

Inspection report for Millbrook, Redbridge and Maybush Sure Start Children's Centre

Local authority	Southampton City Council
Inspection number	383703
Inspection dates	18–19 September 2012
Reporting inspector	Janet Rodgers HMI

Centre leader	Sean Holehouse (Team Manager) Tina McIntyre (Project Coordinator)
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Pickles Coppice 65 Windermere Avenue Southampton SO16 9QX
Telephone number	023 8087 8387
Fax number	023 8087 8391
Email address	surestart.mrm@southampton.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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.

Report published: September 2012



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 reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100080.

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

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

No.100080

© Crown copyright 2012



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 an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the team manager, centre coordinator, staff who work directly with children and families, volunteers, parents, representatives from the advisory board, the local authority and many of the centre's partners. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Millbrook, Redbridge and Maybush (MRM) Children's Centre is located in a purpose built centre in the Millbrook area of Southampton which is shared with local health services and adjacent to Newlands Primary School. The centre is a phase one children's centre and received its designation in October 2005. It serves an area in the south west of the City of Southampton comprising Millbrook and Redbridge which falls into one of the 30% most deprived areas of the country. The centre also provides activities at Footsteps and All Saints church hall, which are both in Millbrook.

Southampton City Council has overall management responsibility for the centre. Governance is provided through the centre's advisory board which includes representatives from health, community groups, pre-schools and parents. The centre coordinator manages a team comprising three community development workers, four play workers, a business support worker and a project manager who works part of the time on city wide projects.

There are 1,677 children under five years of age living in MRM's reach area. Approximately three quarters of the children in the area have been identified as at risk of, or are subject to, a child protection plan. The majority of families are of White British heritage. MRM has large numbers of lone parents and parents claiming benefits, and many of those that work are on low incomes. The area is

predominately made up of social housing and blocks of flats. Most children in the area now enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills comparable to the levels expected for their age, but in the past their skills were considerably lower and a high proportion had speech and language delay.

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

MRM is an outstanding centre that has greatly improved outcomes for families. Children make excellent gains in confidence, behaviour and social skills through attending the centre’s activities. They are well prepared for school and greatly increase their speech and language skills. Parents improve their parenting, literacy, numeracy and employability skills substantially through highly relevant courses. They develop high aspirations and a significant number progress into employment, volunteering or further training. Parents take a key role in shaping the services and activities that are provided, sharing their views about the centre with staff and in the centre’s governance.

Staff place a high priority on safeguarding families and very effectively identify and help those who are most at risk. The centre’s safeguarding arrangements are exemplary. Staff take extremely effective and timely action to ensure the safety of families they work with. The co-location of partners in the centre enables staff to share information very productively with health and education teams. Families have a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and the centre’s initiatives greatly improve healthy lifestyles, smoking cessation, healthy eating and low birth weight. Staff promote breastfeeding extensively but this is yet to improve breastfeeding rates which remain too low.

The centre offers an excellent and highly stimulating environment for learning, development and play. The range of services and activities available are of a very high quality and most families in the area regularly participate. Staff use their vast knowledge of the area and local intelligence very well to ensure the centre meets the needs of its key target groups. Outreach work is exceptionally effective and greatly

enhanced by a dedicated outreach play worker providing individualised play activities in the home. Staff work very successfully with partners to jointly facilitate sessions ensuring they are highly relevant and have a strong focus on health and well-being.

Staff provide outstanding practical help, guidance and support for families. In times of crisis, families receive extremely beneficial advice, practical solutions to their problems and are referred to external organisations, where appropriate. Parents highly value the support they receive, including from their peers and through specific groups, such as those for domestic violence, teenage and lone parents.

Management of the centre, its resources and staff are outstanding. The project coordinator, team manager and local authority have high expectations and set ambitious targets for the centre. They demonstrate an excellent awareness of what the centre needs to improve and prioritise actions clearly within service delivery and business plans. Actions taken by the centre have considerably improved outcomes, particularly for children entering the Early Years Foundation Stage, those at risk of, or subject to, child protection plans and the skills development of children and their parents. The enthusiastic and highly supportive advisory board has strong representation from all key partners and parents ensuring a sound focus on addressing local issues. Its members incisively challenge the centre's decision making but are not always able to measure progress with a few of the outcomes targets which are insufficiently specific.

