

Inspection report for Plymbridge Nursery School and Children's Centre

Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	362671
Inspection dates	28–29 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Mark Lindfield

Centre governance	Governing body
Centre leader	Lynda Chapman
Date of previous inspection	N/A
Centre address	Miller Way
	Estover
	PL6 8UN
Telephone number	01752 786444
Fax number	
Email address	admin@plymbridge.plymouth.sch.uk

Linked school, if applicable	Plymbridge Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Plymbridge Nursery School

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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No. 100024

© Crown copyright 2010



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.

An inspection of the registered childcare provision for young children aged 0–2 years was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 3 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with representatives of the centre's advisory board, the local authority, partnership agencies, members of staff and users of the centre.

They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Inspection judgements

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

Information about the centre

Plymbridge Children's Centre opened in February 2006. As a phase 1 centre it aims to provide the full core offer of integrated childcare and family learning, health, family support, outreach work, links with the childminder network and financial and employment advice from Jobcentre Plus. At the time of the inspection the centre operated under management of the school's governing body.

The children's centre building is a single-storey, purpose-built resource within a campus. The campus also accommodates Tor Bridge School, a community library and youth centre and is currently being extended to accommodate Estover Primary

School by 2012. The centre serves a larger-than-average geographical area than the majority of other children’s centres in Plymouth. Recent health data show that a higher-than-average proportion of families are dependent on benefits, live in poor housing or are socially isolated when compared with other areas across the local authority. These data also show that an above-average proportion of adults in the area suffer from depression.

Plymbridge Nursery school is registered for a maximum of 122 children at any one time. The school provides childcare and Early Years Foundation Stage education and provision for children aged 0–4. Children up to eight years of age also attend the play scheme or out-of-school club. The previous nursery school inspection report in September 2009 identified that a significant number of children attending the school enter with speech and language difficulties and that the proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is high. The centre’s childcare provision for 3–8 years was previously inspected in 2006.

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children’s centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for users and the wider community

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

The quality of provision and outcomes for users are satisfactory overall, with some clear strengths in the provision and outcomes for children within the nursery. Children’s achievement is good; progress is particularly impressive in their social, emotional, language and physical development. Children have very positive attitudes and a willingness to try hard at school and their behaviour is impeccable.

The centre creates a family-friendly environment where users are made to feel welcome. This is encapsulated by a parent who describes how ‘the centre feels like their second family’. The centre promotes equality and diversity through the inclusion of children and their families; drawing on well-established partnerships with other professional agencies the centre provides strong support for families of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Parents and carers are quick to recognise the quality of this aspect of the centre’s work and in helping their children to transfer to local primary schools.

The centre's senior leaders are positive in their approach and are providing support to improve the overall effectiveness of the children's centre and maintain the good outcomes and provision within the nursery. Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the centre's strengths and weaknesses, gained through a comprehensive annual evaluation. Systems are embedded sufficiently to enable the centre to improve outcomes and provide the centre with satisfactory capacity to improve. The centre's most recent annual evaluation confirms that children and adults make demonstrable improvements in their achievement and clearly derive pride and enjoyment from their connections with the children's centre. However, it has also provided confirmation that the centre provides fewer opportunities for adults to develop healthy lifestyles and their economic well-being. The centre has plans in place to increase local breastfeeding rates, improve provision of healthy eating courses and increase smoking cessation advice for adults. There are currently no plans to improve children's immunisation rates and increase provision of information and advice on sexual health awareness.

Senior leaders have made some improvements to provision and outcomes in order to target more vulnerable groups of users within the local area. For instance, good partnerships with children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) have had a positive impact on improving the well-being of adults with depression and low self-esteem. The centre has begun to gather and record information on the families who are accessing the centre. However, the centre is unable to ascertain how closely they are meeting the needs of different groups of adults because the local authority has not provided the centre with an accurate baseline profile of local needs. Consequently, the centre's management team are unclear about the precise nature of the most vulnerable groups in the area, which limits their ability to target services more closely at improving the engagement of these groups.

The local authority has provided strong and timely support to ensure that the centre's safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. Staff have received recent training on safeguarding and show a clear understanding of the need for vigilance. The governing body have provided satisfactory support, although the wider community, parents and carers, and some partners are not fully involved in the governance of the centre. However, the governing body are due to transfer their roles and responsibilities to a new federated advisory board for the campus on the day after the inspection on 1 November 2010.

