

# 3R4 Ebury Children's Centre

Raglan Gardens, Watford, WD19 4LL

<b>Inspection date</b>	4–5 March 2014		
<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 large majority of families from the centre's key target groups are registered with the centre, participate in activities and have good access to services, support, advice and guidance.
- The quality and range of courses, services and activities offered to families is good and includes those that are available for all families and some that are more targeted to meet the specific needs of families identified as priority groups.
- The centre works exceptionally well with a wide range of partners to ensure families' needs are well met. Partners highly value the work of the centre and all express confidence in the quality of the services it offers.
- Parents benefit from good quality parenting training and family support. As a result, the quality of their children's lives improve and the life chances of those with the most needs increases.
- Governance, leadership and management at all levels are highly effective in setting targets and objectives to ensure the centre is not complacent but continually striving to do better. As a result, the centre has made good progress over the last year to increase registration and participation rates.

### It is not outstanding because:

- The centre has not yet succeeded in registering most families or ensuring the very large majority use services.
- Despite the best efforts of centre staff, not enough children who are entitled to access two year old free early years education places take advantage of this provision.
- Tracking of children who attend the centre needs further development as the centre is not yet able to fully demonstrate how its work makes a difference to the achievement and development of these children.

### 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 children’s centre manager and the manager from a centre that is a key partner. They also held meetings with centre staff, local authority staff, members of the advisory board, managers from the Pre School Learning Alliance (PSLA), parents, and representatives from partner organisations including health, charities, education and social care professionals.

The inspectors visited a number of sessions held at the centre and at venues within the community.

They observed the centre’s work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centre’s self-evaluation and development plans, parents’ evaluations and key policies.

### Inspection team

Priscilla McGuire, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Geoffrey Dorrity

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Ebury Children's Centre is a phase two centre which offers a range of services to meet the core purpose, directly from its own premises and in collaboration with South Oxhey Children's Centre. Services are also delivered from venues in the community such as schools, golf clubs, churches and on the NATO base for families who live there.

The Pre School Learning Alliance (PSLA) manages the centre on behalf of the local authority. It is supported by an advisory board. The current centre manager is in a temporary role, covering for the permanent manager who is on maternity leave.

There are approximately 790 children under five living in the reach area. The area is socially diverse and includes some of the most deprived areas in Watford as well as some of the most affluent. Most families are of White British heritage and within the community, there is some representation of families of Asian and of Eastern European origin. According to the most recent data, around 13% of children under 5 live in households dependent on workless benefits. Levels of unemployment are low in the more affluent areas but higher in deprived parts of the community.

In some parts of the reach area, children enter early years provision with knowledge and skills that are below expectations for their age but in other areas they are in line with or above expectations.

The centre has identified as its key target groups, lone parents, families living on the NATO base and those living in the most deprived parts of the centre.

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

- Increase registration rates so that most children and families are registered and most families from target groups access services.
- Increase the proportion of children who access two year old funding to ensure most benefit from this provision.
- Improve tracking systems so that the impact of the centre's work on the achievement of children who attend centre activities, can be regularly monitored and recorded.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The large majority of families from the groups identified by the centre as priority groups are registered with the centre. These include families from the armed services stationed at the local NATO base and those living in the most deprived parts of the community. However, action plans show that staff are persisting in their efforts to ensure most families register with the centre and the large majority regularly use its services.
- Centre staff work hard within the community to gather local knowledge and with partners from health, charity organisations and social care for example, to identify the needs of families. The meticulous assessment of families' needs ensures their needs are well matched to the most appropriate service and support.
- Staff make good use of the centre's informative website, of activities such as door knocking and close analysis of new birth data to promote the centre's services and to ensure families from identified priority groups and families new to the area, access services.
- Staff routinely bring services out from the centre into the community. They successfully use home

visits and venues within the community such as golf clubs, schools and clinics to both promote the centre to families and deliver services to families to ensure their needs are met.

- A large majority of children from families with the most needs access two year old funded places and receive good support from the centre. However, not enough children who are eligible for free nursery education take up their free entitlement.

