

# Mytchett Children's Centre

Hamesmoor Road, Mytchett, Surrey, GU16 6JB

**Inspection dates** 25–26 November 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>Previous inspection:</b>	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 centre requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Not enough children from some of the centre's priority families, especially in the Deepcut area, are using the centre on a regular basis.
- The local authority has only recently monitored the levels of regular engagement by priority families. The use of this information as a management tool by all levels of leadership and management is relatively new. Consequently, it is not being used well enough to ensure services are tailor made to fit the needs of some families, especially those in the Deepcut and Mytchett villages. This limits the centre's capacity to improve.
- The system for health services to inform the centre of new births in the local area is not consistently put into practice. Therefore, centre staff are not always aware of the new parents to contact and register.
- There are limited opportunities for adults to extend their education and move on to employment. Not enough adults who are supported by the centre have their progress followed up in the longer term. The centre does not have well-embedded systems to show the impact it is having on some families, including where children access the centre regularly.
- The involvement of parents in the running of the centre is not formalised enough. Although there are opportunities for parents to give their views, there is no clear route through to the advisory board because parents, especially those from priority families, are not well represented. In addition, there are no volunteers at the moment, although several families have expressed an interest.

### It has the following strengths:

- The centre has established good relationships with midwives and health visitors, and so has improved access to health services for young children and those expecting babies.
- The three members of staff, two of whom are part time, have worked hard to achieve a recent increase in registrations, so that now the large majority of children in the local area are registered. They have been particularly successful in registering those in the priority area of Mytchett.
- Parents rightly feel that they receive high levels of care, guidance and support from staff, who know them and the local community very well. Everyone receives a warm welcome.
- Advisory board members, especially the link governors, use what information has been available to them to challenge as well as support the centre.

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

- Ensure that the large majority of families from the identified priority groups engage with services more regularly by:
  - finding out why more children and families are not using the centre, especially in Deepcut
  - assessing the specific needs of families in areas where they are using services less frequently
  - providing services that match the needs of priority families more effectively
  - working with the local authority and the advisory board to use information effectively to monitor the regular engagement with services of priority families.
- Work with the local authority and health partners to ensure new birth information is provided to the centre speedily and consistently, so that babies can be registered as soon as possible.
- Ensure that needs of adults in the priority groups are met and track the longer term impact of the centre by:
  - assessing the specific needs of parents more concisely, especially those living in Deepcut and Mytchett
  - developing a robust system to get feedback from partners and parents about the progress they have made as a result of signposting or support from the centre.
- Encourage more families to be formally involved in developing services by:
  - formalising the way parents' views are transmitted to the advisory board
  - increasing regular parent representation on the advisory board, especially from priority groups
  - raising the number of volunteers who support the centre.

## 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 centre manager, the headteacher of Mytchett Primary School who is also the head of centre, and two representatives from the local authority. They also met members of the advisory board, including link governors. They spoke with several partners, such as those from health services, early years settings and charities. They also met with staff members and several parents.

The inspectors visited sessions held at Frimley Community Centre and Deepcut Village Centre, as well as the home-based carers' play and learn group held at the centre. One joint observation was undertaken with the centre manager.

The inspectors looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centre's self-evaluation and development plan, safeguarding policies and procedures, and a sample of case studies. The centre manager, head of centre and local authority representatives attended all the team meetings.

## Inspection team

Joan Lindsay, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Graham Saltmarsh

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Mytchett Children's Centre opened in 2010. It is a standalone centre, but it works closely with the other four local borough children's centres. Some services are delivered in the community in Frimley and Deepcut villages. The centre provides family support, adult learning and health services.

The governors of Mytchett Primary School, where the centre is located, manage the centre on behalf of the local authority; the headteacher line manages the centre manager. The centre employs three members of staff, two of whom work part time. There is an advisory board in place. Mytchett Primary School is subject to a separate inspection. Its report can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

There are 762 children aged under five in the area served by the centre. The area covers the three villages of Mytchett, Frimley Green and Deepcut, and borders both Hampshire and Berkshire. Of the eight separate defined localities in the area, none are considered to be in the top 50% least advantaged. There is a large military housing estate in Deepcut village. White British heritage families account for most of the population. The percentage of children under five living in workless households is 7% overall, but 15% in Mytchett village; these figures are below national averages. Around 17.2% of families claim working tax credit in the area served by the centre, in line with national figures. Children generally enter the Early Years Foundation Stage at levels in line with those expected for their age.

