

Sayes Court Children's Centre

Sayes Court Farm Drive, Addlestone, Surrey, KT15 1NB

Inspection date 24–25 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Requires improvement	3
The quality of practice and services		Requires improvement	3
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a centre that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- A rising number of families are participating regularly in centre activities, but the number from the most disadvantaged community and from Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups is relatively low.
- The centre is very warm and welcoming once families access the building, but the lack of signage and the physical barriers to the site, especially for families with pushchairs, are not helpful in encouraging those who may lack confidence to come to the centre.
- There are no consistent systems in place to monitor the progress children make, either when they are attending centre activities or when they move on to nursery or school. Similarly, when parents are helped to access further education and training, or signposted to other agencies, there is patchy follow up of what the longer term outcomes are for them.
- The local authority has recently done much to improve the accuracy and the relevance of the data provided to the centre, but this information is not yet being used well enough by it or centre leaders, the advisory board or the governing body to set realistic targets or inject challenge into decision making. This is especially so regarding checks on the impact of services on the groups identified as needing support the most and why they are not accessing the centre more.

This children's centre has the following strengths:

- Parents speak very enthusiastically about the centre and especially value the high quality sessions for children and specific activities such as the Butterflies group for single parents and the Bunnies group for childminders.
- Families who have received intensive support, including those who are most vulnerable and have been referred from other agencies, have benefited greatly from the good care, guidance and support they have received. Phrases such as 'it's made a massive difference' sum up parents' positive views.
- Parents are involved well in the centre with good levels of representation on the advisory board. They rightly feel that their views are listened to and acted on.
- The centre is managed well on a day-to-day basis and has continued to run smoothly during a recent period of staff shortages.

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, officers from the local authority, representatives from the health services and other key partners including those from community organisations and churches. They held discussions with parents and members of the advisory board as well as two governors. Several activities were observed by the inspectors, including one jointly with the centre manager who also attended all team meetings. Inspectors looked at the centre's self-evaluation, delivery plan, a sample of case studies, safeguarding policies and procedures and a range of other documentation.

Inspection team

Joan Lindsay	Additional Inspector, Lead Inspector
Graham Saltmarsh	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

The centre was designated in September 2009, as a phase three stand-alone centre. It delivers or supports access to a range of services to meet its core purpose as part of a local group of four children's centres in the borough of Runnymede. The building is open 48 weeks of the year, Monday to Friday, from 9.00am until 3.00pm. Services are also delivered from the Sure Start bus and a monthly group for fathers is held in the local community. The centre is located adjacent to Sayes Court School (URN 125290) whose governing body, currently replaced by an interim executive board, manages it on behalf of the local authority; the headteacher line manages the centre manager. The school is subject to a separate inspection.

There are 1,038 children under five years of age living in the centre's reach area. Children enter early years provision at levels slightly below those expected for their age. The centre is located in an area of both affluence and deprivation, comprising of social housing estates and private housing. It serves nine super output areas (SOAs), with one ranked in the 30% most deprived. Approximately 14% of families are eligible for the childcare element of Working Tax Credit and 16% of children from birth to four years of age are living in out of work benefit claimant households. White British heritage families account for 80% of the population. There is a wide range of other ethnic groups with a high level of East European families.

The centre has identified its priority groups as children from BME groups, lone parents in workless households where families have young children and the most vulnerable families who are referred to the centre.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of families using the centre overall, but particularly those from the most disadvantaged area and from BME groups, by:
 - clarifying the needs of these groups and allocating the most appropriate services
 - increasing the outreach work done in the local community
 - ensuring the centre is as well signposted and easily accessible as possible.
- Establish methods to record the progress that children make when they come regularly to the centre and the impact the centre has on adults' and children's achievement in the longer term by:
 - developing a way to monitor children's specific needs and the progress the children make when they attend centre activities
 - working closely with early years settings and schools to monitor children when they move on
 - implement a more consistent method to establish the longer term benefits to adults from the initial support and guidance the centre provides.
- Ensure that the local authority, the governing body and the advisory board use the data that are now available to set realistic targets and to challenge the centre effectively with regard to target groups engaging with the centre and the impact services and practice have on their lives.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- The majority of children in the reach area are now registered with the centre, but some key groups such as BME families are not accessing the services as much as others. Recent initiatives, such as taking the Sure Start bus out into the community and holding the monthly dads' brunch in a more central location, are having some impact, but numbers registered from the most disadvantaged area are still relatively low. However, the centre has been particularly successful in registering and supporting families from their specifically identified target group of lone parents who are out of

work.

