

# Inspection report for Rachel McMillan Nursery School and Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Greenwich
<b>Inspection number</b>	366515
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9-10 March 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joanne Caswell HMI

<b>Centre governance</b>	Governing Body
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	N/A
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	N/A
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Rachel McMillan Nursery School and Children's Centre (EY298210)

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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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and a Senior Inspector (Early Years).

An inspection of the nursery school and the registered childcare provision was carried out in September 2009. The report of this inspection is available on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The inspectors held meetings with the centre's senior leadership team, health professionals, group leaders, representatives from the local authority, the outreach team, the Family Information Service and a focus group of parents.

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

Rachel McMillan Nursery School and Children's Centre is a Phase 1 centre which was designated in March 2006. The centre is integrated within Rachel McMillan Nursery School, which has been an established nursery school for over 100 years and was set up by two early years' pioneers, Rachel and Margaret McMillan. It was the first open-air nursery school to be established in England. Children are cared for in groups called shelters. The centre provides the full core offer and full day care provision is available in Shelter 6 of the nursery school. In September 2010, an extension to the building was added which has substantially increased the size of accommodation provided by the centre. The centre is governed by the nursery school's governing body on behalf of the local authority. The headteacher oversees the management of both the nursery school and the children's centre.

The centre is situated in Deptford, on the border of Greenwich and Lewisham, within an area which is one of the 10% most deprived in the country. The community is ethnically diverse with over 40 different languages being spoken. There is an above average number of lone parents and workless households. Children enter early years provision with skills generally below those expected for their age.

#### 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

Rachel McMillan Nursery School and Children's Centre is beginning to make a real impact on the families it already serves within the local community and is steadily increasing its work within the local area. As a result, outcomes for most families are improving at a good rate. Currently, the centre is reaching families which are representative of the local community and reflect different groups, such as lone parents, fathers and children with disabilities. Analysis of the local area's need is still quite basic and is not yet being used consistently to identify how more families can be targeted and can benefit from the services. The local authority regularly analyses data and shares this with the centre. However, this is not always used systematically to identify new target areas. As systems are not yet fully embedded, the centre demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve.

Although the current range of activities is satisfactory, the centre is currently working at strategic level with other key agencies to increase the range of services. Good signposting arrangements ensure all families are supported in accessing relevant services provided close by. Centre users state how safe they feel at the centre and good attention is given towards safeguarding and ensuring a secure environment. Parents told inspectors how much they enjoy coming to the centre. One parent said, 'It makes such a difference. When you leave here, you walk out with a smile on your face.'

Centre users have good relationships with one another and children behave well. Many parents and carers stated they are keen to be further involved in contributing more ideas. At present, they can express their views to group leaders and make suggestions about activities they would like to do, and some parents are represented on the governing body. However, there are few further opportunities for parents and carers to make a bigger impact on developing the range of provision.

The centre builds on the outstanding implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage in the nursery school and this ensures children attending full day care provision in Shelter 6 make good progress in their learning, given their low starting points. This is particularly evident in their communication, language and literacy development, where some children exceed expected levels at the end of the Reception Year. Staff work across both the nursery school and the children's centre. This ensures the setting's strong focus on high-quality provision is starting to make a positive impact on the learning and development of young children. Parents and carers praise the way staff help them clearly understand how their children learn through quality play experiences.

The centre can point to many individual success stories for children and families. However, there is limited recorded evidence to demonstrate the full impact of the centre's services. Although the centre is consistently reflecting on its practice and regularly reviews activities, these are not always sufficiently evaluative and do not

consistently link into action planning. As a result, it is not always clear why individual targets are set and how they have been identified.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve the use of data to consistently evaluate the impact of all centre services.
- Sharpen the use of analysis of the local community's needs to target provision and the range of services to improve outcomes for more families within the centre's reach area.
- Improve opportunities for centre users to share their views to influence services and further develop the range of services.

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

<b>2</b>
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Evidence through case studies and discussion with parents and carers indicate the positive impact the centre is having on improving outcomes for the families currently accessing the centre. Parents and carers comment on how much they enjoy attending different sessions at the centre and how this increases their confidence as parents. They told inspectors how the centre had '...changed their lives' and '...helped them overcome isolation'. Many state they '....spread the word' about the good work of the centre to their friends.

Children who attend the day care provision achieve very well due to the excellent delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage. There are satisfactory opportunities for parents to develop their skills and knowledge and some have completed courses and accessed employment. Parents comment positively on how they have been helped to apply for jobs and training and some have been successful in accessing further and higher education courses. Parents' and carers' and children's enjoyment of activities is evident and the increasing attendance levels for activities are indicative of how families are beginning to recognise the benefits of the services provided. Fathers, for example, told inspectors how much they enjoy attending the Breakfast Club and Dads' Days and this had enabled them to make new friends.

