

The Rainbow Children's Centre

Vaughan Road, Portobello, Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 3UD

Inspection date 11–12 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	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		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a good centre.

- Leaders and managers are passionate about meeting local needs, ambitious for families and highly effective in ensuring the centre makes sustained improvements. They have developed very strong partnerships with health services and social care and driven significant developments in the accessibility and quality of services delivered over the five years since the centre opened. Those responsible for the governance of the centre provide excellent support and challenge and as a result the centre has outstanding capacity to build for even better effectiveness.
- The impact of the centre's work with partners is notable, for example, in the impressive reduction in teenage pregnancies and in quickly enabling the lowest attaining children to catch up with their peers by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Based on reliable information and local knowledge, the centre has correctly identified which priority families require more focused support, and engages them very well. These families include: teenage parents; children and families who speak English as a second language; and families living in the most deprived areas. In the two most deprived areas the centre serves, 93% of families are registered and overall a large majority benefit regularly from the centre's good quality services.
- Safeguarding arrangements are robust and a strength of the centre. Partnership working with children's social care professionals is highly effective and as a result all vulnerable children receive excellent support. Regular supervision of staff coupled with frequent and effective quality assurance processes ensure case recording is of high quality and that families remain engaged.
- Common Assessment Framework processes are used very well to assess the needs of families. They ensure that families, who need additional support, receive tailored multi-agency early support which is well coordinated and reviewed at specific weekly meetings.

It is not outstanding because:

- Approximately one in ten families is not yet known to the centre, despite the centre's concerted efforts to increase registration rates.
- Health outcomes are not improving fast enough. Breastfeeding rates at six to eight weeks are much lower than levels seen nationally. Childhood obesity amongst five year olds living in the centre's reach area is well above national levels and not reducing rapidly enough.
- There is an insufficient range of opportunities for adults to develop their basic skills, including English and mathematics.

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; a senior representative from the local authority; the headteacher of the co-located primary school; members of the advisory board; a child protection social worker and a representative of the duty and assessment team. They also met with a health visitor, a midwife and the specialist young mums' midwife, parents and grandparents. In addition they met the centre's early communication officer; childcare coordinator; and the family support team.

Inspectors undertook a home visit with a member of centre staff and a joint observation with the centre manager. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation. They looked in detail at a number of case files of children and families requiring additional support, including those subject to Common Assessment Framework processes, looked after children, those subject to child protection and children in need.

Inspection team

Michael Blakey, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Marinette Bazin

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

This phase one, purpose built centre opened in 2007 and is managed by Stowheath Primary School on behalf of Wolverhampton local authority. The centre serves six super output areas (SOAs), four of which are in the top 20% most deprived areas in England, including two in the top 10%. The remaining two SOAs are relatively more affluent. There are approximately 626 children aged from birth to four years living in the area served by the centre.

'Stay and Play' is delivered from the local community centre and all other services from the children's centre which is co-located with Stowheath Primary School (URN: 104323). The school is subject to a separate inspection and the report can be found on the Ofsted website. The centre delivers the full core offer of children's centre services including childcare. At the time of the inspection, the childcare provision had not been inspected by Ofsted.

The centre is designated as a stand-alone centre and leaders and managers have identified groups of priority families as: teenage and lone parents; families living in the most deprived super output areas where worklessness is higher; and families of Eastern European origin for whom English is an additional language.

