

Rainham Village Children's Centre

Upminster Road South, Rainham, RM13 9AA

Inspection date 7–8 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
		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 children's centre group requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Too few families participate in centre activities.
- Too few activities are planned to help adults become more prepared for work by participating in formal or informal adult learning activities or through volunteering at the centre.
- The centre is improving but leaders and managers do not use data well enough to set priorities and to monitor the impact of the centre's work. This limits the centre's capacity to improve and to demonstrate fully the extent to which it improves outcomes for families.
- Governance of the centre through the advisory board does not provide the centre with enough support or challenge.

This centre has the following strengths:

- The staff team is highly committed, highly motivated and works productively with a range of partner organisations to improve the life chances and lives of families.
- The care, guidance and support provided to individual families are good and in some cases, outstanding. As a result, families overcome multiple barriers and there is a significant reduction in the risk of their children being harmed.
- The quality of parenting courses and individual guidance to help adults improve their parenting skills are good. This enables parents who attend to become better equipped to manage their children's behaviour and to support their development and education.

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 three additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with senior staff from the local authority and staff from the centre. Inspectors also met representatives from a range of partner organisations such as schools, social care teams, the health services and the voluntary sector. They also met representatives from the advisory board and met parents.

The inspectors visited Elm Park Children's Centre and St Kilda's Centre.

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

Inspection team

Priscilla McGuire, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Anthony Mundy

Additional Inspector

Robert Miller

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre/group

Rainham Children's Centre is a phase 2 centre in the London borough of Havering. The centre shares its site with Rainham Village Primary School and Nursery, which is subject to a separate inspection (URN 102324). The report for the school can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk. There are 2,659 children under five years of age living in the reach area.

The centre is managed by the local authority and is part of a 'locality' shared with Elm Park Children's Centre. The centre meets its core purpose and services offered include health clinics, parenting training, family support and baby massage. An advisory board provides governance. The community served by the centre is one of mixed social and economic characteristics. It has both pockets of affluence and of deprivation. The majority of families are of White British heritage but an increasing number of families from minority ethnic backgrounds are moving into the area. The most recent data indicate that 22% of all families in the reach area are not in work and claim child benefits. Unemployment rates are higher in the area than in other parts of the borough. Most children enter early education with knowledge and skills that are slightly below the levels generally expected for their age.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- The local authority should ensure that sufficient resources are available for the centre to extend its range of universal services so that a greater number of families are attracted to the centre and benefit from its services.
- The local authority should strengthen the centre's capacity to improve and fully demonstrate the impact of its work by:
 - ensuring the centre routinely receives data and information about local priorities
 - setting measureable and ambitious performance targets to drive improvement
 - implementing a cycle of annual review of the centre's performance
- The centre should extend the range of opportunities that are available for parents to develop their skills and knowledge through participating in informal and formal adult learning activities and by volunteering.
- The advisory board should strengthen its governance role by establishing clear terms of reference.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- The large majority of families are registered with the centre and have good access to information, advice and guidance. The centre makes good use of its links with partners to provide information, guidance and support to families. However, too few families regularly participate in activities.
- Through effective partnership work and through effective outreach work, the centre successfully engages with families with the most needs and with specific groups such as teenage parents and families from the Traveller community.
- Assessment of the needs of families who attend the centre is good. As a result of thorough and accurate identification of their needs, families receive early help which prevents problems from escalating.
- Take-up rates of children's free entitlement to early years education are good and data show that a large majority of families have benefited from this provision.
- Strategies to market and promote the centre to ensure most families can participate in activities have limited impact. This is because overall provision of universal services has been reduced in response to funding constraints and not enough of these services are available to attract those families who do not have specific or significant needs.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- Although not enough families from the community benefit from the centre's services, families who do engage with the centre receive good quality support, care and guidance. This helps them to overcome barriers and to achieve positive outcomes such as improved emotional health and improved living conditions. Families with significant needs, such as those whose lives have been affected by domestic abuse, receive excellent support and the guidance they need to stay safe.
- The centre provides good quality training and intervention to help parents with the most needs improve their parenting skills. As a result, parents are better equipped to manage their children's behaviour and to support their development by for example, setting boundaries and establishing effective routines for them.
- Provision of both informal and formal adult learning opportunities to help parents increase their chances of employment is too limited and requires improvement. Although some parents participate in courses such as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) or have gained employment as a result of volunteering at the centre, not enough of these opportunities are available and too few parents participate in adult learning activities.
- Case study evidence shows that support for families with children on child protection plans is good. Centre staff work well with social workers to ensure these families make sustained progress and that their children remain safe.
- Information sharing between the centre and its partners is good and signposting is effective. This ensures that families' needs are accurately assessed, they receive early help and that the most appropriate services are matched to their needs.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The quality of leadership and management requires improvement because leaders and managers have not established effective ways of monitoring the centre's performance. No performance targets have been set by the local authority to drive improvement and not enough use is made of data or annual reviews to measure the centre's performance. However, centre staff use data and local information effectively to ensure that inequalities between groups are reduced and for example to

reduce barriers for groups such as members of the Traveller community.

- Although representation from a wide range of partners on the advisory board is good, the board lacks focus and members do not have a clear enough understanding about their roles.
- Safeguarding practice is effective. Centre staff work successfully with social workers to reduce the risk of harm to children. The specific arrangements for monitoring and assessing the needs of children subject to child protection plans or the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), looked after children and children in need are fully in place. Specialist support is also available from social workers who together with centre staff, offer targeted help to disabled children. Effective support is also provided from the centre's good links with a charity that offers training and support to families whose lives have been affected by domestic abuse.
- Staff are highly motivated and passionate about improving the lives of families. Their work is highly valued by families and by the partner organisations they work with. Morale has remained high despite a climate of uncertainty about the future of children's centres within the borough.
- The quality of resources is good. The centre's accommodation is attractive and welcoming. Staff make good use of display areas to provide information to families about health and safety topics. Staff are appropriately qualified for their roles and well trained. Staff retention rates are high and families benefit from the continuity of service offered by staff who have gained their trust.

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	22464
Local authority	Havering
Inspection number	433360
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	2,659
Centre leader	Maria David
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01708 434928
Email address	Marie.david@havering.gov.uk

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