

Three Rivers Children's Centre

High Street, West Molesey, Surrey, KT8 2LX

Inspection dates		3–4 March 2015	
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 of children under five living locally are registered with the centre. Registrations have risen substantially over the last year despite an increased number of young children now living in the area. Strong links with health services and the follow-up of all new births by very proactive centre staff are giving a positive impact on access.
- The centre has worked closely with parents and local early years settings to ensure that most two year-olds who are eligible, take up free early education. Outcomes for children are improving over time. A higher proportion of children now achieve a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage than seen nationally.
- Health outcomes are good. Families have easy access to health visitors and midwives at the centre. Staff consistently support families to lead healthy lives. Consequently breastfeeding rates and the number of young children who are a healthy weight are significantly higher than national averages.
- A high number of parents have attended adult learning and parenting courses or have been supported to enhance their education, such as by taking GCSEs. Parents say this has a profound effect on their confidence and future prospects.
- Leadership, governance and management are good. The local authority provides effective support. There is a clear understanding at all levels of the centre's strengths and areas for development as well as which are the priority families that need most support. As a result, there is good capacity to continue to improve.

It is not outstanding because:

- Although most children in the Fleetside North area are registered, the number who use centre services regularly is lower than for other priority families. The centre has not fully established the reasons for this or which services may best meet those families' needs.
- Occasionally the centre's policies on having hot drinks and using mobile phones in activities are not made clear enough to parents or enforced rigorously.
- Targets identified by self-evaluation, set at reviews and included in the action and service delivery plans are not fully measurable or challenging. They do not always relate closely enough to the planned outcomes for priority families.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that at least the large majority of families in the Fleetside North area use services more regularly after they have registered by:
 - establishing the reasons why some families do not participate in what is being offered
 - identifying the priority needs of children and families in this area
 - working with partners to provide the services that meet priority needs and to encourage good take-up.
- Rigorously enforce the centre's policies on the use of mobile phones and hot drinks. Ensure parents have a clear understanding of the reasons why they must follow the policies and that posters are prominently displayed.
- Work with the local authority, the governing body and the advisory board to ensure that consistently challenging and measurable targets are set in all management and monitoring documents. This includes the centre's self-evaluation form, the service delivery and action plans and the local authority's annual review.

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 the centre manager and staff, local authority officers, parents and volunteers. They also spoke to partners from health services, adult education and several other agencies. Representatives from the centre and the local authority attended all the inspection team meetings.

The inspectors visited several activities, including 'Stay and Play' as well as a 'Forest School' session that took place on the school playing field.

Inspectors looked at a range of relevant documentation. This included safeguarding policies, procedures and practice, self-evaluation processes and the service delivery and action plans. They took into account the views of parents shown in their evaluations of services and in face-to-face discussions.

Inspection team

Joan Lindsay, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Libby Dickson	Additional inspector
Peter Towner	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Three Rivers Children's Centre is a standalone centre that was opened in 2008. It has provided a full range of services since 2010. The centre is open from 9.00am to 4.30 pm Monday to Thursday and 9.00 am to 3.30pm on Fridays. It provides family support, adult learning and health services through partnership work.

The centre is located adjacent to Chandlers Field Primary School. The governing body of the school manages the centre on behalf of the local authority. The headteacher line-manages the centre manager, who has been in post since October 2013. Other staff members include an outreach worker, two administrative assistants and an early years practitioner, who are all part time. There is an advisory board in place to assist governance. The school is subject to a separate inspection. Its report can be found at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

There are 1,333 children aged under five living in the area served by the centre. The area is very economically diverse, with one of the 12 separately defined geographic areas being ranked in the 30% least advantaged in the country; several others are amongst the most advantaged. The percentage of young children living in households where no-one is in work is 14% overall, which is below the national average. However, in the Field Common area, this figure rises to 47%. Almost a tenth of families claim Working Tax Credit in the area served by the centre. The large majority of children are from White British backgrounds. Over a quarter are from Bengali, Portuguese or East European heritages. Children generally enter early education at levels slightly below those typical for their age.

The centre has identified two main priority groups as needing most support: young children living in the two least advantaged areas of Field Common and Fleetside North, and individual families most in need of intervention and support.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The centre has successfully registered the large majority of families across its extensive area. It has overcome the transport difficulties of the Field Common district by using a mobile children's centre bus and setting up activities in convenient locations to enable children good access. The weekly 'Forest School' activity is frequently held on the nearby common, which halves the families' journey time to the centre. Consequently, the large majority of children in this priority group access services.
- The centre has a clear rationale for identifying the families that need most support. Over a quarter of local families are not from a White British heritage. However, assisting them to access English language courses and encouraging families to use the activities open to all have been effective in meeting their specific needs.
- Families who are most in need of support have very good levels of engagement with the centre. Almost 80% have regular contact with services. This is supported by very strong partnerships, especially with health and social care professionals.
- Although most families living in the Fleetside North area are registered and the large majority access services, fewer than in other priority groups use the centre regularly. The centre has started to analyse the reasons for this. It has been proactive in improving partnerships with agencies such as Jobcentre Plus. However, services are not yet fully established to ensure families in this group engage with appropriate services frequently.
- Several weekly midwife and health visitor clinics take place at the centre; these provide very good opportunities for families with young children or who are expecting babies to access health services. A much improved system to inform the centre of new births has also ensured babies are registered promptly at the centre.
- Most two-year-olds who are eligible take up their free entitlement to early education, as do three-