Pressures placed on key partners at children's trust level are impacting on multiagency working with health and Jobcentre Plus. These key partners are not using their evaluations of their contributions effectively to shape services and improve users' healthy lifestyles and their economic well-being and the overall effectiveness of the work of the centre. Some users report that they have chosen to go directly to children's centre staff when access to other professionals is not forthcoming.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve being healthy and economic well-being outcomes for all users.
- With local authority support, improve partnership arrangements and ensure that core partner agencies with health and Jobcentre Plus use evaluations of their provision effectively to shape services to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities.
- Ensure that the federated advisory board are clear in their roles and responsibilities, include representatives from key partners so that they provide support and challenge for the centre, and monitor progress and work to identify key priorities.
- With local authority support, improve the effectiveness of local needs analysis to identify groups of users who are not accessing children's centre services in order to target services more closely at improving the engagement of these groups.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

A rich and varied range of activities for children both indoors and outdoors makes a good contribution to children's development in the early years. Staff work closely to plan the curriculum and as a result the majority of children make good progress from their starting points and especially in their personal and physical development. These are enhanced by weekly activities for families such as 'Big Play' and 'Singing with Steve', which provide parents and carers with examples of using language and songs to develop children's early communication skills.

The centre ensures that children work closely with a key person on the staff team to give children reassurance. This helps children to feel safe, although there is a minor lack of continuity of personal care for young babies. The centre has robust systems for security in the building to ensure the safety of adults and children attending. Staff show satisfactory awareness of the centre's procedures to share and record child protection concerns. They use a common approach with other agencies to ensure that children who are vulnerable due to their circumstances are kept safe. The system of using key workers in the nursery enables staff to form good relationships with parents and carers. These good relationships are maintained by all centre staff so that parents and carers communicate their views through a range of informal channels. Staff are responsive and make adaptations to services in the light of these comments so that parents and carers feel that their contributions are valued and respected. This has resulted in good feedback from parents and carers on the impact of the centre's parenting group and positive parenting sessions in more appropriately managing their children's behaviour.

Case studies and discussions with parents provide strong evidence that centre staff and partner agencies help families improve their self-confidence and personal well-being. Effective support from the family intervention service and parent development workers has been successful in raising the self-esteem and confidence of a number of adults so that they raise their aspirations. In particular, the centre's partnership arrangements help a number of parents with post-natal depression to improve their own and their children's emotional health.

Outreach and family workers have supported some parents with finding suitable employment. The centre has published attractively produced case studies which effectively demonstrate how their support has transformed the lives of a number of users of the centre. Staff help provide financial advice and support for a number of parents to improve their economic stability. However, the centre's partnership arrangements with employment services and careers advice provide limited support for the high proportion of adults in the area in receipt of workless benefits. Similarly, the centre supports some users to engage in training and adult education programmes through providing funded childcare so that take-up rates for the majority of users are satisfactory.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	3
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	3

How good is the provision?

3

Provision for children is enriched by a first class range of outdoor and indoor learning opportunities within well designed and spacious classrooms. Planning includes a rich and varied environment supporting children's learning and development. The qualified Early Years Teacher works closely with early years staff to discuss planning, track and evaluate children's progress and in addition delivers specific singing and rhyming sessions to increase children's speaking and listening skills. Services link together well so that families attending baby groups can move on to toddler and nursery sessions with staff sharing information to support children's learning and development.

Multi-agency working ensures that those users that access services are well supported. There is effective tailored support for parents and carers with children with special educational needs and/or disabilities so that users make good personal development and improve their well-being. Step by Step workers liaise with centre staff and activate appropriate services and support for children and their families. During school holidays the centre provides accommodation for additional children with special educational needs and/or disabilities who do not attend the school during term time.

The centre know its users well so that the quality of care for young children is outstanding. Staff across the centre are approachable and act as good role models so that partnerships with parents and carers are strong. They report that they feel well supported and benefit from the calm, friendly atmosphere. A parent describes that she 'doesn't know what would have become of her and her family without the support of the children's centre and their excellent staff'. The centre celebrates the personal development of users well and has published case studies of users' successes and good achievement to encourage others to access the centre.

Outreach workers have some success with families that were previously difficult to engage and are supporting families back to work through links with Connexions services. They are gathering and recording data on the different groups of users they are reaching in order to more effectively target services at particular groups. Partnerships arrangements with health and employment support and advice are not firmly established and this impacts on the range of services and the extent to which the centre can meet the needs of all users.

Families spoke about a continuity of care and support with outreach workers providing practical support in the early days and then referral on to other services as their children grew older. CAMHS Infant mental health service provides regular contact, support and training for staff which has improved their awareness. As a result staff are quick to discuss their concerns and make appropriate referrals confident that adults with low emotional and mental health will receive appropriate support.

