

# Didcot Ladygrove Children's Centre

All Saints Primary School, Tamar Way, Didcot, OX11 7QH

**Inspection date** 11–12 June 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Good	2
The quality of practice and services		Good	2
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This is a good centre.

- The centre manager and head of centre have a clear focus on improvement. They are passionately committed to do whatever it takes to continually improve opportunities for safety, health and well-being for all children and families, but particularly those in most need. Staff share their enthusiasm and morale is high.
- The centre is a warm, welcoming place where all families feel at ease. Staff know the local community well. They listen to families and accurately tailor good quality support to what families and individual members of families need.
- Strong partnerships, particularly with the school and neighbouring centres, ensure that a large majority of the families and children in most need, fathers and lone parents targeted by the centre receive the right support at the right time.
- The centre goes to great lengths to contact new families, particularly those it has identified as in most need. Checks on the proportion of families reached show this is rapidly increasing and that once they have been introduced, families are keen to return to the centre.
- The local authority, the advisory board and governors set challenging targets and have good systems in place to ensure the centre works consistently towards them. Effective performance management and a carefully considered development plan ensure that the work of the centre improves rapidly and consistently and that targets for improvement are met.
- The high priority that the centre places on safeguarding ensures a rapid response to all families and children in need and children are safe.

### It is not outstanding because:

- There are not enough opportunities for workless adults to train or gain skills that will improve their opportunities of gaining employment.
- There are not enough opportunities for parents to contribute to the centre's decision making about how it will develop in the future.

### Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, the head of centre, support workers, a representative from the local authority, and early intervention support. They also met health, education and early years partners, the school special educational needs coordinator, parents, volunteers and representatives of the advisory group, the governing body and a partner centre manager.

The inspectors visited a family in need.

They talked to parents, looked at the centre's self-evaluation, action planning, a sample of case studies, safeguarding procedures and a range of other relevant documentation. Visits to activities such as the Forest School, baby massage and a first babies group were undertaken jointly with the centre manager, who also attended all team meetings.

### Inspection team

Barbara Atcheson	Additional Inspector, Lead Inspector
Pippa Wainwright	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre/group

This stand alone, phase three centre opened 2009. It is open Monday to Friday 9.00am to 4.30pm and alternate Saturdays 9.00am to 12.00 and offers a variety of groups for ante- and post-natal care, fathers and general stay and play drop-ins. It also offers a range of other support, such as help with benefits, childcare, breastfeeding, health and parenting.

The centre shares a site with All Saints Primary School which is subject to a separate inspection. The area has 715 children under five years. It has two significant pockets of deprivation. The centre has identified families and children in most need, lone parents, fathers, workless families and those from low income backgrounds as its key target groups.

Most residents in Ladygrove are White British. A few children live in workless households and a few families are eligible for the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with typical skills for their age. The centre works closely its neighbouring centres, South Didcot and Stephen Freeman, and all three share a joint advisory group. The centres' managers meet regularly to plan their activity programme to support each other. The centre commissions and works closely with Home-Start to deliver outreach services. The centre is managed by All Saints Primary School and governed by a committee primarily made up of All Saints School governors and staff. The children's centre manager is on the school's governing body.

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

- Extend the opportunities for more adults, particularly those from workless homes, to improve their economic well-being by:
  - building stronger links with training providers
  - actively promoting volunteering so that more parents sign up
  - providing more opportunities for onsite literacy, numeracy and work related skills development.
- Strengthen the role that parents play in the planning and development of services and in making decisions about the most important priorities for improvement through the formation of a parents' forum.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

Good

- School events, the child health clinic, visits to other schools, pre schools and nurseries, leafleting in the town centre and the annual trip to Bournemouth are some of the many ways in which the centre successfully increases the number of families that it reaches, particularly those from its key target groups. However, fewer prospective parents attend because mothers work late into their pregnancy.
- The centre checks how often families come to each session. This shows clearly that once families see and enjoy what is on offer their visits are more frequent, and they attend more activities.
- A quick phone call or visit when attendance is seen to fall off often reveals underlying problems that the family has been unable to resolve. Families who spoke to inspectors spoke in glowing terms of centre workers who had turned out to be 'life savers' in such events and how for example vital help with mounting debt or housing was given.
- Reluctant fathers, who mistakenly see the centre as mainly for women, soon enjoy the benefits of the fathers' group which is run by a male centre worker. The group has more than doubled in a short space of time. As the fathers relax with their children over the mid-morning break of a 'bacon butty' they also share and learn parenting skills. This increases their confidence in themselves as parents.
- Good use of information on attendance at groups has helped the centre to shape its services to

encourage all families to come along, but particularly those who may be less likely to take advantage of what is on offer. For example, a large number of those attending the Friday stay and play session were observed to be children with disabilities and so the session was successfully redesigned to enable these families to take more advantage of what was on offer.

