workless homes and signposts to existing services as required. However, not enough has been done to assess all of the needs of the small but significant group of families from workless homes in order to further improve their

economic well-being. The level of contact with lone parents is not as good as it is for other target groups.

The centre demonstrates a high standard of safeguarding; it is welcoming to families and children who enjoy participating in activities and feel well supported and safe. Good use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) helps to prioritise services and results in the good well-being of those most in need of support. Parenting courses are very well attended and raise both confidence and self-esteem. Early learning experiences are effective in assisting young children's achievements and school readiness, and outcomes are good. The gap in achievement between those at most risk of the lowest outcomes and others of the same age is narrowing over time.

The centre has a strong commitment to promoting equality and diversity. Particularly successful is the outreach work to support vulnerable children and families, including those with disabilities, mental health problems and ongoing health issues. These words of one young mother sum up the impact the centre's work is having on the lives of some: 'The staff are brilliant - the centre has been a lifesaver for my family.' Feedback forms show that parents highly value the good range of well-planned sessions that result in the good and sometimes outstanding outcomes. They feel that their views are listened to and acted upon, although due to lack of support, the parents' forum is not currently in operation.

Self-evaluation of strengths and weaknesses is accurate and the centre's capacity to improve is good. The advisory board is keenly aware of the importance of matching provision to local needs and is effective in seeking value for money in all of its activities. The centre and local authority have pinpointed the importance of having more efficient systems in place to both gather data and demonstrate the impact of services on all target groups as a core priority. A useful start has been made with the introduction of reach profile information and the 'score-card'.

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

#### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Work with the local authority to refine data collection and analysis for all target groups within the community and particularly lone parents so that timely checks on the impact of services can be made and used to set next-step targets.
- Improve the economic well-being of the small but significant group of adults from workless homes through sharper needs analysis and the provision of appropriate activities to enhance employability.
- Press ahead with extending the direct involvement of parents and carers in the centre's decision making.

### **How good are outcomes for families?**

2
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The centre's close work with health services and other agencies encourages families

to make healthy choices and this has a positive impact on their lifestyles. Physical activity is effectively promoted through regular exercise, such as 'Gymboree Play' and 'Play around the Parishes', which take place at various locations across the reach area. Outcomes are improving with child obesity rates in the area below those in other parts of the county. The very high take-up of immunisation at 97% results in the vast majority of young children completing the full programme at a very early age. Anti-smoking work is effective with the numbers of smokers reducing over time. The centre is proactive in supporting new mothers who want to breastfeed their babies and the success rate is good. At 56%, the level of sustained breastfeeding for more than eight weeks is currently above the local average.

The centre is very alert to the needs of families and works effectively to keep them safe and protected. Excellent work takes place to raise awareness about safety in the home, for example safety checks are carried out during each home visit. The well-being of young children, including those subject to a child protection plan, shows good impact from the centre's well-targeted outreach interventions and multi-agency work. Those who are most vulnerable are helped to build positive behaviour and nurturing family relationships through experiences such as 'Holding Hands'. Parents and carers strongly identify that they feel free from any form of discrimination. Their conversations with staff and members of the advisory board, together with feedback from surveys, usefully informs the centre's forward planning but there is currently no formal opportunity for parents to have a more specific 'voice' in decision making.

Children are enabled to enjoy activities and achieve successfully, and this assists their future economic well-being. The gap in achievement between the lowest 20% and the rest is reducing at a faster rate than many other areas in the county. An above-average proportion of children attain 78 plus scale points including communication, language, literacy and personal, social and emotional development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Signposting to training support for adults is clear and a few steps have been taken to provide opportunities to increase employability. For example, a young mother has been supported in studying for a GCSE in mathematics and a volunteer programme provides work experience for two parents. However, the centre has not assessed finely enough the needs of workless families in the area and this target group is not as well served as others by the centre's good work.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment</b>	<b>3</b>

## **How good is the provision?**

**2**

The quality and range of services are integrated and cohesive, and meet the needs of most families well. The children's centre staff work closely with health and social care professionals to assess and support the needs of families and refer for one-to-one support. This enables the development and effective delivery of dovetailed services to most target groups. In discussion, parents and carers identified the good quality of outreach services and said how valuable the home visits carried out by family support workers are in helping them through times of crisis.

Creative planning and the strong network of support enables the centre to add its services to others already existing and widen access for families living across the very scattered reach area. For example, a targeted group of children successfully accessed the 'Puzzle, Play and Say' session at the Puzzle Centre in a nearby village to support their speech and language development. A programme delivered with partner schools, which gives parents the opportunity to learn a range of parenting skills, has resulted in families identifying huge impact. 'The course is amazing, I'm already doing the things they suggest and we've got to school on time and I've also put washing in the machine!' and 'My child is so different in the mornings now because of the course and the beneficial effect it is having on me' are comments typical of the many.

