

# Inspection report for Eyres Monsell and Gilmorton Sure Start Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Leicester
<b>Inspection number</b>	404479
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 September 2012
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Rolleston Primary School Eyres Monsell Primary School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	EY334499 Magpie Playgroup EY346270 Playdays Nursery

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 of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, senior leaders, parents and representatives from the local authority, health services, local schools and other partners.

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

## Information about the centre

Eyres Monsell and Gilmorton is a phase one children's centre that was designated in September 2005 and became fully operational in March 2006. The centre is managed by the local authority to deliver services to meet the government's core purpose for children's centres. The centre is in the grounds of Rolleston Primary School; private childcare provider Playdays Nursery operates from the premises. The centre also has accommodation in Eyres Monsell Primary School where the children in need staff have an office base; childcare provider Magpie Playgroup is also based in the school. The centre is part of the south neighbourhood of Leicester city and serves this area with two other children's centres. The centre provides a variety of activities for parents and children alongside services such as individual family support packages and parenting programmes. Health visitor and midwife drop-in clinics take place at the centre, and specialist clinics, such as appointments with the community paediatrician and pregnancy testing, are also available.

The centre serves around 1100 children and their families who live on the Eyres Monsell and Gilmorton estates in the city. Most of the families living in the centre's reach area are of White British heritage. Much of the area served by the centre falls within the top 30% of the most deprived areas in the country and around 41% of children live in households dependent on workless benefits. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years provision are below those expected

for their age. The area has a mix of housing with the majority rented from either the local authority or private landlords.

## 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**

**3**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**3**

## Main findings

Eyres Monsell and Gilmorton Children's Centre is a satisfactory centre. The centre provides a safe and welcoming environment where parents can call at any time and their children can play in a large, well-resourced open area. The centre's services are primarily targeted at the children and families in the reach area whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Practical work to ensure children's safety is given the highest priority in the centre. This approach has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of children who are subject to child protection plans or who are designated as children in need in the area. A very strong and active parents' forum supports the centre's work and is a vital link to young families in the community. In contrast to these successes, reducing the universal access to the centre has led to some activities being underused. In addition, wider community resources are not used as effectively as they could be to support the centre's services.

Strong partnerships, which include joint working with the health team on development checks for two-year-olds, are a noticeable feature of the centre. The centre's capacity to sustain improvement is satisfactory. Management and monitoring systems to evaluate the centre's work are appropriate and focused on priorities for the local authority, the neighbourhood and the reach area. Governance arrangements through the advisory board are well established. The board supports the centre with its target setting and monitoring as does the local authority.

The data sets available to the centre are increasingly sophisticated and there is an increasing range of monitoring taking place. A number of the tracking and monitoring tools are recent introductions and, as such, they are not yet embedded or at a point where they can be used to full effect. In addition, the processes to assure the quality of the services delivered at the centre are not as effective as those for assuring quality within the neighbourhood. The quality of some services is high, particularly those linked to the funded nursery education for two- and three-year-old children.

The impact of this is seen in the year-on-year rise in children's levels of achievement at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the narrowing of the gap between children in the lowest 20% of achievement and their peers. While data for the key health indicators show improvement over time, the improvement of health outcomes still remains a high priority for the centre's work.

Unemployment in the area remains high, and there is evidence that the centre's input has enabled some adults to return to learning or enter employment or volunteering. However, this is not an area that is given a high enough profile in the centre; some parents commented that they were unaware that courses, such as basic skills training, are on offer.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Embed and refine the tracking, monitoring and quality assurance systems to give a clear picture of the centre's impact on outcomes and aid progress in improving outcomes for families in the reach area.
- Improve the profile and accessibility of adult learning opportunities to raise aspiration, encourage personal development and improve volunteering and employment prospects.
- Improve outcomes by:
  - maximising the use of activities to engage a greater range of families from the centre's reach area
  - making greater use of community resources.

## How good are outcomes for families?

3
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Outcomes for families overall are satisfactory and some are showing significant signs of improvement. Parenting programmes are successfully improving parents' understanding of how to keep their children safe. Presentations to the accident and emergency department have shown a significant level of reduction, and parents report that they have a greater range of skills to use to manage unwanted behaviour children might display. Work with families who are subject to Common Assessment Framework processes and children in need or subject to child protection plans is very well developed, and the number of families in need of these interventions is reducing very well.

