

# Rainbow Children's Centre

c/o Chiltern Edge School, Reades Lane, Sonning Common, RG4 9LN

<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 July 2014
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Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Good	2
		Not applicable	
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.

- Most families in the area are registered with the centre and the numbers are increasing over time.
- Collaborative partnership work results in vulnerable families having their needs assessed early on and receiving effective packages of support to help them move forward.
- The centre makes a positive contribution to children's readiness for school. Most eligible two-year-olds take up their free education in good or better quality settings.
- Adults from the area who undertake courses such as English sustain their involvement and achieve successfully.
- Parents told inspectors how much they value the staff's inclusive, welcoming approach and benefit from the support they receive, including one-to-one help in their homes.
- Good leadership is ensuring the centre continues to develop during a period of significant change. Leaders' high aspirations, strong teamwork and effective action planning underpin the centre's good capacity for improvement.
- The local authority provides effective governance, support and challenge.

### It is not outstanding because:

- The proportion of lone parents who are also workless families using the centre and sustaining involvement in appropriate services is not yet as high as other priority groups.
- There are not enough opportunities for adults to receive timely advice and guidance about their next steps in education or towards employability.
- The assessment of starting points and tracking of children's and adults' progress when they attend centre-led activities is developing, but there is patchy follow-up of how they progress when they move on.
- Though well established, the advisory board has yet to ensure all partners and parents attend meetings regularly to enable continuity in decision making, provide effective challenge about the centre's performance and meet agreed terms of reference.

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

- Increase the numbers so that all, or at least the large majority, of lone parents and workless families sustain engagement in relevant services.
- Extend the opportunities for adults to receive timely advice and guidance about their next steps in education or towards employability.
- Further develop baseline assessments and tracking systems to keep a close check on children's learning and development, particularly target children, including how well they achieve by the time they are five
- Strengthen governance by reviewing the membership, encouraging more regular attendance and reinforcing the challenge role of the advisory board to ensure it fully meets its terms of reference.

## 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 leaders and managers, local authority officers, partners, parents, volunteers, childminders, centre users and members of the advisory board.

The inspectors visited a number of activities held in the centre and at outreach venues. An observation was undertaken jointly with the centre leader.

They also looked at a wide range of relevant documentation.

## Inspection team

Christine Field, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Marinette Bazin	Additional inspector
Shagufta Shahin	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

The Rainbow Children's Centre opened in October 2009. The centre leader, appointed a year ago, also oversees another children's centre five miles away in Henley-on-Thames. An advisory group, shared with Henley, is in place. A separate parents' forum is established. Action for Children took on the contract for Rainbow Children's Centre in April 2013 and also manages 13 other children's centres in Oxfordshire on behalf of the county council. The Rainbow Children's Centre is part of a cluster of six children's centres overseen by a services manager but which are stand-alone, and as such, inspected separately. An organisational review took place in spring 2014 and the centre is recruiting more staff. The county council is currently consulting about the future role of children's centres.

There are 1,030 children under the age of five years living in an area which is mainly rural with pockets of disadvantage, principally in parts of Woodcote and Sonning Common. The majority of families are White British with an increasing number of families from Eastern Europe. When they enter early years provision, children's skills and abilities are broadly at the level expected for their age.

The centre provides services which include targeted family support, parenting courses and adult learning, universal groups such as Stay and Play, and support to early years settings in the private and voluntary sector. Activities are delivered from the centre, Woodcote Village Hall, Sonning Common Library and the Play Bus which visits rural areas.

Target priority groups are identified as: two-year-olds eligible for free education; children in low-income or workless homes; children with additional needs; children and families living in the areas of most deprivation; and lone parents.