and four-year-olds. The centre works closely with early years settings, especially those that take the highest proportion of two-year-old children. Systems to track children's progress when they transfer to nursery are now in place, although they are relatively new.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The range, quality and relevance of services are good. Although staff resources are limited, the centre makes good use of partners and outside providers to respond to local needs. For example, four sessions of a highly popular music session delivered by a partner are timetabled each week in response to parental requests.
- There is a good balance of services that anyone can attend and those for families with specific needs. Approximately 420 adults have been helped to access adult learning and parenting courses over the last two years; the large majority complete them. Close links with the adjacent adult education college have supported several parents to further their education to GCSE level. The centre's tracking of those families shows that outcomes are frequently good.
- The centre works closely with parents and early years settings to help children get ready for school. 'Stay and Play' sessions have a clear 'school readiness' focus such as by encouraging even the youngest children to sit at the table when eating their healthy snacks. Parents say their children make very good progress in their learning and development due to coming to the centre.
- The proportion of local Reception-aged children who achieved a good level of development improved by 12% in 2014. At 63%, it is now above the level seen nationally. The gap between those from the least advantaged backgrounds and all others narrowed substantially from 2013 to 2014. Tracking of a group of children from some of the priority families shows that a good proportion are expected to meet or exceed the levels typical for their age.
- Health outcomes are good and improving. At 60%, the proportion of babies aged around two months who are being breastfed is well above national figures. The proportion of young children who are deemed to be a healthy weight is far higher than the national average. Encouraging physical activity through 'Forest School', for example, plus strong links with health services, has contributed effectively to those positive outcomes.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Families who are most in need of support engage well with staff through home visits or by coming to the centre. Those with a range of complex needs are helped to get back on their feet. Families typically describe the staff as 'brilliant', 'very responsive' and 'like professional friends'. Good quality information exchange with most partners helps to dovetail the support provided by different agencies.
- Parents play an important role in the life and development of the centre. There are four volunteers at present who assist in activities. The parent forum is an effective platform to air ideas. The 'Message in a Bottle' system of putting forward views, regular surveys and evaluations all provide parents with opportunities to comment on and help develop services. However, parents are currently under-represented on the advisory board.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The centre is well led by the manager. She has developed a range of systems to measure the impact of the centre's work, especially on improving the well-being of priority families. However, some systems, such as those for tracking children, are at an early stage, due to the relatively short time she has been in post. Staff long-term absence through illness has also hindered how quickly some systems can be embedded but has not impacted on the good quality of services provided for families.
- Staff are well trained and there are effective systems in place to ensure their performance management and development. Although the staff team is small in number, everyone is very enthusiastic and committed to enhancing the lives of families in the local area, especially for those who need most support. Consequently, staff resources are used effectively to reduce inequalities, as

reflected in the rapidly closing achievement gap.

- The local authority provides effective support for the manager. Regular monitoring visits are undertaken and information about which families are registered and using the services is provided. However, some targets set at the annual review are not always easy to measure. At present, targets listed in the centre's service delivery plan, action plan following the annual review, and the self-evaluation form are not consistent with each other, sufficiently challenging or linked closely enough to improving the outcomes for children and families from priority groups.
- The advisory board and the governing body have a good understanding of the centre's effectiveness. This has been enhanced recently through the role of the link governor, who provides a good level of challenge to the centre. Although partners are well represented, the appointment of an independent chair has yet to take place. Currently, not enough parents are on board to ensure that governance is even more effective.
- Appropriate safeguarding policies are in place. Staff are regularly trained in how to identify children that may be at risk and they act swiftly and effectively to safeguard children. Recruitment and vetting checks for staff and volunteers are robust. As soon as the centre is made aware of children who are subject to child protection plans, who are looked after, or who are supervised through 'team around the child' meetings, staff play a full role working alongside other agencies to provide support.
- Parents, on occasion, do not adhere to the centre's policies for the use of mobile phones and hot drinks. In busy sessions, this is not always picked up by staff. The centre has already taken steps to ensure these policies are clearly advertised and robustly enforced in the future.
- Parents have very high levels of satisfaction with the centre and encourage their friends to attend. They particularly like the warm welcome they receive and the good quality resources, including the well-used easily accessible outdoor area. Parents feel their views are taken into account, a good example being the centre's positive response to timetabling additional music sessions for different aged children.

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.

Children's centre details

Unique reference number	23306
Local authority	Surrey County Council
Inspection number	454555
Managed by	The governing body of Chandlers Field Primary School

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,333
Centre manager	Vicki Morganti
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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