Case studies highlight the positive difference centre services make to the learning and development of those in most need, including children and adults with disabilities, teenage parents and families with children under four-years-old who are experiencing problems. There is less compelling evidence about the impact of services on lone parents and those from workless homes. Take-up of the parenting courses on offer to promote positive behaviours is good, with 100% of teenage parents actively engaged in centre activities. The 'Tums 2 young mums' group has involved skill building, for example through the design and making of costumes for the local carnival. A helpful display provides a range of job-related information, and staff signpost parents to adult education courses. However, there are no centre-coordinated courses to extend the further learning or employability needs of adults. Effective partnerships between local nursery settings and childminders assist the youngest children in being confident learners and ready for full-time education.

Good quality care, guidance and support help families from different backgrounds that use the centre to feel free from harm and bullying. The strong focus on supporting parents and carers in building confidence reduces feelings of isolation and

improves family relationships. There is a good range of helpful information available in the centre. The touch-screen photographs with children's recorded voices explaining what they are doing are a very imaginative way of celebrating their achievements. Surveys show that families are very appreciative of the centre's support and are confident that they will be given high-quality advice and guidance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

**2**

The centre coordinator and advisory board are well focused on the challenges for children and families in the area, and provide good leadership, management and governance. Realistic targets have been set to improve outcomes based on accurate self-evaluation of strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, the centre is engaging with the majority of families and achieving mainly good outcomes.

Regular and effective supervision supports the personal and professional development of staff who told inspectors they feel valued and supported in their role. Teamwork is excellent and ensures that resources are used efficiently. Outreach work has been tailored to meet users' needs and has enabled staff to reach more families. Exceptionally well coordinated multi-agency working involves shared planning, delivery and review, and ensures that families receive a bespoke service that meets all of their closely assessed needs.

Safeguarding arrangements are comprehensive and ensure that all who use the centre are well protected. Health and safety matters are well attended to and supported by thorough risk assessments. Awareness about child protection matters is good. The systems for staff vetting and recruitment fully meet requirements.

Equality and inclusion are central to the centre's work. Its ethos is warm and welcoming. The centre's approach makes a valuable contribution to community cohesion and building unity between families of different backgrounds. The centre's accommodation is accessible for wheelchairs and meets all the requirements for disabled access.

The advisory board has clear oversight of service provision. It works collaboratively to make sure that available resources are used efficiently to achieve best impact and good value. Good systems are in place for holding the centre to account with the



local authority annual conversation and spot checks on the business plan ensuring that the centre's actions are making a positive difference. A useful range of data is used to assist action planning. Further data are actively being sought from the local authority, for example on lone parents, to enhance the information gathered and enable even more precision in the targeting of resources. The recent introduction of the 'score card' is a positive development in assisting the centre in monitoring the impact of services on improving the outcomes of all those most at risk and analysing emerging patterns and trends. The advisory board is at the very early stage of identifying how best to meet all of the needs of the small but significant group of families from workless homes.

These are the grades for leadership and management

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision</b>	<b>2</b>

## **Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection**

Steeple Claydon Nursery (EY419755) report published June 2011

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Steeple Claydon Children's Centre on 8 and 9 February 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We talked with some of you, your children, staff, and a wide range of partners and members of the local authority linked to the centre. We observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documents.

We found that the centre makes good provision for the increasing number of young children and families who use it and this make a positive difference to your lives. Outreach work is highly regarded, and justifiably so as so many of you told us how the tailor-made support helps you to build confidence and overcome personal crises. The provision of services at locations very near to where you live helps you to use services which would otherwise be inaccessible. You told us that when you join in the activities at the centre, the centre manager and her team of staff make everyone feel valued and that relationships are respectful. We agree that these features are some of the many strengths that help the centre meet the diverse needs of local children and families, including those with disabilities, mental health problems and ongoing health issues.

We very much enjoyed observing the 'Stay and Play Drop In'. It was great to see so many of you brave the very cold and icy conditions to come and join in the activities. Your children behaved so well and clearly enjoyed making play dough models, painting Chinese dragons and singing songs. Watching you and your babies use sign language as you sang and exercised together at the 'Gymboree' session was a sheer joy.

The centre and its partners are doing really well in helping young learners enjoy achieving to the full and to becoming well prepared for starting school. Parenting courses are a successful part of the centre's work and help those who do them to build new skills and move towards better financial well-being. However, some of you are not being encouraged to sign up with the centre and let it know what further learning courses you would find valuable to your future success. We have asked staff to work more closely with you to explore this aspect.

The centre makes sure that you are well looked after when you visit. The good safeguarding arrangements help you feel safe and free from harm. You told us that you put forward your views through chats with staff or by completing activity feedback forms but that attending meetings is not that appealing. We have asked the centre to press ahead with extending the opportunities for you to be involved with assessing, developing and evaluating local services.

The centre coordinator and advisory board are working successfully to meet everyone's needs and provide good-quality services which you can benefit from. They draw on a lot of information to help plan ahead and see how well things are going. However, the data have not always been sufficient or timely enough. We have

asked the centre to set out exactly what information will be most useful to helping it keep track of how well services lead to better outcomes and to work with the local authority to bring improvements, especially to inform their work with lone parent families and those not in employment.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).