

St Margaret's at Troy Town Children Centre

King Street, Rochester, Medway, ME1 1YF

Inspection dates		12–13 May 2015	
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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.

- Most of the children under five living in the area served by the centre have accessed services. The centre knows all of the families in the reach who are in greatest need of help and support. The excellent network of partner organisations, including health, adult learning, pre-schools and schools, enables effective joint working. As a result, families living in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods are helped exceptionally well.
- Leaders and staff are highly committed and have very strong community knowledge. They use a comprehensive range of information to make sure services are an excellent match for the local community. Parents and carers are full of praise, appreciation and admiration of the advice and support they receive.
- The quality and impact of services are excellent. Children who attend centre activities make excellent progress because of the wide range of well-planned purposeful activities to meet their needs. Parents and carers receive support in helping them understand the way their child learns, which has made a huge difference in helping them become better parents and carers.
- Partnerships are excellent and very well established, particularly with health services. The use of live birth information helps the centre to identify and address any family concerns at a very early stage. Local adult education establishments have helped an increasing number of parents and carers to gain qualifications, get into work and volunteer.
- With the support of the local authority, the centre is acutely aware of those families most in need. An effective tracking system helps reduce those at risk of harm, including those on child protection plans.
- Leaders manage the centre in an exemplary way and are continually improving services for local families most in need, helped by the excellent support from the local authority. The centre staff are warm, welcoming and enthusiastic, thus creating a harmonious environment where families feel at ease and supported.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- At a strategic level, refine the centre's system for following up those adults who successfully complete courses and gain employment, in order to show the longer-term impact of the centre's work.

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 were based at the main site of the children's centre at St Margaret's CE VC Primary School, and visited the four satellite venues of Medway Adult Community Learning, the ABC Pre-School, Pilgrim School and St Peter's Church Hall.

The inspectors held meetings with local authority officers, the centre manager, the senior leadership team, community outreach officers, a range of partners, volunteers, parents and carers and members of the advisory board. The inspectors visited all the outreach venues where activities take place. At the venues they observed activities including 'Tea and Toast' and 'Growing Together', and observed 'Messy Play' jointly with a community outreach worker. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the self-evaluation form, development plan, safeguarding policies and procedures, a variety of activity files, planning, assessment and evaluations of services. Senior leaders and the local authority attended all the inspection team meetings during the inspection.

Inspection team

Jameel Hassan, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Carole Skinner	Additional Inspector
Patricia Collis	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre.

St Margaret's at Troy Town is a standalone children's centre which opened in 2010. It is governed by the school on behalf of the local authority. There are two centre managers on a job-share basis, one of whom was absent during the inspection. The advisory board includes partners and parents and carers, along with members of the school's governing body, including the headteacher. Services provided include activities to promote early learning, adult education, careers, family health and volunteering. The majority of families receive benefits or working tax credits, with 37% of children living in workless households and 15% of families being lone parents.

The main hub of the centre is located in the grounds of St Margaret's CE VC Primary School (URN118709). The school is subject to a separate inspection and the report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

All administrative functions are carried out at the main hub site, while the satellite venues host activities only. The centre is operational for 40 hours a week, from 8am to 4pm Monday to Friday

There are 872 families living in the area served by the centre. Four districts in the reach area are among the 30% most deprived in the country, alongside small pockets of affluence. The very large majority of families are White British, with a mixture of other ethnic backgrounds, including White European and Asian.

Children generally enter the Early Years Foundation Stage at levels below those that are typical for their age.

The centre has identified priority groups needing most support as: the under ones from birth or earlier, the funded two-year-olds and their families, and those families with multiple needs in the two most disadvantaged districts.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Outstanding

- Access to services is outstanding. Families in the area benefit from a range of excellent services and support from the centre. Registrations have increased significantly over time so that nearly all families are registered. Most are taking advantage of the activities the centre has to offer. The centre's relentless focus on trying to help those in need has paid dividends. All families who are from the priority groups are registered, and most of them have strongly benefited from the centre's support.
- Centre staff make excellent use of referrals from partners. In collaboration with key partners, the centre works extremely well with families who need support in their home, particularly those who may be reluctant to attend activities at venues. As a result, their needs are being met.
- Along with the staff's excellent knowledge of the families in the area, robust and accurate systems are in place to check on attendance, enabling the centre to have a very clear picture of the impact it has on families' lives.
- Almost all three- and four-year-old children take up their free entitlement to early education. All the children entitled to the two-year-old funding are known to the centre. The centre plays a vital role in supporting families with their decision to go to a pre-school or remain at the children's centre. The few families who do not wish to take up their entitlement immediately are given opportunities by the centre to attend their well-planned activities, until the parents or carers are ready for their children to attend a nursery. As a result of this, most eligible children attend either a pre-school or other high-quality centre activities that help prepare them for starting school.
- Information, advice and guidance for families is exemplary. The centre promotes the benefits of breastfeeding, healthy eating and physical activities. This has resulted in breastfeeding rates being

higher than the national average and obesity rates much lower than the national average.