The centre is a highly inclusive environment where staff strive to eliminate any potential barriers to participation. They promote respect, equality and diversity successfully and organise very popular sessions that have high levels of participation from fathers and from Black and minority ethnic heritage groups. The outstanding partnerships result in seamless and well-integrated services that are in the heart of an exceptionally deprived and hard to reach community. Parents' views are collected and used extensively for improvement and in developing new services and activities. The excellent collaboration with partners and parents ensures the centre provides outstanding value for money.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Tighten up a few of the outcomes targets to be more specific, thus enabling the advisory board and managers to more effectively measure progress and achievement.
- Increase the low breastfeeding rates in MRM by reviewing and implementing the more successful initiatives and activities.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

MRM's excellent collaboration with its partners is a key factor in its outstanding and improving outcomes. The centre's work with the midwifery team and the 'quitters' advisor has helped improve low birth weight rates and smoking cessation. Staff have

excellent training which they use to good effect when discussing parents' health and lifestyle choices. Many parents notice substantial improvements in their emotional well-being, weight and ability to cope with stress. Children's awareness of healthy eating increases through activities like growing vegetables in the outside area and hatching chickens from eggs. Staff use a vast range of breastfeeding initiatives and activities but these have yet to improve breastfeeding rates in the area, which are low.

The centre has outstanding arrangements for ensuring parents' and children's safety. Staff use their excellent partnerships with health specialists to share information and ensure children and families at risk of harm are identified and that action is taken at a very early stage to support them before they reach the stage of being on a child protection plan. A highly successful domestic violence parents' support group enables parents to take control of their lives and deal with issues that arise more confidently. Parents have a good understanding of health and safety which is heightened by the centre's first-aid courses, outreach work and play sessions. Staff successfully promote safety with children through their actions, discussion and encouraging children to take risks in a safe environment.

MRM has substantially improved children's speech and language development and their transition to school. Staff very effectively establish each child's starting point and monitor their progress during MRM's activities. Children make significant gains in their confidence, social skills and anger management. Attendance is good and children behave well. Children's achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage has vastly increased over the last three years from a very low rate, and is now comparable with the rest of the city.

A significant number of parents have completed a wide range of learning programmes with MRM and its partners, which has improved their literacy, numeracy, language, computing and play skills. One parent said, 'I feel comfortable learning in the centre; they treat me like an adult and I now want to progress onto other courses.' Their learning is carefully planned to match their career aspirations, progress to further learning and address locally identified skills shortages. Staff highly value parents' opinions, using them to introduce new initiatives, like the very popular 'my time' programme and a buddying scheme for new parents. Parent volunteers on the 'my time' programme receive excellent training and skills development opportunities. Parents also gain useful experience through volunteering in schools, providing support for adult learning sessions and helping in the centre. A small, but significant, number of parents have gained employment with help from the on-site Jobcentre Plus advisor.

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	2
--	----------

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	2
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

MRM offers an excellent range of services and activities that meet the needs of its users exceptionally well. As a result of this, virtually all children under the age of five attend the centre and most participate in activities and groups regularly. Staff make excellent use of parents' and community representatives' views and evaluations alongside local data when planning new activities and to attract all target groups. Particularly successful activities have increased participation by teenage and lone parents. Crèche facilities are readily available to enable parents to attend training and support groups.

MRM has outstanding resources and facilities that are welcoming and well used by families. The play rooms and crèches provide a highly stimulating environment for children and babies. Outdoor play facilities are excellent and particularly valued by the high number of families who live in flats.

The centre offers an excellent and very broad range of learning and development activities which increase children's opportunities for purposeful active play. The dedicated outreach play worker carries out highly effective, structured six week programmes that develop parents' and children's skills and confidence. Staff are exemplary role models and motivate parents to regain control of their lives. The very successful 'my time' group raises parents' self-esteem, independence and aspirations through activities such as learning how to make jewellery, writing poetry and floristry, leading to self-employment or taking qualifications. Sessions that develop children's speech and language are highly effective, having clear aims linked to children's development. The very close working between health and MRM staff results in an excellent programme for first time mothers to improve their confidence with sleep, weaning, behaviour and illness.

The centre provides families with outstanding advice and guidance through its on-site health, parenting, education, employment, benefits and training partners. In times of crisis, families are exceptionally well supported as staff use their extensive links with other agencies to seek practical solutions to immediate problems. Parents value the excellent support staff provide with debt, emergency food, telephoning official organisations and accompanying them to court. The centre has highly

effective signposting to external specialist support to ensure parents and families are able to cope more successfully and confidently with their problems. One parent said, 'I would not be sat here now if it was not for the help I have had; things don't always go brilliantly but I now know how to cope better.'

