

The Poplars Children's Centre

Queen Mary's Drive, New Haw, Surrey, ST15 3TT

Inspection dates 26–27 November 2014

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 is a good centre.

- The large majority and in some cases all families from priority groups are registered with the centre and regularly access services.
- Centre staff provide highly effective support and guidance for families in most need. Outcomes for these families are good and their needs are well met.
- Parents benefit well from good quality parenting training which improves their skills and improves the well-being of their children.
- The centre's partnership arrangements with professionals and representatives from education, health and social care are strong. They support the centre in providing services for families.
- Governance, leadership and management are highly effective in monitoring the centre's performance. As a result, the centre is continually improving and increasing the positive impact it has on the lives of families.
- All eligible two-, three- and four-year-old children in the area access free early years education places. As a result, inequalities are being reduced.

It is not outstanding because:

- Registration rates in a minority of the most deprived parts of the area are not yet high enough.
- Not enough is done to ensure information about children's progress is shared with parents.
- Parents are not represented on the advisory board. As a result, they do not have enough opportunities to contribute to decisions made about the centre's work.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Increase registration rates, particularly for those living in the most deprived areas, so that at least the very large majority attend services regularly.
- Extend existing tracking systems to ensure parents have regular opportunities to share in monitoring the progress of their children's learning and development.
- Ensure parents are represented on the advisory board by reducing barriers that limit their participation.

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, local authority managers, and representatives from partner organisations such as those from health, schools, training organisations and pre-schools. They also met parents and members of the advisory board.

The inspectors visited activities taking place at the centre and observed sessions such as Play and Learn and Baby Massage.

They observed the centre's work and also looked at a range of relevant documentation such as the self-evaluation report, safeguarding policies and improvement plans.

Inspection team

Priscilla McGuire, Lead Inspector

Additional Inspector

Helen Hutchings

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Poplar's Children's Centre is a small part-time centre in Surrey. It shares its site with the Grange Community Infant School (URN 125037), and is managed by the governors of the school, on behalf of the local authority. The school is subject to a separate inspection. Its report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

The centre is set in the semi-rural location of New Haw in Surrey. It is perceived to be a reasonably affluent area, but has pockets of deprivation which are close to the centre. The majority of families living in the area are of White British heritage. Most families live in privately owned houses, although there is social housing in some streets and temporary local authority accommodation in some areas.

Most services are provided direct at the centre but some venues within the community such as libraries are also used to provide services and activities. Services offered include health clinics, early years learning, family support, parenting programmes and training support and guidance. The proportion of 0 to 4 year olds living in out-of-work benefit households is lower than the Surrey average. Unemployment rates are low and a high proportion of adults in the area have good levels of education. There are 746 children under five years of age who live in the community the centre serves. Children's skills and abilities on entry to early years education are in line with what is expected for their age.

The centre has identified the following as priority groups: lone parents living in the top three most deprived areas, families whose children are eligible for free early years places, families with children under two years of age and vulnerable families with complex needs.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families Good