The views of parents and users of the services are gathered regularly and are used to plan and develop activities and services. The centre responded to requests from local childminders who now access activities designed specifically for them and find the centre a useful resource for support and guidance. The centre has developed activities for fathers and these sessions are popular and well attended.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	2
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

The centre's safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. Staff use common protocols and procedures to share concerns with other relevant agencies. Procedures to recruit and appoint staff involve appropriate checks on the suitability of staff to work with children and vulnerable adults. The centre has reviewed and revised its safeguarding procedures and these meet requirements. However, parents and carers are not currently aware of the availability of the newly revised safeguarding policy.

Centre staff routinely reflect on their practice and regularly gather feedback from users about services and activities. Partners are involved in completing evaluations of their services but these are not used effectively by all partners to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the centre. Children's evaluations and targeted evaluations from specific groups such as fathers are used to inform the centre's work. The most effective of these evaluations are where users are expected to provide feedback matched closely to the objectives of the session. Parents and carers feel that their views are taken into account on important issues.

The centre has developed strong partnerships with parents and carers, with a clear emphasis on promoting an inclusive and friendly environment. Parents and carers value the centre's close links with staff and specialists to help children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, develop and learn. For example, the centre has good links with inclusion workers, speech therapy, portage and educational psychologists.

Performance management systems and staff supervision are in place. All outreach and family intervention staff highlighted the support and leadership of the deputy centre leader in their day-to-day work. Those staff who work with more vulnerable families receive regular opportunities to meet with CAMHS professionals and share information. All staff contribute to the annual evaluation, which is used to identify strengths and highlight the key priorities to develop and improve provision and outcomes. Senior leaders have used these evaluations effectively to draw up plans to improve adults' healthy lifestyles and economic well-being.

The satisfactory outcomes for adults and good outcomes for children ensure that the centre currently provides satisfactory value for money. Senior leaders are intent on applying recent training to more effectively evaluate provision and outcomes against expenditure per user. The centre is using systems to gather and record data in order to more accurately identify the extent to which they are reaching different groups of users.

The governing body provide satisfactory support and appropriately challenge the work of the school and the centre. Parents and carers, and partners are not fully represented and this limits the governing body's ability to shape provision and improve outcomes in key areas. However, the majority of the current governing body are taking up positions on the federated advisory board which takes effect from 1 November.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood	3
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	3
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	3
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	3
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	3
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	3
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	3

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

Plymbridge Nursery School was inspected in September 2009 and the judgements on the good quality of education and good leadership and management have informed the judgements made on this inspection of the children's centre.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected Plymbridge Children's Centre on 28 and 29 October 2010. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall, with some clear strengths in the centre's work with children in the nursery school. Children who attend the nursery make good progress, especially in their speaking and listening skills and their behaviour and kindness to others. The centre building is well designed and gives children the chance to play and learn; they enjoy the outdoor area and make good progress in developing their balance and physical skills. Staff work well together to plan exciting activities for children and keep an eye on how they are doing. Children get to know key members of staff well and this helps them to join in activities and to enjoy playing and learning in the centre.

Many of you told us that you feel that the centre is a warm and friendly place to visit. They listen to what you have to say about the centre and have made changes. Staff work together well and have good partnerships with other professional speech and language therapists, educational psychologists and portage workers so that your children get support. You told us how much you appreciate the good support from these adults and the difference that they have made to your lives.

The leaders at the centre are positive in their attitudes and get to know you and help the day-to-day running of the centre go well. They hold an annual event which gives them a clear understanding of what works well in the centre and what needs to improve. The most recent event showed that the centre is helping you to develop and achieve as parents and carers that you enjoy the activities on offer. However, it also confirmed that the centre could do more to help you develop healthy lifestyles and to improve your financial stability, gain qualifications and help you to find jobs. We have asked the centre to develop their partnerships with health, adult education and careers information and advice so that more of you succeed in these areas.

You recognise the support that you receive from the centre's outreach workers. They are helping many of you to improve your lives. We were impressed by the published life stories of some of the adults who attend the centre. They show clearly how the centre has helped to support a number of families to completely change their lives for the better. We have asked the local authority to help the centre identify the

numbers of families in the area who might benefit from support so that the centre can make sure that it is making contact.

The school's governing body have provided satisfactory support to the school and centre. However, we have asked that more parents and carers, and representatives from all partner organisations join the new advisory board which takes over on 1 November and that all partners work more closely together to improve the work of the centre.

We have asked that key partners consider how they are helping the centre to meet the needs of all users. We have asked the local authority and key partners to pay particular attention to how they are helping to improve healthy lifestyles, to raise the numbers of adults getting qualifications and helping you to find job.

We would like to thank those of you who spared the time to speak to us.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.