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

Good

- The quality and impact of services provided by the centre is good. The range of services offered is impressive and includes for example, 'breathing and relaxation' sessions for pregnant women, 'Knit Knatters', a stay and play group and 'Baby Buds' a group for under one year old babies. A series of 'Wot Nots' courses are targeted at the under two age group and includes themed activities to promote for example, health and school readiness.
- Parents benefit well from the good quality parenting training that is offered through structured courses but also through one-to-one support. In interviews and evaluations parents comment very positively about the impact of the parenting support they have received. Centre staff also work exceptionally hard to tailor standard parenting programmes to meet the individual needs of families. This ensures that parenting training is relevant to the specific needs of families and produces positive outcomes.
- Support for early years providers is good. Through networks such as the 'child-minders' network' and the 'early years network', the centre promotes good practice. Centre staff have worked very effectively with a local school to set up a pre-school.
- Through activities such as 'Mums on the Move', a physical activity outdoor course, and other activities, the centre promotes healthy lifestyles. These activities contribute to the low obesity rates in the area. Support for mothers who breastfeed is good. The impact of this is evident from the centre's own research and monitoring which shows that breastfeeding rates at six to eight weeks are higher than national levels.
- Children enjoy and benefit from good quality activities such as 'Little Sprouts' and 'Baby Buds' which are explicitly linked to Early Years Foundation Stage outcomes. Other courses such as 'About Boys' are helping to narrow the achievement gap between boys and girls. However, staff do not track the progress of individual children who engage in centre based activities. This limits the centre's ability to fully demonstrate the impact of its work with children.
- The quality of information sharing and referrals between the centre and other centres that it works with and also with professionals such as health visitors and social workers is good. As a result, the large majority of families receive timely and specialist help and intensive support when they most need it and inequalities are being reduced for those living in the most deprived parts of the community.

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

Good

- The quality of the centre's leadership, management and governance is good. At all levels, leaders, managers and advisory board members are highly competent and bring a wide range of expertise, experience and in some instances local knowledge, to their roles. They offer the centre both support and challenge to improve.

- Governance arrangements are effective. The PSLA provides good support to enable advisory board members to be effective in their roles. This includes an advisory board members' booklet which clarifies roles and responsibilities of members. As a result, the board is effective in its role of monitoring the centre's performance and members use data and centre reports to continually review the centre's progress and monitor the extent to which for example, it is reducing inequalities particularly for those living in the most deprived parts of the community.
- Staff are well qualified for their roles, highly competent and highly valued by partners and parents. Some staff and advisory board members live locally and make good use of their established links within the local community to support the centre's work.
- Monitoring of the centre's performance by the advisory board, the PSLA, the local authority through the Children Centre's Improvement Partner (CCIP) arrangement is routine, regular and effective. Judgements about the centre's performance are accurate, honest and well informed by data and case study information about the progress of families. Targets for improvement are ambitious but realistic.
- The centre's work to keep families safe is good and supported by a comprehensive range of policies that cover both safeguarding and safer recruitment. In addition, the quality of the centre's safeguarding work is enhanced by the work of two members of the outreach team who are qualified social workers. Their expertise and experience contributes exceptionally well to the centre's direct work with children subject to child protection plans and its use of the Common Assessment Framework processes to provide joined up early help.
- The centre's partnership working is excellent. Staff have built very productive relationships with a range of partners from the statutory, private and voluntary sectors. As a result, signposting, information sharing and referral processes are very effective.
- As a result of close partnership working with other children's centres and with community based organisations, the centre maximises the resources it has. By using venues within the most deprived parts of the community and using accommodation at the NATO base, the centre is able to provide services that meet the needs of key priority groups and which improve overall outcomes for families.

**What inspection judgements mean**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
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**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	20012
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	430192
<b>Managed by</b>	The Pre School Learning Alliance on behalf of the local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	790
<b>Centre leader</b>	Zoe Hier
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
<b>Telephone number</b>	01923 255054
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