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

MRM is exceedingly well led and managed. The centre's objectives are clearly identified and prioritised within highly focused business and service delivery plans. Partners and staff have an excellent understanding of the centre's targets and key priorities. Staff have regular opportunities to share good practice and self- and peer-reflection through highly supportive supervision and team meetings. Their roles link extremely well to their expertise, interests and the centre's priorities. The centre has assessed thoroughly and accurately its strengths and weaknesses and uses self-evaluation productively to drive improvement. MRM's advisory board has strong representation from enthusiastic partners, community groups and parents. Its members understand outstandingly the local community and its particular characteristics. The advisory board supportively challenges the centre's work but is not able to monitor progress or successful achievement of a few of the outcomes targets as they are insufficiently measurable.

MRM promotes equality and diversity very effectively within all of its work. The environment is welcoming, inclusive and very accessible. Staff fully ensure that any potential barriers to participation are overcome. Achievement rates of children entering school have improved significantly over the last three years from very low starting points. Specific groups very effectively target identified families, such as the 'talk and taste' group for children with speech and language delay and the 'opportunity group' for disabled children and their parents. A high proportion of children from Black and minority ethnic heritage groups are registered with the centre, when compared with the local population. MRM responds exceptionally well to the growing group of Polish families through drop-in support groups, holding Polish story time and helping parents understand the transition to school process.

The centre's safeguarding arrangements, policies and procedures are exemplary. Managers diligently check staff, including those employed by partners, and volunteers' criminal records. Safeguarding and staff security have a high priority and are routinely discussed during meetings and staff supervision. Staff use their

extensive safeguarding training to confidently identify those families in need of support or intervention.

MRM has outstanding partnerships, particularly with health professionals. Their close working results in a very coherent and highly integrated service for families in one location. Partners' collaboration is excellent resulting in staff employed by different organisations working productively together to provide a high quality service for families. Through its strong partnerships and sharing resources and expertise, MRM offers outstanding value for money.

Parents' opinions significantly influence the centre and its activities. They value the excellent 'parents' voices' system which has led to many practical changes, such as to the times of sessions or the age range of a group. A group of parents commented 'Our views are valued and we feel we have really made a difference.' Parents' suggestions have resulted in very successful new courses. Staff very creatively gather and use children's views to identify activities they like during group sessions like 'just play', in designing new logos and when reviewing the fathers' group.

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

Not applicable.

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 the Millbrook, Redbridge and Maybush Sure Start Children's Centre on 18 and 19 September 2012. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

During our visit we talked with a number of you, visited some of the sessions and met the staff and professionals who work with the centre. We would like to thank all of you who contributed to the inspection.

It was good to hear from so many of you that attending sessions at the centre is making a real difference in improving your children's confidence, behaviour and social skills. You told us that you feel more able to play with your children confidently and creatively. Children are well prepared for school and greatly increase their speech and language skills.

Many of you are substantially improving your literacy, numeracy and employability skills through taking highly relevant courses. This is opening up new opportunities for employment, volunteering or further training. Many of you have high aspirations for the future and have clear career routes that include the course you are taking.

Staff listen to, and highly value, your opinions. They have used your views from the excellent 'parents' voices' scheme to shape the activities and services at the centre. The extremely successful 'my time' group is an excellent example of where your ideas have led to new programmes being offered at the centre.

We were very impressed with the high priority that staff place on safeguarding families and the very effective ways that they identify and help those who are most at risk. All staff at the centre, including those working for other organisations, work exceptionally closely and well together, sharing information and expertise to ensure they provide a high quality service. The families that we met had a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy. Some of the centre's activities have very successfully helped you to give up smoking, improve healthy eating and lose weight. However, despite a lot of work by the staff to increase the breastfeeding rates, these are still low in MRM, and we have asked staff to work with you to identify and prioritise the most successful initiatives.

The centre is an excellent and highly stimulating environment for learning, development and play. The range of services and activities available are of a very high quality and it is good to see that most of you regularly participate. Outreach work is exceptionally effective and greatly enhanced by the outreach play worker providing individualised play activities in the home.

One of the aspects that you said was particularly strong was the practical help, guidance and support that staff provide for families. In times of crisis, you receive extremely beneficial advice, practical solutions to your problems and are referred to external organisations, where appropriate. Those of you who attend support groups for domestic violence, teenage and lone parents told us how you particularly value the highly specific group and centre support these give you.

The management of the centre, its resources and staff are outstanding. Everyone has high expectations and sets ambitious targets. Staff fully understand what the centre does well and have taken some very successful actions to address areas they felt needed improving. We met a few of you who are on the advisory board and we have asked the centre coordinator to make a few of the targets in the business plan more specific to enable you to measure the centre's progress.

Staff are extremely successful in ensuring a highly inclusive environment, removing any potential barriers to participation and promoting a culture of respect, equality and diversity. The excellent collaboration between partners and with yourselves results in a centre that provides outstanding value for money.

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