

SA4 Redbourn and Villages Children's Centre

Redbourn Infant and Nursery School, Long Cott, Redbourn, AL3 7EX

Inspection dates	16–17 July 2014
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
		Not applicable	
Access to services by young children and families		Outstanding	1
The quality of practice and services		Outstanding	1
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is an outstanding centre.

- The centre has been very successful at increasing the number of families with young children in the area so that nearly all are registered. The overwhelming majority of families, including priority groups, are engaging successfully with the centre and benefiting from the high quality services.
- Children attending the centre's sessions make very good progress from their starting points and as a result move into school as extremely confident learners. Specific workshops help parents grow in confidence and improve their parenting skills very well.
- The centre has established highly effective partnerships with, health, social care, educational and early years providers. These ensure that the families' needs are continually very well met.
- The pursuit of excellence is relentless at the centre; governance by the advisory board is strong. Leaders, governors, managers and staff have a shared ambition and passion to provide the very best for services families, and this has led to excellent outcomes.
- Listening to the views of parents is something that the centre does routinely. Leaders and the advisory board respond to suggestions made by parents. Families are fully involved in setting the direction of the centre's work.
- The centre is at the heart of the local community and is held in very high regard by those that take advantage of its activities and services. One parent, summed up the impact of the centre's work by describing it as 'a great place for families to have fun and grow.'
- Volunteering is one aspect that has yet to attract the same take up as all other opportunities.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Provide parents with more opportunities to train as volunteers at the centre by actively promoting volunteering so that a higher number sign up.

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 centre staff, the centre manager and headteacher; a representative of the local authority; members of the governing body and advisory board; parents and users of the centre; and representatives of organisations who work in partnership with the centre.

The inspectors visited activities taking place in the centre. These included Redbourn Pre-school and the Traveller site in Ver Meadows. They jointly observed one activity with the centre manager.

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

Inspection team

Steve Nelson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Nick Gadfield

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Redbourn and Villages Children's Centre operates in the Redbourn and Watling wards and is based on the same site as Redbourn Infant and Nursery School, which are inspected under separate arrangements. It provides outreach services to Redbourn, Markyate, Flamstead, Gaddesden Row, Great Gaddesden, Water End and Kinsbourne Green.

The centre provides services for families by commissioning them from a range of partners and by working in partnership with health visitors, midwives and speech therapists in the shared delivery of some services. The range of activities offered by the centre includes support at the local community baby clinic, antenatal group, breastfeeding support and baby massage. The centre signposts families to a range of providers that offer adult education, volunteering opportunities, and activities designed to support parents and carers into training or back into employment. Activities are planned in partnership with other local children's centres to ensure a full range of services is available to families.

The local authority has delegated responsibility for the governance of the centre to the governing body of the Redbourn Infant and Nursery School, which is the lead agency. The governing body receives advice and guidance from an advisory board to which the parents' forum also contributes their views. The centre manager is responsible for the day-to-day running of the centre, and is supervised by the headteacher of Redbourn Infant and Nursery School.

The children's centre has 741 children under the age of five years in its area. The large majority of the families living in the area are White British, although some are from different ethnic groups and an Irish Traveller community. The area is relatively affluent with pockets of deprivation. Levels of unemployment and the proportion of families dependent on benefits are below the national averages.

When they start early years provision, the majority of children have skills, knowledge and abilities similar to those expected for their age.

The main priority groups assessed in need of the centre's services are families on the centre's 'families in greatest need list', families whose children are eligible for two year early education funding, families from the Traveller community and families from minority ethnic groups with English as an additional language.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Outstanding.

- Nearly all families with young children living in the area are registered with the centre. An overwhelming majority of priority families regularly visit the centre, and as a result benefit from the services on offer including all young children from Traveller families, disabled children and those with special educational needs.