There is a positive commitment throughout the centre on keeping children and adults safe. Centre staff consistently model safe behaviour and help parents and carers to recognise safety issues within the home. As a result, the numbers of accidents within the home are decreasing. Children identified as being vulnerable, and those subject to a child protection plan, achieve well due to close, targeted support. The centre is fully committed to ensuring those children who are involved with a Common Assessment Framework are supported well. As a consequence, children and families receive support they need and this enables children to make good progress in their learning and development. The centre uses the 'I Statement' which helps children to say when they do or don't like something and to help them share how they are

feeling. As a result, children have confidence to say when they feel uncomfortable about something and are empowered to seek help.

Children behave well and make friends easily. Relationships between adults and children are good. As a result, children approach staff easily and are confident to share their views. For example, children recently made their own suggestions as to what activities they would like provided at the centre. There is a very happy, positive atmosphere evident throughout the centre and all parents and carers state how welcome they feel.

Parents and carers state they have an improved understanding of buying and preparing healthy, nutritious meals for their families. They enjoy the cookery activities and this has helped them to prepare healthier meals at home. The strong focus on outside play and learning within the centre helps parents and carers encourage children to become more active and enjoy physical play. Health services provided directly by the centre are still quite limited. However, parents and carers commented on how useful they find talking to the health visitors informally when they occasionally visit different groups. Children are developing well as any early signs of delay are being recognised through the two-year-old developmental checks health visitors carry out. Centre staff reinforce the importance of health and well-being and signpost parents and carers to services, such as smoking cessation groups, counselling and breastfeeding support groups. As a result, parents and carers are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, and their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all users 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 users 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 are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment</b>	<b>3</b>

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

**3**

There are some strengths in the centre's provision of services, although overall the provision is satisfactory. The centre is working hard to replicate the high standards of provision reflected in the nursery school in the new services which are being developed within the children's centre. Staff demonstrate a shared commitment

towards the provision of high-quality care. However, the addition of the new building for the children's centre has not yet sufficiently made an impact on the range and breadth of services the centre provides. Partnerships with all key agencies are not yet fully in place. As a consequence, the centre relies heavily on the work of the outreach services to identify new families and signpost them to relevant services. The current arrangements for this are effective and the centre is able to demonstrate that it is beginning to reach more families. Assessment is used satisfactorily to ensure the current range of services meets the majority of centre users' needs.

The centre is becoming increasingly successful in engaging with a wider range of service users and is developing the activity programme to ensure it meets the local community's needs. Staff know the community well and are beginning to be successful in taking the centre's activities out into the local area to publicise its services. The quality of care, guidance and support are good. Centre staff are sensitive towards the needs of families, particularly those who are experiencing crisis and difficulty. Parents and carers comment positively on how helpful they find the staff and the services it provides. One parent told inspectors, 'They always surpass our expectations.' Many parents and carers told inspectors how they would like to be more involved in the decision-making process within the centre and are keen to share their views more regularly, and through more formal channels, such as in a Parent Forum.

Attendance levels at the centre are increasing and the work of the outreach team is now beginning to reach more families. Established links with agencies, such as the Family Information Service, ensure families receive the support they need. However, strategies to target other families are still being developed.

All staff, across both the nursery school and children's centre, are fully committed to working closely with families to help them access the support they need. For example, many two-year old children have benefited from full day care provision in Shelter 6, as families have been identified as being in need. As a result, these children make good progress in their learning and families receive targeted support, such as access to the counselling service. Centre staff work closely with the speech and language team and early identification of communication delay ensures children receive targeted support. As a result, children's progress in communication, language and literacy is good.

Links with health professionals are developing. However, partnership arrangements are still not fully in place with some key agencies. The centre recognises it needs to do more to support midwifery services to target the increasing numbers of teenage parents and young parents. This is currently being addressed at strategic level. There are links in place with services to help parents access training and employment. The Greenwich Local Labour and Business team and recent link with Jobcentre Plus enable parents and carers to receive support in applying for jobs and accessing training information. This has been successful for some parents. For example, one parent started working at the centre as a volunteer and is now employed as an assistant outreach worker.



The Family Information Service plays an integral part in the promotion of the centre's activities and services. A recent tracking system has been implemented to help the centre staff monitor the take-up of services by individual families. This is now beginning to be used in other areas of centre provision. Early intervention with families after birth is beginning to see attendance rates at sessions such as 'Baby Club' improving. As a result, more families are beginning to benefit from the range of services the centre is starting to provide and this is having a very positive impact on outcomes for children and their families.