- A large majority of families and those expecting children are registered with the centre and benefit from its services. Families from priority groups also benefit well, as result of their regular use of the centre's services. However, registration rates in a minority of the most deprived parts of the area are not yet high enough.
- The centre actively promotes its services using a range of effective methods such as community 'open days'. Also, a centre newsletter and promotional products such as thermometers provide helpful details about the centre's services and activities.
- Centre staff pay close attention to the smaller details that can make a difference to families' awareness of services. For example, 'take away' timetables are provided in an external display unit positioned beneath a noticeboard on the railings outside the centre.
- Centre staff share information effectively with their partners, particularly those from schools, health and social care. This ensures that the centre keeps a close eye on which families have the most needs. As a result, referrals from partners to the centre and signposting from the centre to other agencies are very effective.
- The centre is very responsive to the needs of families. For example, families who cannot travel to the centre or are reluctant to attend are helped by staff making home visits. They also use venues within the community such as a library to provide services. In addition, they make good use of the local authority's 'Surestart Bus', to bring services to families who live in the more rural parts of the area.
- The centre has worked well with the local authority to promote free early years education. As a result, all eligible two-, three- and four-year-old children take up free early years places. Centre staff also offer effective support to families of two-year-old children. They help these families understand their entitlements and help them complete applications. As a result, the centre contributes well to reducing inequalities for families with the most needs.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- Parents most in need are helped to improve their parenting skills via one-to-one support in the home and structured parenting courses. Comments such as 'it helped me learn to ignore the behaviour not the child' are typical examples of how parents have specifically benefited from parenting training.
- Sustained breastfeeding rates are higher than national rates and a high proportion of children under five have healthy weights. Through sessions such as 'Active Tots', the centre promotes physical activity. Healthy eating is actively promoted by providing fruit snacks at all sessions. This helps children to experience new tastes but also to develop social skills as they sit down together to eat.
- Centre staff provide highly effective support to families in most need, particularly those from priority groups. For example, lone parents receive good support to navigate their way through the welfare system and to attend activities that help to reduce social isolation. As a result, the well-being of children and their families improve.
- 'Help and support has been beyond expectations' was the view of one parent, which is typical of the views of many others. Parents give many examples of how they have been given invaluable support and guidance during times of crisis. As a result, they have experienced 'life-changing' and positive differences to their family lives and well-being.
- Data show that children who attend the centre perform better than those who do not. Well-planned activities, such as 'Play and Learn', help the centre to provide good support for children's learning. These also enable it to contribute well to the success of children who achieve a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year.
- Tracking systems are beginning to be used well to monitor children's progress. However, leaders are not involving parents enough in this process. This limits the opportunities they have at home to support their children's learning and development.
- The centre views the safety of families as a priority. It ensures parents receive relevant information about current safety issues such as safe use of hair straighteners. Working with external charities, the centre also offers sessions such as 'Beep Beep'. This provides both guidance to parents on road safety and practical aids such as visible reflectors. As a result, parents receive good practical help to adopt safe practice when using roads.
- There is a good balance of services open to all families and those that are targeted at specific groups. As a result, the needs and interests of a large and increasing majority of families are being met.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The centre is led by a well-organised and efficient manager who leads a strong, enthusiastic and competent team of staff. Parents and partner organisations highly value the centre and talk very positively about its work and about staff. As a result, both parents and staff from external organisations are very strong advocates for the centre's work.
- Governance, leadership and management are effective in monitoring the centre's performance, reviewing staff performance and in identifying where improvements need to be made. Through a rigorous self-evaluation process, 'the manager's report' and termly review meetings with the local authority, the centre's impact and progress are effectively scrutinised. This ensures that the centre is held to account and that improvement plans are effective.
- To ensure the centre continually improves its performance and meets its obligation to help reduce inequalities, the advisory board and the local authority both set ambitious performance targets for the centre. Staff work hard to meet or exceed these targets. As a result, outcomes for families are good.
- There is a good representation from a wide range of key partners on the advisory board, and attendance at meetings is good. Organisations represented on the board include local churches, health services, training organisations, schools and pre-schools. The board provides effective support and challenge to the centre.

- Through the 'parents' voice' group, parents contribute well to decision making such as planning of services. They have good relationships with staff. However, despite the best efforts of staff, parents have yet to be recruited onto the advisory board.
- Safeguarding arrangements, including policies and procedures for safer recruitment, are well established and effective. Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding arrangements and take appropriate and swift action to minimise risks of harm to children.
- The centre knows all the children in its area who are subject to child protection plans or identified as children in need. Staff work very productively with social care teams to provide support to these families. For example, staff attend and contribute well to 'core group' meetings and complete early help assessments to ensure families with the most needs receive the help they need. As a result, children who are subject to child protection plans, and those deemed to be children in need, are well supported.
- The centre has strong partnerships with schools, pre-schools, social care and health, so that it can provide a wide range of services to families. Staff from partner organisations have a good understanding of the centre's priorities and work well with staff to ensure these are met.
- The centre is well resourced and offers attractive accommodation for families. The quality of resources for families is good and the budget well managed. As a result, the needs of families are well met.

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	23237
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	451706
Managed by	The governing body of The Grange Community Infant School, on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	746
Service Manager for the group	Zoe Hoare
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01932 350605
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