- The centre works exceptionally well with local early years partners to ensure all eligible two-year-olds from disadvantaged families take up their entitlement to early education. Nearly all three-year-olds have taken up their free early years education, and the majority make good or better progress in their learning and personal development.
- Outreach work is outstanding and ensures that families have the individualised help they need, particularly at times of crisis. Parents talk unreservedly of the highly effective support they receive at the centre and the positive impact it has on their lives. One parent said, 'It's like your mum if your mum's not there.'
- The centre is well informed about the expected number of new births. The information enables managers to plan precisely services such as the monthly 'Pregnancy Club' delivered during the evening to accommodate working families. Monthly 'Family Matters' meetings with health visitors enable the centre to obtain accurate and up-to-date information to ensure that the overwhelming majority of families in greatest need routinely take up services offered.
- The centre listens carefully to the views of parents and have recently introduced an 'Adoptive Parents' Group' to provide peer support and accommodate the needs of the increasing number of families adopting children in the area. The centre has been highly successful in engaging with families who speak English as an additional language and set up a family learning course at the centre. Participants commented that they are more confident when interacting with the local community as a result of improving their English language skills.
- Leaders know the area extremely well, and have used the information they receive to deliver high quality services in the community. For example, the range of events over the school holidays provided at the Markyate Village Hall are well attended by families from priority groups.

The quality of practice and services

Outstanding.

- The centre provides an excellent range of high quality services and support to promote the learning, development and well-being of children under the age of five years who live in the area. These are very well balanced between services available to all parents and those that are aimed at those families in greatest need.
- There are outstanding partnerships with childminders, schools and early years providers in the area. Activities such as 'Stay and Play' helps prepare children very well for school and makes a notable difference to the readiness of those who need more support. This makes an important contribution to reducing inequalities as reflected in the consistent narrowing of the achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the rest.
- Health outcomes are significantly better than those seen nationally. Highly effective promotion of breast feeding results in the proportion of mothers, including those from priority groups that continue to breastfeed their children, being higher than the national average. As a result of very well-targeted and sustained efforts by the centre to promote healthy eating and active life styles the childhood obesity rate has rapidly reduced and is below average.

- The centre provides high levels of care, guidance and support, particularly to vulnerable families in times of crisis. Case files are well ordered and show excellent partnership working with health, educational and social care services. The files provide detailed examples of very effective targeted help that help families get back on their feet.
- Parents say they are highly satisfied with the quality of services available to them. They value the positive relationships they have with centre staff and say the advice they are given improves their parenting skills. Parents also say that a key strength is the very strong sense of community harmony between families of different backgrounds.
- The centre has very well-established arrangements to make sure that parents have access to high quality services for adults such as English and mathematics courses, vocational training and information about job vacancies. These ensure that a large proportion of parents from workless households improve their skills, employability and life chances. A few parents have successfully volunteered in the centre and gone on to further training or employment, although there is no continuous programme to encourage more parents to take up volunteering.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Outstanding

- Redbourn and Villages Children's Centre is exceptionally well led. The centre manager fosters very good relations with local families. She is an exemplary role model for staff, parents and their children. As a result, no family is discriminated against. All parents have equal opportunities to make positive changes to their lives and that of their children.
- Governance arrangements are highly effective and contribute to the centre's success and continual improvement. The local authority carries out robust termly monitoring visits based on areas of the service specification and an annual review. These visits lead to specific agreed targets being set. These targets have effectively driven up the number of registered families and the high proportion of priority groups using the centre's services.
- The advisory board gives voice to the parents' forum and draws on the wealth of detailed information from partners to challenge the centre and shape its services. Partners contribute to the useful self-evaluation and development plan so that the centre knows at all times how well it is closing gaps and reducing inequalities.
- Safeguarding is the highest priority, and policies and procedures, including staff vetting checks, reflect this. The centre works very well with social care staff to ensure families remain safe, and there is highly effective intervention for children in need, those subject to child protection plans and for children being helped through the Common Assessment Framework procedures, including looked after children.
- Supervision and performance management procedures are robust. Staff receive regular one-to-one supervision and annual appraisals are used very effectively to monitor performance and develop staff skills. For example some staff are trained in facilitating parenting courses, which enables courses to be run without the need to commission these services.

- The centre's resources are used extremely effectively to make sure that families' needs are met. There is an extensive range of toys, books and portable sensory equipment for disabled children and those with special educational needs to use at home. Exceptional use is made of the comprehensive 'story sack' library with 521 children having access to these, including Traveller and minority ethnic families with English as an additional language in the last year.

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.

Centre details

Unique reference number	22607
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	451270
Managed by	Redbourn Infant and Nursery School on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	741
Centre manager	Micky Waters
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01582 688512
Email address	manager.redbourn@hertschildrenscentres.org.uk

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