

Plum Tree and Plymstock Children's Centres

Plympton St Maurice Primary School, Plympton St Maurice, Plympton, Plymouth, PL7 1UB

Inspection date	4–5 December 2013
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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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for children and families

This children's centre group is good.

- The centres serve the community well. They are well established and, as a result, are used well by local families. Staff give a warm and caring welcome to all and do their very best for children and their families.
- The increasing number of families who receive support from the outreach team get good support that provides crucial help for them and their children.
- The centres offer good quality services across the board. Families enjoy attending and many achieve well. Staff are skilled and effective at supporting children and families.
- Parents and carers highly value the services and groups on offer. Parents typically describe staff as, 'Like an extended family,' and, 'A lifeline.' One commented that, 'I don't think I would have survived the last year without the centre!'
- The centres are well managed and their performance is being maintained and improved at a time of uncertainty.

It is not outstanding because:

- Data are not used well enough in evaluating how well the centre is doing.
- The tracking of the progress that children and adults make is not widespread enough.

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 of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, managers from the local authority and centre staff. They also met health, education and social care partners, parents, early years practitioners and representatives from the advisory board.

The inspectors visited both main sites, the Plum Tree Woodford Centre and provision at the Yealmstone Farm sites. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Jon Bowman	Her Majesty's Inspector, Lead Inspector
Denise Blackwell	Her Majesty's Inspector
Helen Barter	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the group

Plum Tree and Plymstock Children's Centre Group consists of two local authority run children's centres. The group was formed in April 2013 following consultation with parents and professionals. A further four bases are used across the locality and other community settings are utilised regularly. The centres are approximately four miles apart. Plum Tree Children's Centre was previously inspected in October 2012 and judged to be 'good'.

The group is managed by one centre manager, with a deputy and operational team at each centre. Each centre has its own advisory board. The centre manager is managed and accountable to the local authority adviser for children's centres.

The reach population is approximately 3,000 children aged from birth to four years. The centres provide a mixture of universal and targeted services to meet the core purpose including family support, midwifery services, adult learning, baby groups, stay and play sessions and parenting support. They work with health professionals to offer antenatal clinics, breastfeeding support and antenatal parentcraft groups.

The relatively affluent areas of Plympton and Plymstock contain pockets of deprivation. They consist of large residential areas on the edge of the city of Plymouth. The population of the area is primarily White British. There is a permanent Gypsy and Traveller site within the Plymstock area, and there is housing for families of service personnel particularly for naval families and those of marines. Levels of unemployment are low, with a 10.9% benefit claimant rate, with few families living in workless households. Children enter early years provision with level of skills, knowledge and ability above those typical for their age.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the use of data, by determining the most important data that are needed, and use these to routinely inform the centre manager and leaders about the performance of the centre.
- Improve the tracking of individuals by:
 - better linking observations to areas of learning and outcomes for children to clearly show their development
 - sharing information with the adult learning service on the progress of individuals who take part in adult learning courses.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The large majority of children and their families in the area engage well with the centres, including those from vulnerable and target groups, such as those from the Gypsy and Traveller community and service families. The number of families attending is increasing well. Many families achieve good outcomes through their long-term involvement with the centres.
- Good knowledge of the local community and feedback from users are used well to plan services and adapt the programme to better meet local needs. For example, outreach work with the Traveller community ensures that they routinely access support.
- Social media are used effectively to promote services and groups. Regular postings are popular with the large number of users who attend. Services are delivered at venues across the locality that are easy to access for users.
- The good range of partnerships between centres and other services are highly effective in encouraging attendance at the activities and services available. On-site midwifery services very effectively promote the centres to expectant mothers. They help families get to know the centres,

what they have to offer and sustain their engagement.

- The assessment of children's development at the age of two by health visitors is successful in identifying those children who are most in need. Health professionals work effectively with the centres and other agencies, such as the portage service, to ensure that families get the help they need, for example children with additional needs in the Step by Step group.
- The centre works well with early years settings in the community, including childminders. This aids the smooth transition of children as they move into pre-school and nursery settings. The large majority of families who are eligible to do so take up their entitlement to free early education places for their two-year-old children.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- Support for those on child protection plans, children in need and those subject to support through the Common Assessment Framework is good and caters well for a wide range of needs. The outreach team provides effective oversight of the welfare and safety of children, gives valuable practical help, assists children and parents to access specialist services, and gives vital on-going emotional support that meets the individual needs of families very effectively. The use of the Common Assessment Framework by the children's centre staff is increasing well.
- Information is shared effectively between partners, including social care, health visiting and early years settings, to identify those families where children are at risk of poor outcomes. This ensures that their needs are quickly identified and access to the help they need is swiftly secured.
- There is a strong focus on supporting children's communication and language development throughout the centres. Children's personal, social and emotional development and physical skills are developed well through the very popular Tumble Time group. Parents report their delight in their children's growing confidence, independence and social skills.
- Support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well focused as a result of early identification of their needs. The Step by Step group is effective in enabling children to make good progress and in helping parents to support their children's learning and behaviour in the home.
- There is a good standard of early years provision in the area. Data show that most children in the area meet or exceed expectations at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The achievement gap between the lowest achieving and the rest in the Early Years Foundation Stage is narrowing well as a result of focused work across all early years settings and in the centre.
- Adults are supported well to raise their aspirations and take up learning and volunteering opportunities with a view to employment. The centre tracks the progress of individuals to establish how effective their guidance to them has been. However, the adult learning service and the centre do not share information on adult learners so the picture of their progress is incomplete.
- Children make good progress from their starting points as a result of the quality of services and groups provided. Staff plan groups in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage and generally assess children's progress effectively in order to identify their next steps in learning and development. However, not enough learning journeys link observations to areas of learning or outcomes for children to clearly show whether their development is typical for their age.
- Parents receive good support to help them improve their parenting skills through programmes such as Incredible Years. Parents gain increased confidence and develop effective strategies to help their children.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Good leadership and management ensure that the group continues to perform well during a period of change and uncertainty. Provision reflects well the local authority's ambition to support families at the onset of any problems. The centres have been effectively prioritised by the local

authority during a period of austerity.

- Safeguarding arrangements protect children effectively. Suitable recruitment and selection procedures are in place. Staff are vigilant in safeguarding children and all are suitably trained. The outreach team advocates well to ensure that those at risk receive the most appropriate support and help.
- Centre managers know the strengths and weaknesses of provision. Self-assessment captures these well. Groups are routinely evaluated and the views of users are used effectively to make changes so that their needs are better catered for.
- Data are used reasonably well to inform judgements on the performance of centres. However, the centres are not clear enough about what data are most helpful to use in analysing the performance of the group.
- Action plans focus well on the key areas for improvement. However, targets and success measures are not always sufficiently precise to inform managers and the advisory board of the centres. More recent planning is of better quality and focuses well on the priorities for the locality such as improving the tracking of progress of families.
- Performance management arrangements are effective. The advisory boards provide sufficient oversight and challenge on the centres' performance. Chairs are passionate about the provision and act as strong advocates for the centre.
- Good management ensures that most health and education indicators, that are directly relevant to the centres, are showing improvement. In the few instances where this is not the case, actions to tackle deficits are in place.
- Resources are used effectively. Resources to support children's learning and development are of good quality and are sufficiently varied to meet their ages and stages of development. Staff expertise is built effectively through training and services are well matched to community needs.

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 group details

Unique reference number	80263
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	424808
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	3,000
Centre leader	Helen Caine
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01752-283826
Email address	Helen.caine@plymouth.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- Plum Tree
- Plymstock

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