The proportion of mothers breastfeeding is steadily improving, although this remains below national average figures. The centre offers a weekly breastfeeding support group run by peer volunteers. This is a relatively new venture and the impact of this regular support has yet to be seen.

Parents are actively invited to join the small but well-established parents' forum, which provides them with a good opportunity to influence the range of services

which the centre provides and environmental changes at the centre. The group, which has a constitution, independently and successfully gains funding to run activities and courses which support the centre's work. The development opportunities that membership of the parents' forum offers are wide ranging; members gain skills, for example, in financial planning and oversight, and budgeting, they build confidence and develop a sound work ethic. A good example of the work of the group and their links to the centre's key priority work is illustrated by the successful self-esteem and confidence building course that was run for parents. The forum gained funding, planned and negotiated all aspects of the course with a variety of agencies. Further funding has been gained to promote the benefits of breastfeeding to pregnant women and new mothers, which is a very positive response to a need they have identified through their member who is on the advisory board. While membership of the parents' forum has very positive outcomes for its members the members are very few in numbers.

Although adults enjoy the learning and development opportunities on offer, their achievement is not as evident. This is a direct contrast to the clearly evidenced good progress being made by children who access the centre's services. The Early Years Foundation Stage scores for children tracked into school show their skills and knowledge are better than the scores of children who have not attended the provision.

Childhood obesity levels remain higher than local and national averages. The centre offers fruits as healthy snack options in all the sessions it runs. It also delivers healthy lifestyle messages through courses such as 'Small Bodies, Big Voices', which combines communication, language and physical activities for children and parents. Parents comment on how much their children enjoy the fruity snacks. However, parents are not all taking this information and applying it consistently when they are away from organised activities. For example, they provide sugary snacks to children who use the open access play area at the centre after school. In addition, this is not challenged by the centre.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

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

## How good is the provision?

<b>3</b>
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Over 80% of families in the reach area are registered with the centre and the majority of them have accessed the centre's services in some way. The centre has successfully engaged with families in many of its target groups. However, there are still some, such as young parents, who are not using the centre's services in great enough numbers.

The range of services and activities on offer is clearly linked to the centre's priorities, especially in relation to improving children's communication, language, physical, personal and social development. Adult learning opportunities are available; however, they are not well publicised. The centre knows that some adults have progressed and moved into volunteering and employment, but it does not yet have a clear picture of adults' starting points and their progress when they take up learning opportunities. Successes are celebrated within groups, but they are not given a high profile in the centre where others might see them and be inspired.

Families in the target groups are invited to attend courses such as 'Talking Tots 1' and basic skills training following sound assessment of their need. There is limited marketing of such courses to the wider community due to the focus on target families. As a consequence, when in discussion with inspectors, some parents said they were not aware of some of the centre's activities. Take-up of places is low and slow, and families do not have to make a commitment to attend weekly for the duration of such courses. This reduces the value of the sessions offered in terms of the progression of learning and, in some cases, children's progress is not as rapid as it could be. Opportunities to promote learning are taken in all of the centre's activities. Planning is also in place for all activities in the centre, including the one universal drop-in group, 'Stay and Play'. In some cases, the planned themes are not successfully threaded through the whole of a session and staff do not always maximise the opportunities to model play and language.

A very strong feature of the centre's work is the duty desk service operated by the family support team. In the 12 months it has been publicised and operating in its current form, it has become very well known and is well used by families and partners, such as schools. In times of crisis, families use this service knowing they will receive prompt and very good quality advice and support in a wide range of ways. Families have been supported to flee domestic violence, provided with emergency food supplies and given help to apply for emergency payments. One-to-one work with families is very well planned and matched to their needs.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>

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

**3**

Clear and appropriate supervision and monitoring systems are in use at the centre. The manager and staff know the centre well and self-evaluation is accurate. Data provided by the local authority are used to monitor the centre's effectiveness, as are evaluations of the courses and sessions provided at the centre. These evaluations provide week-by-week information and analysis of the centre's short-term impact. They do not yet provide the centre with an accurate picture of the long-term impact of its work with centre users. Members of the advisory board actively contribute to setting realistic targets for the centre using their professional and local knowledge. Remedial action to maintain momentum when staff leave is not swift enough and some targets, such as increasing the number of volunteers, have not been reached.

