

Inspection report for St Augustine's Children's Centre

Local authority	Coventry
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Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school if applicable	St Augustine's Catholic Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Radford Children's Centre EY Provision (EY338266) St Augustine's Pre-School (507658)

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 one additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager and staff, a representative of Coventry City Council, members of the advisory board and parents' forum, a broad range of users and a number of partners. Inspectors observed sessions at the centre, looked at the centre's work, and a range of documentation.

Information about the centre

St Augustine's Children's Centre is a phase two centre and was designated in 2009. It provides family support and outreach work, child and family health services, sessional care and adult education. It is located in the grounds of St Augustine's Catholic Primary School. It works in close partnership with Radford Children's Centre, between them they provide services to the Radford area of Coventry. St Augustine's Children's Centre provides childcare through partner schools, childminders and local independent nursery providers.

The centre manager is responsible for the day-to-day running of the centre. She also manages Radford Children's Centre and staff work across both centres to serve the Radford community. The partnership advisory board oversees the centre's work and the city council monitors the centre's work. The advisory board consists of representatives from partner organisations and key stakeholders that work with the children's centre, parents and partner schools.

The children's centre has 992 children aged from birth to five in its reach area, but also serves an additional 387 from out of its reach area. The large majority of families are White British and the remaining families come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. In total, 28 languages other than English are spoken by users of the centre. A number of families are from Black African and Asian backgrounds and an increasing minority are from Eastern Europe. The proportion of children from families in receipt of benefits and in homes where no one works is above average and in some parts of the reach area it is much higher. There is a higher than average

number of lone parents. When they start early years provision, the majority of children have skills, knowledge and abilities that are low in comparison to those expected for their age.

The centre provides a wide range of on-site services related to child health and development, parenting and adult learning courses and outreach support in partnership with health, adult education services and Jobcentre Plus. The centre operates from 8.00am to 6.00pm, 50 weeks a year and opens on some Saturday mornings.

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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

St Augustine’s Children’s Centre provides an outstanding service. The clarity of vision and commitment of the centre manager and the early years’ team leader, shared by a highly committed and skilled staff, are driving the centre forward at a rapid pace. The high level of commitment to supporting the community is very successfully translated into a wide range of activities which are highly effective in meeting the needs of all, especially those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. A high, and constantly increasing, proportion of families from all backgrounds, make excellent use of the centre’s facilities to improve their lives. Outstanding use of limited data has helped the centre meet community needs exceptionally well. The rapid development of the centre from its designation shows an outstanding capacity for improvement and excellent value for money.

Leaders listen carefully to the views and opinions of the local community and make excellent use of available information to ensure the centre provides what is most needed. The effective parents’ forum and very strong partnership advisory board, contribute extremely well to successful management and strategic planning. Consequently, outcomes for users are outstanding. In particular, the level to which the safety of all users is assured is exceptional. The centre’s impact on children’s learning and development has significantly contributed to a very strong improvement in narrowing the gap between the lowest achievers and the rest at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The centre’s impact on the health of families is excellent. Local data available to show the centre’s full impact on outcomes is not

exclusively focused on St Augustine's reach area. However, much of the data available relate to Radford, which is supported by St Augustine's in partnership with Radford Children's Centre. In this case, data provide a good picture of St Augustine's impact.

The centre has a bright, warm and welcoming environment which encourages parents and carers to seek out support for many aspects of their lives. The excellent provision of high quality crèche and other childcare facilities enables parents to take advantage of the wide range of courses on offer for their own improvement. This has a very positive impact on the economic well-being of many groups of users helping them into employment or volunteering activities.

Through excellent family support and outreach work, families who are most at risk receive timely and very well-targeted intervention. The family support workers are highly skilled and play a pivotal role in helping adults understand how they can assist with their children's learning and development and in becoming more effective parents and carers. A high percentage of young parents in the area have been very well supported to enrich their children's and their own lives. Parents using the centre have developed an excellent understanding of how to ensure the safety of their families.

Leaders and managers successfully promote equality and opportunity for all and this encourages members from a wide range of ethnic minorities or with additional needs to feel welcomed and use the centre.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work with the city council to focus data more on the children's centre reach area and enhance the already outstanding use made of data in developing services to the community and in assessing the centre's impact.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

The centre works in a highly effective partnership with health services to ensure outstanding health outcomes. Carefully targeted information and professional advice make a significant contribution to well above average immunisation rates for children. The many activities aimed at healthy eating and exercise have a very positive effect. Levels of obesity for children in the Reception Year have fallen steadily so they now compare favourably with the national average. The centre is very effective in supporting mothers with breastfeeding their babies. The very large majority of new mothers initiate breastfeeding and there has been a rapid increase in the proportion sustaining this beyond eight weeks. The centre has significant success in helping adults and pregnant mothers give up smoking. In the last year, 79 adults stopped for more than four weeks. There has also been a steady fall in the proportion of adults using dangerous drugs from eight per cent in 2009 to the latest figure of five per cent.