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

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

<b>3</b>
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The daily management of the centre is effective and the senior leadership team is working hard to fully integrate the children's centre into the nursery school provision. However, at present, the high quality range of provision offered within the nursery school is not yet fully replicated within the children's centre. Although staff continually review practice and carry out self-evaluation, this is not robust enough and does not sufficiently challenge practice. As a result, action planning is not based on sharp analysis of provision, the changing needs of the local area and the tracking of outcomes through better use of data. Consequently, the centre provides satisfactory value for money and has satisfactory capacity to improve.

Governance arrangements are secure and the governing body shares a commitment towards the success of the children's centre. Governors are passionate about their role and one governor told inspectors she 'felt privileged' to be part of Rachel McMillan and in the development of the centre. However, current arrangements for accountability are not rigorous enough. Data is available and staff use it to monitor provision but it is not consistently used to measure impact and senior leaders are not sufficiently rigorous in challenging practice. Accountability lines are sometimes blurred between the local authority and the governing body. For example, the governing body does not always have access to the data analysis provided by the local authority.

The headteacher is a highly motivated early years professional with excellent experience. She is working hard with the senior leadership team to address the

current financial constraints which are impacting on the range of services she knows the centre needs to provide.

Safeguarding arrangements are good and are of high priority to the centre. Strong procedures are in place to ensure that all staff are thoroughly vetted and cleared to work with children and relevant checks are completed. Staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding and there is a strong ethos throughout the centre for supporting the welfare of children and families. Relevant support is provided for families at times of crisis and staff are committed to working closely with relevant agencies to ensure children are appropriately protected. The premises are maintained to a high standard and good attention is given towards safety and security.

The centre offers a fully inclusive environment and meets requirements with regard to promoting equality and diversity and tackling discrimination. Staff are committed to supporting all families and ensure information is available in different formats and is easily understood. For example, health promotion information is provided to parents and carers in different languages to meet the diverse linguistic needs of the local area. Relevant groups help to ensure adults and children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are appropriately supported. However, due to limited use of data analysis, the centre is currently unable to demonstrate sufficiently securely that the most vulnerable groups within the local area are being targeted.

Outreach services are beginning to have an impact on all groups within the area, and this continues to be developed. Improved analysis of data and closer targeting is needed to identify whether the centre services are reaching those most in need. High-quality early years provision is ensuring children using the full day care provision within Shelter 6 are making good progress in their learning and development, and the achievement gap between the most disadvantaged children and the others is closing.

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</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>3</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 evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>3</b>

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Rachel McMillan Nursery School and Children’s Centre on 9 and 10 March 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall. During our visit, we looked at the centre’s plans and documents and talked with a number of the staff who work with you and some of the other agencies who provide services from the centre. Many of you who spoke to inspectors told us how much you enjoy coming to the centre and how it is giving you more confidence as parents. You told us how safe and secure you feel and that you know the staff will help you and give you advice if you ask for it.

We noted that, although the centre is not offering an extensive range of services yet, staff give you lots of information about different issues, such as health and where you can go within the local area to get relevant support. When the centre is not able to provide services directly itself, staff give you information as to where you can access the services at other nearby centres. Parents and carers told us they found this useful.

We found the centre to be very welcoming and it offers a safe, homely and secure environment. Staff are knowledgeable and they know what to do to promote children’s safety and support family welfare. Families who are facing complex or difficult times receive good support.

We noted that many parents and carers told us that, although they can share their views and ideas with staff about activities they would like to do at the centre, there are few other opportunities for them to play a bigger part in making decisions about the centre. Some parents and carers told us they would like to join a group which meets regularly to share ideas with the centre’s managers, such as a Parent Forum. We have asked the centre to address this.

The children’s centre is developing steadily. Under the careful guidance of the headteacher, services and different activities are beginning to develop, and those

that are running are already making a good impact on outcomes for families. The full day care provision offered within Shelter 6 enables children to benefit from the high standards of early years provision. This has a very positive impact on young children's learning and they make particularly good progress in their speech and language.

The staff at the centre are very dedicated and they recognise your changing needs. They are beginning to review the activities they provide for you and are starting to track the impact it is having. However, this is still being developed. The centre is not yet using the data it receives from the local authority to help it identify where new services would make the most impact on local families. We also recognised the centre is not using evaluation sufficiently well to recognise where services can be improved. We have asked the centre to improve this and to make better use of the information it receives from the local authority in identifying the services local families need.

Thank you all very much for taking the time to talk to the inspectors. We thoroughly enjoyed meeting you and wish you and your families every success for the future.

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