There is a high uptake of formal childcare linked to Working Tax Credit and the centre estimates that approximately one fifth of families living in the area are workless. A large majority of families living in the reach area are of White British origin. Children's skill levels on entry to early years provision are generally below those expected for their age.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Ensure even more families living in the reach area are registered with the centre and most priority families use services regularly.
- Work with the local authority and relevant partners to:
 - develop and implement a clear strategy to improve the level of sustained breastfeeding and reduce childhood obesity rates so that they compare favourably with those seen nationally
 - improve the range of learning opportunities for adults and fully support them in developing their basic skills, including English and mathematics, and to go on to further training or employment.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- Parents and grandparents proactively support the centre in engaging more families, and in particular those that are less likely to do so. They put up posters in local launderettes, shops and doctors' surgeries and regularly speak to new families in the street to make sure they are aware of what the centre has to offer. A grandmother who spoke to inspectors, summed up the view of many families when she said: 'everything I do here is great. They care and there is nowhere else to go.'
- Excellent information sharing ensures that midwives notify the centre of every pregnancy and birth in the local area. As a result, the centre's outreach team undertakes home visits to expectant and new mothers and offers good early advice and support. When these families register with the centre they are provided with a wide range of information and advice on a range of issues including: breastfeeding; sharing a bed with a baby; food safety; children's first aid; and safety in the kitchen.
- The centre puts its in-depth local knowledge to good use and has registered 322 of the estimated 377 families living in the reach area. A large majority of these families regularly access services. In the two most deprived areas, in which the centre has very ably prioritised its work to engage more priority families, the very large majority are registered and most access the centre's services. These families include: children and families who speak English as an additional language; and families living in the most deprived areas. Contact with teenage parents is very positive: 100% of new mothers referred by midwives are engaged in some way with the centre.
- The centre has also identified other groups of families with which it has very successfully engaged. Most of the small but significant local group comprising Eastern European families attend services and 19 families currently access support as a result of domestic violence. Likewise, contact with lone parents has doubled over the last three years.
- Access to services is not yet outstanding because the range of courses and opportunities for adults to improve their basic skills, including English and mathematics, is limited and the centre is not fully supporting enough adults into further training or employment.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The centre has developed a wide range of activities and services which are very well attended by most priority groups. 'Stay and Play' activities, delivered at the local community centre, are open to all families. The Early Communication Officer Supports children's communication and language skills.
- The support that the centre provides to families whose children are in care is exceptional. A coordinated approach ensures that parents are fully supported to access parenting programmes and work programmes. Children attend childcare and families undertake supervised contact at the centre whenever possible. As one parent said: 'the centre helps me to stay on the upper path.' As a result of this excellent work, parents remain engaged with the centre throughout the care process.
- The 'Terrific for Twos' offer provides disadvantaged two year old children with fifteen hours of good quality childcare per week. As one parent stated: 'his progress has been great at Terrific for Twos. He's come on a million times and is not shy anymore.' Effective work is enabling the lowest attaining children to catch up with their peers by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, the attainment of children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage despite improving strongly,

remains below the level seen nationally.

- In some aspects health outcomes have improved strongly. For example, due to highly effective partnership work the proportion of teenage pregnancies fell dramatically after concerted effort by the children's centre and in particular the fathers' worker. However, the proportion of mothers who breastfeed six to eight weeks after birth remains stubbornly below the levels seen nationally. Obesity rates of children in their reception year are rising, despite a wide range of services across the reach area in place to promote healthy living.
- The centre sells a range of significantly reduced price home safety equipment such as stair gates and cooker guards to families including young and lone parents. For those families who are workless or financially more disadvantaged these items are often provided free of charge. The centre manager also requests additional information about children's admissions to hospital and uses this information to tailor advice and guidance on safety to families and deliver safety courses and first aid. Accident and emergency admission rates for children are lower than rates seen across the city.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Outstanding

- The highly qualified and very effective centre manager has inspired a strong team of ambitious children's centre staff and partners. Together they have significantly increased the number of families using the centre and deliver good and often outstanding activities and one to one support to families, particularly those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Resources are used exceptionally well to maintain regular and extremely positive engagement with families and to improve their well-being.
- Support and challenge from the local authority is highly effective and contributes to strong improvements in the centre's performance. The local authority ensures that the centre has no more than four well-chosen priorities, and has a clear view of the needs of the local area together with an accurate view of how well the centre is meeting them. Supervision is viewed positively and links well to staff development and training.
- Members of the advisory board regularly review activities and record the views of families. They provide extremely good support and high-level challenge and as a result all those responsible for the centre hold an accurate view of the centre's performance and know exactly what the centre needs to do to improve further. Rigorous actions plans are in place to guide developments and underpin the centres accurate self-evaluation.
- As a result of very strong partnerships with social care, leaders and managers are able to track the impact of their interventions with vulnerable children. For example, information held by the centre shows that children subject to child protection plans are often stepped down to children in need as a result of the centre's work. In 2012, eleven cases of families subject to Common Assessment Framework processes were closed with successful outcomes for these families. Staff are very clear about the levels of intervention that they make and a social worker stated: 'the children's centre staff are my eyes and ears in the community and I totally trust them to make appropriate judgements about families'.
- Every two weeks, the centre manager represents Wolverhampton children's centres at the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). At this meeting professionals discuss families and allocate children's centres across the city to provide highly targeted support. As a result, families who are high risk victims of domestic violence and abuse are very well supported through one to one support and for example, the Freedom Programme.
- All safe recruitment checks are undertaken and staff are well trained, particularly around wider safeguarding issues including domestic violence. The centre manager routinely checks case files and monitors the quality of services delivered.
- Children's centre staff contribute extremely well to reducing inequalities. The attainment gap between the lowest attaining children and their peers has narrowed rapidly from 34% in 2010 to 24% in 2012. The centre provides information and welcoming signs in a range of languages including those from Eastern Europe.

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.

Children's centre details

Unique reference number	23242
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	421516
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	626
Centre manager	Lisa Raghunanan
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Telephone number	01902 550734
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