### **The quality of practice and services**

Good

- Services are planned jointly with neighbouring centres to ensure a full range of activities at times and places that are convenient for the families concerned. The centre listens carefully to the needs of its families and plans its services to improve their chances of success in life.
- Parents say that they feel relaxed and welcome in the centre. This helps them to share their difficulties and provides someone to whom they can turn. One-to-one support for those in most need, in their own homes, is seen as particularly beneficial and often gives families the confidence to visit the centre and start to plan their future.
- Services improve families' health and well-being. Breastfeeding and immunisation rates are increasing, and childhood obesity levels are falling.
- The centre provides good quality help and advice on benefits and housing, and some parents have become volunteers in order to prepare themselves for work. However, there are not as many opportunities for this as there could be. Those who do attend courses signposted by the centre go on to access more training and five have become volunteers.
- Courses such as the Family Links parenting course is of great benefit, particularly to families in need, and the popular Come Dine With Me encourages healthy eating. However, links with training providers are not fully exploited and the centre has not yet maximised opportunities for adults to develop literacy, numeracy and work related skills through on-site courses.
- Close links with the school help the centre keep track of its children, particularly those in most need, and also help to keep children safe and improve their readiness for school. Staff from the school and the centre do joint home visits before children start school and run a series of sessions a week or two before they transfer in order to help children to prepare for school and settle in well.
- The centre also plans joint topics with the school so that children in most need have familiar stories and rhymes to enjoy once they start school. Learning to dress themselves and go to the toilet gives children confidence and removes any fears they might have about not being able to manage. These important activities help close any learning gaps that children might have. The gap between the lowest performing children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and other children is much smaller than the national figure.
- Popular activities, such as the Forest School, give all families a unique opportunity to explore outdoors in an exciting but very safe way. Children who do not have access to a garden and those whose parents do not always relish going outside get to experience the wonders of wildlife for themselves. Children delighted in going on a 'bear hunt' in the grounds as staff modelled songs and rhymes and flagged up important safety messages to be used at home.

### **The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management**

Good

- The head of centre provides a very good steer and has forged a high quality partnership with the school. The commitment and enthusiasm of the centre manager and head of centre to do the very best they can for all families inspire all staff to 'go the extra mile' in providing the best services they can for all of their families.
- The leadership team has an accurate view of where the centre's strengths lie and the areas it needs to develop. This is because the team makes good use of the information it gathers to show the successful impact of its work, particularly with the families and children in most need, lone parents and fathers. Information shows that now most lone parents in the area are registered at the centre. The centre recognises that more needs to be done to address the needs of the workless and already has good plans in place to start adult literacy classes in September.
- A joint advisory board serving this and the two neighbouring centres allows centres to plan a well

organised service that meet the local authority's key local priorities and the needs of each centre's particular target groups. It also provides an opportunity to share information and good practice.

- The good partnerships which exist between all three centres have increased the range and quality of services that are on offer.
- Demanding systems to check the work of the centre ensure that the local authority is well informed. Governors also keep their own close check on all that goes on, set targets for the centre's work and challenge it to continually improve. They have an accurate view of the centre's effectiveness and the quality of services provided and know how successfully the centre is reducing inequalities between families.
- Parents' views are gathered informally and used well to help shape services, but as yet there is no forum through which parents can discuss and contribute formally to the centre's decision making about its future development.
- Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and well organised. Children subject to child protection are well supported. The Common Assessment Framework is used well to check the individual needs of vulnerable children and families. A large majority of families identified as being most in need of intervention and support show clear improvement in their parenting skills. As a result, the effect on children identified as being most at risk is significantly improving.

**What inspection judgements mean**

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Practice consistently reflects the highest aspirations for children and their families and as a result inequalities are reducing rapidly and gaps are closing.
Grade 2	Good	Practice enables most children and their families to access good quality services that improve children's wellbeing and achieve the stated outcomes for families.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	Performance is not as good as it might reasonably be expected to be in one or more key areas.
Grade 4	Inadequate	The needs of children and families in its area are not being met and/or the leaders and managers are not providing sufficient challenge to bring about improvement to the quality of services.

**Select details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	20957
<b>Local authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	421457
<b>Managed by</b>	All Saints Primary School on behalf of the local authority.

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	715
<b>Centre manager</b>	Elizabeth Haydon
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01235 512988
<b>Email address</b>	elizabeth.haydon@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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