Services to support children's early learning and development make an excellent contribution to their enjoyment and achievement. 'Stay and Play' and other parent and child activities give adults high levels of skills and understanding of the value of play as a tool for learning. One stated, 'I now read more books with my son. I never really knew how important it was.' This equips children to take full advantage of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children make excellent progress in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding and from low starting points, achieve the national average in all areas of learning by the end of the Reception Year. Outcomes are improving year on year. The centre's clear focus on supporting disabled children, those with special educational needs or who may otherwise be vulnerable, and their families means these children successfully achieve beyond their expected potential levels. Consequently, children are very well prepared for their future learning.

Children on a protection plan, looked after children and the families who care for them, are kept exceptionally safe. The centre has very successful initiatives to support children who may be at risk through circumstances of domestic abuse for example, and relieve pressure for the whole family. 'Raise, Share and Review' meetings support open discussion between the different agencies involved in the Common Assessment Framework process to ensure that the best and most appropriate support is provided at any one time. 'The children's centre has been really supportive and has helped us hold things together,' and 'Visiting the centre has been a big confidence build – my future is onwards and upwards, not so much of an upheaval but more of a project that can be achieved' typify the views of many. Actions to safeguard individual children include home safety checks through outreach to improve the safety of children at home.

The success of parents and carers who are supported to improve their own life chances are excellent and their progress is noteworthy. Courses to improve adult literacy and numeracy and courses in English to help those who speak English as an additional language are seen by participants as a gateway to further training. Courses are consistently over-subscribed and the centre's records show almost all achieve success. There is evidence to show that a good number of parents and carers go on to gain further qualifications, entering paid employment or undertaking meaningful volunteering roles to widen their experiences. This has made an excellent contribution to their economic well-being.

The very active parents' forum and representation of parents and carers on the partnership advisory board mean that they make a significant contribution to influencing the centre's work. Their views are routinely sought at all points of contact. They are listened to and their ideas acted upon. For example, parents initiated advisory board discussions highlighting the different needs of babies and three to five year olds attending centre activities. As a result, older children became involved in Forest Schools and the allotment project, following activities that were much more stimulating to their development. There are very good opportunities for parents to contribute to the displays and information boards around the centre. One father provided highly valued technical support when the centre produced its 'Bear

Hunt' DVD.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	1
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	1
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	1

How good is the provision?

1

The use of assessment to plan and support all aspects of the centre's work are key features of its excellent provision. A major strength of the centre's work is its use of the Common Assessment Framework and the 'Raise, Share and Review' meetings. Families are fully involved in deciding upon the support provided through this process, feel ownership and fully cooperate. During the review meetings, all staff and professional partners involved in the process share their findings in a frank and open way so support can be updated and kept most relevant at any time.

The procedures for registering and monitoring all users' contact with the centre are very effective and lead to careful targeting. The recognition of growing numbers of families from minority ethnic backgrounds in the reach area prompted the centre to include a greater celebration of diversity and provide courses to meet their needs, such as English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Consequently, the numbers of users from minority ethnic groups has increased dramatically. In the period from November 2010 to April 2012, the number of African families using the centre has increased from 20 to 60, Indian families from 28 to 119, families from Eastern Europe from 29 to 80 and Pakistani families from 17 to 49. There has been a similar rate of increase for other, smaller overseas communities. High quality language training has led to further opportunities in a high proportion of cases.

The support for childminding services is of a high quality. The centre maintains excellent relationships with childminders, who feel very well supported through training opportunities, loaning resources and contact with other professionals. This has led to good or better outcomes in their own inspections. As a result, the centre's outreach services make very good use of its childminding network to support families, including those with children on a protection plan or through the Common

Assessment Framework process.