- English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses are run regularly; but the centre has not identified what other specific needs BME groups may have nor is it monitoring this and other key target groups' access to services robustly enough. In addition, the number of families who access the services from outside the centre's reach area outnumbers those from within it and these families do not necessarily fall into the centre's identified groups who need most support.
- Health visitor appointments and checks held at the centre, the BIBS breastfeeding drop-in session, the Butterflies group for single parents and Bunnies group for childminders ensure there is a good balance of sessions open to all and those for specific groups. This is improving the numbers who access the centre from some of the key groups, as well as supporting families including those expecting children, to access early childhood services. Evening groups and the provision of a daytime crèche also have a positive impact on the numbers overall attending the adult groups.
- The number of individual families referred to the centre for one-to-one support is increasing significantly and this identified key group of the most vulnerable families engages well with the centre.
- Most children from priority groups are accessing early education locally. The centre has been successful in supporting eligible families to take up free entitlement of early education, especially for two-year-olds.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The quality and range of services are good and families speak highly about the variety of courses they can attend, such as cooking and literacy classes. Children obviously enjoy and benefit from sessions such as Funfit. However, the relevance of some of the activities in meeting the needs of key groups, such as BME families and those from the most disadvantaged area, requires improvement.
- Activities using different sized teddies at the Little Monkeys session to extend mathematical language enhance children's early learning well. Parents report that their children become more confident and independent through coming to the centre, but the evidence is largely anecdotal as there are no consistent systems in place to measure the progress children make, either at the centre or when they move on.
- Early Years Foundation Stage profile results have stabilised at just above the national average and slightly below borough levels for the past two years, although the gap between the lowest 20% and the rest has widened slightly. The centre has recently made contact with all local early years settings, but links such as how best to track children's progress when they move on are, as yet, not well embedded.
- Parenting skills and paediatric first aid courses have had a positive impact on parents' ability to support their children and keep them safe. Good links with the local college, as well as other community groups, provide adults with skills to enhance their learning and life chances; although not all the identified key target groups make enough use of these courses and the longer term impact is not being monitored.
- Health outcomes, such as the number of mothers breastfeeding at six to eight weeks, are improving and reflect the centre's strong links with health services and the focus on encouraging a healthy start.
- Case files and assessment of need are maintained to a very high standard and show that families with sometimes multiple and complex problems receive swift and appropriate support from the centre and other agencies. The impact on this priority group of families has often been profound and is summed up by one parent's comment, 'I wouldn't have been able to do anything without this children's centre.'

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The advisory board and the governing body have been supportive and fully committed to the centre.

They review the centre's work regularly but are not sufficiently challenging about its performance. For example, they do not place a strong enough focus on evaluating the impact of the centre's services or practice on its identified priority groups.

- The local authority has recently improved the quality and accuracy of the data provided for the centre, especially in relation to the registration and access figures for specific groups. However, it is not yet using this information to set clear, realistic targets for the centre.
- There is very good day-to-day management of the centre and it runs smoothly even during a period of staffing difficulties. Clear lines of responsibility are in place and there are strong, and improving, links with the co-located school's leadership. This has a positive impact on the sharing of information especially in relation to the most vulnerable families.
- Safeguarding is a high priority in the centre and policies and procedures reflect this. Staff are quick to spot any concerns such as any mental health or domestic violence issues. Most of the young children who are subject to a child protection plan in the local area are being supported effectively by the centre. Staff work closely with social care and health partners to support others that are identified as in need or who are looked after children through active involvement with the Common Assessment Framework and full participation on relevant panels.
- Resources are used efficiently. Only the centre manager has a full-time post and there is currently not a full staff complement, but services to families have largely been maintained. All the toys and equipment are spotlessly clean and of good quality, although the centre is aware that the outdoor area is less well resourced. A wealth of information is available for parents in the very welcoming reception area and in the spacious activity room.
- Parents hold the centre in high regard and, although there are no formal volunteers currently, parents do help out at sessions such as the Butterflies group as well as providing a support network for each other. The newly set-up parents' forum has already put forward views that have been acted on, such as changing the time of the breastfeeding drop-in and having more trips and visitors to the centre. Parents, including those from key groups, are well represented on the advisory board and make a good contribution to the decision making.

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.

Unique reference number	22640
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	427479
Managed by	The governing body of Sayes Court Junior School on behalf of the local authority.

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1038
Centre manager	Jill Edwards
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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