The centre has identified priority groups needing most support as: young children living in the least advantaged area of Mytchett village; two-year-olds eligible for free early education; and families living in the Deepcut area, including service families.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

### Requires improvement

- A recent push to increase registrations and find out why some families are not using services has led to 66% of children now being registered and 50% overall accessing children's centre services. However, a relatively low number of children in the Deepcut area access and engage regularly with the centre. This is partly explained by the transient nature of the service families living there. However, the centre has not done enough in-depth analysis of what services would best meet the needs of some of their priority groups.
- Until recently, the local authority, the advisory board and the centre manager have not had information about how frequently families use the centre services. Consequently, this has not been used as a management tool to identify where the gaps in effective engagement are. Priority families' attendance at services that are open to all, such as the music and movement session held at Frimley Community Centre, has not been monitored consistently to see if these popular sessions are meeting the needs of families who need most support.
- There are strong local links with health services such as midwives who use the centre to book in expectant mothers and to hold well-attended weekly antenatal clinics and the health visitors' monthly 'well baby' clinic. This has improved access for those families, as have the weekly antenatal 'coffee and cake' sessions. However, there is an inconsistency in the way the centre is informed about new births which limits the staff's ability to follow them up and has a negative impact on the number of new registrations.
- The centre has been supportive in ensuring that all eligible two-year-olds are taking up their entitlement to free early education in good or better provision. Strong links with childminders, who hold a weekly home-based carers' play and learn session at the centre have had an impact on this. However, although a large majority of this priority group of children is registered at the centre, a smaller proportion engages regularly with centre services.

**The quality of practice and services****Requires improvement**

- The quality, range and relevance of services require improvement because there are not enough specific services that meet the needs of some priority groups. Their regular use of the centre has not been monitored consistently enough. The centre has not carried out an in-depth analysis of why some families, especially in Deepcut, are not maintaining their contact.
- There are several anecdotal examples of adults who have progressed in their education and employability, such as through an apprenticeship at the centre. However, there are only limited opportunities for parents to access education and attend structured parenting courses, held in conjunction with a neighbouring centre. There has been no detailed analysis of what local parents may need, especially in the least advantaged area of Mytchett, to ensure services are adapted to meet those requirements.
- Where adults have been supported by the centre, for example to access adult education, the outcomes have not been tracked consistently either by the centre or their partners.
- The centre has had volunteers in the past, but there are none at present. In addition, although parents' views are noted, there are no clear methods to ensure these are fed on to the advisory board, as there are not enough parent representatives. Consequently, not enough families are fully involved in the running of the centre.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile results for children living in the local area have improved significantly in 2014 and are well above the county and national levels, although this is not consistent across all three schools. Children who have attended the centre are tracked when they move on to the adjacent nursery and school, and this tracking shows that they make good progress. Parents feel their children are prepared well for school. However, only a very small number of priority group children are monitored during their time at the children's centre.
- The sessions run by the centre or commissioned out to other providers are popular. By using various community venues, they ensure that high numbers can attend. Adults and children enjoy the well-run sessions, but the centre has not monitored priority families' attendance effectively enough to ensure these families are engaging regularly.
- Health outcomes are generally good in the local area, with 62% of babies being breastfed at six to eight weeks. This is well above the national levels. Good links with local health visitors and workshops, such as those for weaning advice, have all contributed to this good outcome.
- The small number of families supported on a one-to-one basis by centre staff have positive outcomes as the levels of care, guidance and support are good. The centre has been particularly effective in supporting mothers who have postnatal depression. Several parents spoke movingly about the impact of this work, summed up by the comment, 'If it had not been for the centre, I would have carried on suffering.'

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

- Not enough use has been made of the information about the number of priority families engaging regularly with the centre by the local authority, centre manager or the advisory board, as this information has only recently been available. As a result, centre targets have focused on increasing registrations and self-evaluation has been over optimistic. This has limited the centre's capacity to improve.
- The local authority has monitored the centre on a regular basis since the last annual review in June 2014. The advisory board has asked challenging questions about the levels of registration and access overall. However, there has not been a strong enough focus on the continuing engagement of some families, especially those in Deepcut and Mytchett, and the two-year-olds eligible for free early education.
- Staff resources are very limited, as is the space at the centre. However, the use of a number of community venues, such as the Scout Centre at Frimley Lodge Park, and of commissioned services means that families in all parts of the centre's area can access sessions open to all. However, the number of priority families who attend those sessions is not always high enough to ensure that

inequalities are being significantly reduced.

- Well-implemented safeguarding policies and procedures are in place. Staff know the local community and families well and are swift to act on any concerns. At present, there are no young children in the locality that the centre has been informed are subject to social care supervision or are children that are looked after. The number of families who have an early help assessment is also very low. However, where it has been necessary in the past, staff have been fully involved with other agencies to enable families to receive effective support.
- Families hold the centre and the staff in high regard. One parent summed up the very positive views of many by saying, 'I thank heaven for the staff and all they have done for me.' Parents feel they are made very welcome and that staff are caring and supportive. However, not enough parents are formally involved in the running of the centre, for example as representatives on the advisory board.

**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>	22077
<b>Local authority</b>	Surrey County Council
<b>Inspection number</b>	450533
<b>Managed by</b>	The governing body of Mytchett Primary School on behalf of the local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	762
<b>Centre manager</b>	Elaine Thurlow
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01252 544009
<b>Email address</b>	childrenscentre@mytchett.surrey.sch.uk

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