Alongside the many learning and development activities that routinely enrich children's lives, children with additional needs are engaged through the 'Together Like Me' groups and multi-sensory stimulation in the sensory room. The excellent outreach provision contributes very well to the high quality of care, guidance and support. The staff's well-established local knowledge, combined with very effective use of data, means they can quickly identify and support those in its target groups or with very individual needs. The needs of all target groups are met exceptionally well.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

The centre manager, who is also manager of Radford Children's Centre, is highly focused on excellence. She is extremely well supported by the early years team leader and all staff. There is a very strong commitment to on-going professional development so provision is of high quality. Governance is excellent. The partnership advisory board and the parents' forum provide very effective support and guidance through robust monitoring and evaluation. This is evident in the sharply focused and aspirational development plan. Coventry City Council directly monitors the centre's effectiveness through direct supervision at a number of levels. Although data sometimes lack specific reference to the reach area, leadership and management make excellent use of that available to evaluate performance and set challenging targets.

Safeguarding procedures are exceptionally secure. They include the vetting of staff and others who work at the centre. Child protection procedures are very thorough and the centre's records reflect best practice. Early intervention arrangements are excellent, exemplifying the very good partnerships with a wide range of agencies and services. All staff are competent and experienced in all aspects of safeguarding. The centre recognises the need to safeguard outreach workers whilst making home visits. There are robust arrangements in place to secure their safety.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. There exists a very strong commitment to inclusion and to tackling any discrimination. The centre is designed to allow all users full access. The promotion of a positive view of diversity is very well established in the life of the centre and evident in the high proportion of families from all nationalities accessing services.

User engagement is excellent and the centre provides outstanding value for money. The number of families accessing the centre has more than doubled since November 2010 and the centre engages with all target groups. The centre consistently seeks the voice of parents and children through regular questionnaires and surveys. A very high percentage of all target groups within the reach area, including disabled adults and children and those with special educational needs, engage with the centre's services due to the welcome, enthusiasm and commitment shown by all staff.

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	1
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
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	1
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	1

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

The inspection reports for Radford Early Years Provision, St Augustine's School Pre-school and other early years settings, including childminders were used in making judgements about St Augustine's Children's Centre. Outcomes and provisions were found to be at least good and often outstanding in these settings.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the St Augustine's Children's Centre on 2–3 May 2012. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

We enjoyed speaking to you, and hearing how much your contact with the centre is helping you to improve your lives and those of your families. We heard how very welcoming the centre is, and how exceptionally well all staff respond to your needs. We heard of the wide range of ways the centre uses to help you and your families become and stay healthy, such as outdoor play, Forest School, the allotment project, cookery sessions, and ideas for healthy food and snacks. All of these initiatives are having a positive impact on the health of you and your children.

You told us you feel very safe when using the centre, and we judged the centre to have excellent procedures to keep you and your children safe at all times. The centre provides outstanding support for families with new babies, such as the baby massage sessions, support for breast feeding and baby weighing, and has many excellent ways to help you develop your skills as a parent.

We heard of the outreach support many families receive if they are in crisis, and of the consistently high standard of help and advice for families including lone and teenage parents. We heard about the ways that the families with disabled children or with special educational needs are exceptionally well supported through the portage provided via the centre. Parents and carers are helped to understand these children's needs and to cope in difficult times, with support when needed. We were impressed by the way in which the centre welcomes families from all backgrounds and their success is easily measured by the rapidly increasing number of families from minority ethnic backgrounds engaging with the centre. Indeed, the number of families using the centre has doubled in under two years: a real testament to its success. It was extremely clear that the centre staff and the partner organisations are trusted and provide highly valuable support that makes a very big difference to the lives of many families.

Many of you told us how much you and your children enjoy play sessions and how much you have learned the importance of sharing in your children's learning journey. These activities are of excellent quality and support your children's learning and development, especially in helping them be more ready for nursery and school. We heard how the centre helps with speaking and listening and with children's ability to mix and get on with others, as well as placing a strong emphasis on their physical and creative development. There are very good links with experts who can help with a wide range of issues, and the centre has been extremely successful in getting them involved when families need additional support or advice.

We found that the centre staff and managers are highly committed to improving the work they do and welcome the ideas and feedback from those of you using the centre. Many of you have made extremely good suggestions, and have let the manager, the parents' forum or the partnership advisory board know your ideas and

opinions. This is very important and your views often lead to further improvements. Very many of you have also been able to give time as volunteers and learned new skills in the process. We judged the centre to be exceptionally well led and managed and found that it is in an excellent position to continue to build on its many strengths. We have made a recommendation to help this. We have asked the centre to work with the City Council, to build on their already excellent monitoring and evaluation by making data and information about outcomes more specific to St Augustine's reach area so they can build even more accurately to assess their impact on your lives.

Thank you for telling us about your experiences of the centre, and we wish you and your families every success in the future.

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