The centre offers satisfactory value for money. It is very well resourced in terms of accommodation and this allows for a drop-in café area to be provided for families to use. The family support officers and childcare and early learning officers are well used in the one-to-one family work conducted in the home. Staff resources have been reduced and this has had some impact on the services which the centre is able to provide. In some sessions, the staffing resource is not used well, for example, there is overstaffing or childcare staff complete administrative tasks.

Partnerships with schools and health and social care teams are good. They strongly support the centre's focus on the most vulnerable families in the reach area and have brought about improvements for these families. The use of local resources in the wider community are not as strong. Some services, such as the voluntary organisation providing food parcels are well used, but this is not the norm.

The centre meets its duty to promote equality and diversity. Take-up of services by families from minority ethnic groups reflects the community. Through its preventative pathways work, the centre is especially successful in engaging with the most vulnerable families and is starting the work to narrow the gap between children who are not making the progress they might be expected to and their peers.

Staff are well trained in safeguarding and have a very good understanding of the thresholds for referring families for further support or intervention work. Monitoring and support of families are good and in many cases have removed the need for further work. The centre meets the requirements for ensuring staff are suitably vetted and keeps appropriate records to ensure it meets the local authority's three-



yearly renewal process. Systems for recording and monitoring staff training in safeguarding are less secure.

These are the grades for leadership and management

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>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 partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision</b>	<b>3</b>

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

The findings from Playdays Nursery inspection in 2009 and Magpie Playgroup in 2011 were used to guide the inspection team's findings with regard to the progress children make.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Eyres Monsell and Gilmorton Sure Start Children's Centre on 19–20 September 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you very much to those of you who spoke to us in meetings and in activity sessions. We found the information you gave us very useful. We also spent some

time looking at the comments you have made about the centre and the activities you have used to help us to make our inspection judgements.

We found that the centre is a safe and welcoming environment where you can call in at any time with your children for a drink and a chat with other parents. The centre is good at making sure it works with families who need the most help and support. Staff make safeguarding children the highest priority in the centre. We found that this way of working has helped to reduce the number of children and parents in your area who need intensive support. We were very pleased to hear about your very strong and active parents' forum. We know that the parents' forum supports the centre's work and is a vital link to young families in the community.

The centre has developed really strong partnerships with local schools and health and social care teams and this has helped in its focused work with families who need the most support. We know the majority of families in the area have used the centre at least once and this is positive. However, we found that not enough families are regularly taking up opportunities to attend activities and courses. We also know that the centre does not use as many community activities as it could to help its work. We have asked the centre to get better at these things.

We know that more of you are using the duty service provided by the family support officers to seek help and support. We found that when you have been supported by the centre it has made a difference to you and your families. Although we have judged the centre as satisfactory overall, the quality of the support and guidance you receive is good, especially when you are facing particular difficulties.

Managers at the centre use the information they have about the area well to plan the activities they provide. They also take time to use the information to see how well the centre's work is doing to help to improve the outcomes for you and your families. Some of the systems are new and some do not provide the centre with enough detail. We have asked the centre to improve this. We were pleased to find that more mothers are choosing to breastfeed their babies and that children are having fewer accidents that need hospital treatment. One area that the centre has been focusing its work on is helping you to understand the importance of healthy eating to reduce the number of children who are overweight. When you are taking part in activities at the centre we know you and your children enjoy the healthy snacks that are offered. Despite this, the number of children who are overweight is still high.

Your children receive good-quality early learning experiences when they go to Playdays Nursery and Magpie Playgroup. We found that you find activities such as 'Peek a Boo' and 'Small Bodies, Big Voices' are useful to you in helping you to understand how your children learn and develop. This has helped them to make good progress and more of them who might find learning more difficult than their friends are doing well when they leave Reception Year in school. However, the centre does not know enough about how useful you find the learning on offer or how much you have learned. We also found that adult learning opportunities are not very

well promoted and some of you do not know what is on offer for you. We have asked the centre to improve on this.

Thank you to all the users we met for your input into the inspection. It really was appreciated and we wish you all the best for the future and for the future of your centre.

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