### Inspection judgements

#### Access to services by young children and families Good

- Registrations are increasing and now include 85% of local families. Priority groups are currently being redefined because some children and families fall into more than one group due to their specific circumstances. The large majority of children and families from most priority groups, including those living in the most deprived neighbourhoods, access centre or partners' services. The exception is lone and workless parents, and leaders recognise there is more to do to ensure their sustained involvement.
- Extremely close working with health partners supports the centre's early contact with expectant parents and speedy follow-up of all new births. Families' attendance at clinics held at the centre supports their ongoing positive relationship with centre staff; this is especially the case for those families who most need help.
- Checks on a child's health at two years of age involve a survey carried out jointly between health and centre staff. Survey outcomes sometimes result in the involvement of other specialist services to meet assessed needs, for example when the therapist works with centre staff at 'Playbox' sessions to support children's additional speech and language needs.
- Ninety-three per cent of eligible two-year-olds take up their free education place; some of these are supported directly by the centre. All two-year-olds receive their education in good or better quality early years settings.
- The centre canvasses parents' views about its services by a range of means including distributing an Impact Assessment Survey, which also seeks to find out why some families are not yet using the services. Recently, the main focus of gathering feedback has been on the local authority's consultation about closing children's centres in the south of the county. The increasing use of social media by families is widening the opportunities for the centre to market further what it has to offer.

**The quality of practice and services**

Good

- The quality of services is good. There is an appropriate range of services which leaders are working effectively to balance between those targeted at specific needs and those open to everyone. The use of the Play Bus which visits rural areas and the village hall at Woodcote is helping extend the centre's reach and widen access.
- Well-planned groups such as 'Stay and Play' provide worthwhile experiences that support children's learning and development, and promote positive parenting. Staff are evaluating the impact of activities. However, work to track the progress children make, especially those in target groups, from assessed starting points, is at an early stage of development. 'All about me' booklets are being used for this purpose at the crèche run by the centre and offer a model for use at other groups.
- Volunteering opportunities are being taken up by four parents currently with a recruitment drive under way to increase the numbers. Good-quality services are provided for the small number of adults who undertake English, mathematics or employability-related courses. However, there are as yet too few checks to see what their starting points are, whether goals are achieved and what further needs they have once they successfully complete a course. The links with Jobcentre Plus are already in development to assist further in this aspect of the centre's provision, particularly for low-income families or those not in work.
- Information is effectively shared and the strong collaborative partnership with health, social care and early years practitioners results in integrated packages of support from which families benefit. Support for families facing complex problems such as domestic violence includes access to specific programmes such as 'Freedom' and the 'Recovery Toolkit'. These empower families to take back control of their lives. A high number of parents participate in the 'Family Links Nurturing' programme which helps them set boundaries for their children and manage their children's behaviour positively.
- Case files are maintained to a good standard and reflect the good-quality work taking place with families, many of whom have complex problems to resolve. Leaders from other centres in the Action for Children cluster routinely audit family case files, and provide useful feedback to support best practice. As a result of the good care, guidance and support provided, children and families are building strong emotional well-being.
- Parents have high levels of satisfaction with the quality and impact of the centre's services. They told inspectors how much they value the staff's inclusive, welcoming approach and enjoy attending groups. The comments of one parent sum up the views of others: 'The centre is simply brilliant.'

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

Good

- Leaders have worked hard since taking over the management of the centre a year ago to guide change positively. Leaders undertake accurate evaluations of the centre's strengths and areas for development, and have initiated well-prioritised action plans to drive improvement. Their ambitious aspirations are clear for all to see. It is to their credit that improvement has continued, as reflected in rising registrations and the removal of the waiting list for family support, during a very challenging time.
- The local authority provides effective governance, support and challenge. However, the advisory board's role in challenging the centre's performance is currently being reduced by a few partners' irregular attendance.
- Supervision and performance management arrangements are robust. Staff receive regular one-to-one supervision, and annual and mid-year appraisals are used effectively to monitor performance and develop skills. Staff have good opportunities to discuss their casework and to ensure that families receive the right support at the right time.
- Safeguarding arrangements are at the core of the centre's work. Well-understood policies and procedures assist the well-being of those most in need, including that of children subject to a child protection plan. The Common Assessment Framework procedures are used very well to reduce the risk of harm to children in need and looked after children.
- The centre's very successful partnerships with a range of agencies further aid the the good-quality and positive impact of safeguarding practices. The centre has been described by partners as being

'very good at nipping potential problems in the bud'.

- Resources are used effectively and there are a growing number of good-quality services readily accessible across the area that are reducing inequalities and improving the outcomes for children and 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.

**Centre details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	23244
<b>Local authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	442872
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority
<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	1,030
<b>Centre leader</b>	Jo Vines
<b>Telephone number</b>	0118 972 4024
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