- Families enjoy attending centre activities where they feel safe, extremely valued and very well cared for.

The quality of practice and services

Outstanding

- The quality and impact of the services are outstanding. Families benefit from an excellent balance of services which are open to everyone and those aimed at specific groups. Activities that are for the priority groups, such as 'Tea and Toast', and universal services such as 'Messy Play' are very well attended. The large majority of families come back regularly because they enjoy the sessions and find them worthwhile in meeting their needs.
- All courses run to capacity and all parents and carers who attend courses complete them. This is because the centre listens to its community and provides relevant courses which meet the needs of the families. For example, all those who attended a recent first-aid course completed the course, which provided them with the skills to keep their children safe.
- The well-trained, well-qualified, dedicated centre staff promote and develop children's learning exceptionally well. This has contributed to the significant improvement in the achievement of reception-age children. In 2013, 50.3% achieved at a level above national expectations, while in 2014, 64% did so.
- The centre is extremely effective in reducing inequalities for children, narrowing the gaps between the most disadvantaged children and others, and helping to prepare children well for school and learning. Staff have initiated activities that have been sustained by partners to improve local children's communication and language skills. For example, 'Troy Town Tales', one of the centre's most successful initiatives, has been implemented by a local school and pre-schools. The community outreach officers are instrumental in ensuring this activity is maintained to a high standard in order to improve the literacy skills of young children.
- Dynamic strategies to improve the healthy weight of reception children have been instigated, resulting in a positive effect on local families. Breastfeeding at six to eight weeks and immunisation rates are above the national average. A major factor is the 'under ones' pathway as an early intervention strategy which promotes key messages with health partners during pregnancy and through the first year of a child's life.
- Most adults who attend courses are from the most deprived areas of the reach. Through the opportunities given, they make exceptional progress empowering them to improve themselves and gain invaluable experience, confidence and qualifications. Consequently, the large majority are improving their skills for work and parenting.
- Volunteer opportunities are available at the centre, which help adults take the first steps back into employment. Some of these adults go on to further education, gaining qualifications and ultimately employment, although the tracking of this success is only recent.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Outstanding

- This outstanding centre is run extremely efficiently. The staff are well qualified to support local families and are actively encouraged to develop their skills and expertise in areas that interest them. In return they use their new skills almost immediately with local families. For example, one community outreach officer recently became a breastfeeding mentor and within weeks of qualifying is already supporting a number of families.
- Leaders and partners use a robust tracking system to monitor families' attendance. If a user has not attended for a while, the centre, with its partners, speedily makes contact to ensure all is well and encourages families to attend centre activities. The result is that sustained engagement is very high from all priority groups and users.
- The staff work tirelessly to keep families safe. Very effective safeguarding procedures are in place to keep the most vulnerable families out of harm's way. All families subject to child protection plans

and children who are looked after are known to the centre. As a result, the centre can work with these families to support their needs when required. Leaders ensure that all staff are fully trained, including volunteers, and that recruitment, policy and procedures are followed rigorously.

- Partnerships with schools, pre-schools and adult education are exemplary, and the local authority sees the centre as a model of good practice which is shared with other centres.
- Centre leaders are proactive in seeking the views of its users, and these inform their decisions about ways to improve services in order to meet families' needs. Centre users have high levels of satisfaction. Parents and carers from the different priority groups are unanimous in their praise for the staff who run centre activities. They believe that the community outreach officers create a nurturing environment where parents and carers feel valued. The views of many parents and carers are reflected in one parent or carer's comment: 'They go the extra mile.'
- The local authority, senior managers and advisory board members are very clear about their aims and priorities and set challenging targets for the centre which were shared at the recent annual conversation. They use sophisticated local data to evaluate the centre's effectiveness and support the centre in their zeal to improve the life chances of local families.
- The local authority has been instrumental in improving the quality of services at the children's centre and makes sure that resources are used very effectively. The school has a new headteacher and a centre manager is currently absent through illness, but due to the excellent coaching and mentoring provided by the local authority, these changes have not affected the high quality of the centre's services.

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 well-being 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	22863
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	455062
Managed by	St Margaret's CE CV Primary School on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1076
Centre leader	Emma Banks and Elinor Crockford
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01634 843843
Email address	office@smatt.medway.sch.uk

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