

Epsom Downs Children's Centre

St Leonard's Road, Epsom Downs, Surrey, KT18 5RJ

Inspection dates	7–8 July 2015
Previous inspection date	7–8 July 2010

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Good	2
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

- This warm and friendly centre is at the heart of the local community and is highly regarded by parents. Relationships between staff and families are extremely positive.
- Centre staff and the headteacher of Epsom Downs Primary School and Children's Centre have continued to improve the centre's services since the last inspection. They are strongly committed to improving the life chances of children and their families.
- Leaders, governors and advisory board members have an accurate view of the centre's performance. They are very knowledgeable about the needs of the community the centre serves.
- Most eligible two-year-olds and all three- and four-year-old children take up their free early years place, because of the centre's effective support and provision of good quality services.
- The local authority gives very effective support to the centre. It provides very helpful and timely information, particularly on priority groups.
- Effective partnership work with health professionals is ensuring that health outcomes for families are positive and improving.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the centre, which reflects the most recent guidance for keeping children safe.
- Resources are of high quality. Children and parents have access to a wide range of facilities across the site, which provide a wealth of opportunities for outdoor learning and development.

It is not outstanding because:

- Currently, systems to track the progress of adults' learning and achievement are underdeveloped.
- Data are not always collected effectively so staff can check the full the impact of the centre's work.
- Not enough adults complete courses or volunteering programmes, as a first step back into training and employment.

What does the centre need to do improve further?

- Ensure leaders thoroughly check the impact of the centre's work by:
 - developing systems to monitor the progress and success of parents' learning and achievement
 - making sure information is collected more effectively to enable staff to conduct robust analysis that will inform future planning and demonstrate the impact of the centre's work.
- Increase the number still further of adults completing courses and volunteering programmes, as a first step back into training and employment.

Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with, staff, the headteacher of Epsom Downs Primary School and Children's Centre and a representative from the local authority. They also met partners from health and early years education, parents, representatives from the advisory board and members of the governing body of Epsom Downs Primary School and Children's Centre. The lead inspector met with the centre manager of Banstead Children's Centre, with which the centre works in partnership. The centre manager was absent during the inspection. The headteacher of Epsom Downs Primary School and Children's Centre and a representative from the local authority attended all meetings of the inspection team.

Inspectors observed the 'Boogie Mites', 'Feeding Mothers Together' and 'Stay and Play' sessions. The inspectors looked at the centre's self-evaluation and action planning, a sample of case files, safeguarding practice, policies and procedures, and a range of other documentation, including evaluations of parents' views.

Inspection team

David Scott, Lead Inspector	Additional Inspector
Jean Cook	Additional Inspector
Peter Towner	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Epsom Downs Children's Centre opened in October 2005, as a stand-alone centre. It is fully integrated with Epsom Downs Primary School and Children's Centre (URN 125127) and Epsom Downs Children's Centre Day Nursery (EY 312652), who share the same site. It delivers a range of services, including health, parenting classes, stay and play sessions, adult learning and family support. The centre works in partnership with Banstead Children's Centre (URN 23716). All these settings are subject to separate inspections and their reports can be found at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

The centre is managed by the governing body of Epsom Downs Primary School Children's Centre on behalf of the local authority. There is also an advisory board, which comprises parents and key partners. There is also a parents' forum.

The number of children under five years of age living in the area served by the centre is 1274. The surrounding area is relatively affluent but has significant pockets of deprivation. Approximately one in five children live in an area of least advantage, with a high proportion living in social housing. Information shows that just over one in ten children live in households where no adult is working. A third of parents have been educated to university level.

Most families are of White British heritage, with the remainder being from a range of minority ethnic groups. Children's skills and abilities on entry to early education are at levels that are generally below those expected for their age.

The centre has identified the following priority group as needing most support: all families living in the three least advantaged areas.

Inspection judgements

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

- The large majority of families with young children in the area, including those who are expecting children, are registered and regularly attend the centre's activities.
- The large majority of priority families who live in two out of the three least advantaged areas engage well with its services. Families located nearest to the centre, from the most disadvantaged area, attend even more regularly.
- Staff have ensured that most eligible two-year-olds and all three- and four-year-old children take up their free funded place at good or better early years settings. This is because of the centre's effective support and provision of good quality services.
- Strong partnership working, particularly with health and social care professionals, has enabled effective packages of support to be arranged to help families in most need. Where services cannot be provided directly by the centre, staff signpost families to other services or professionals, including those at a neighbouring children's centre.
- Centre staff work closely with midwives and health visitors to ensure they are kept up to date about new babies born each month. Regular baby clinics held at the same time, for example as 'Feeding Mothers Together'. This has made a strong contribution to rising registrations, particularly for expectant and young parents.

The quality of practice and services **Good**

- The centre provides an effective balance of activities that are open to everyone and those designed specifically to support priority groups, and to meet the needs of families. Relationships between staff and families are extremely positive and, as a result, parents hold the centre in high esteem and

say how welcoming it is. As one parent commented, 'Staff are non-judgemental and always help you to find solutions.'

- Case files are effective in giving a clear record of actions. They show high levels of care and support for families to enable them to establish clear routines and positive behaviours and improve levels of confidence in their parenting skills.
- Good quality sessions such as 'Boogie Mites' and Stay and Play enable parents to build positive relationships with their child and support their learning, through play, music and movement. An attractive and useful early years profile enables parents and staff to check children's progress. These activities have made a strong contribution in enabling just over two thirds of Reception-age children to achieve a good level of development, which is just above the national picture.
- A quarter of parents have attended parenting programmes such as baby massage, first aid and family links. These are designed to improve their parenting skills and give them a better understanding of how their children learn and develop.
- There are some opportunities for parents to prepare for employment, which include improving English and mathematics skills, and gaining a better understanding of the needs of the workplace. However, too few adults from households where no one is working are benefitting from such courses as a first step back into training and employment. Also, systems to monitor the progress and success of parents' learning and achievement are underdeveloped.
- In the past, volunteering programmes have been successful in enabling parents to participate in activities supporting the running of the centre and the local community. However, the numbers participating in such programmes are too few.
- The promotion of healthy lifestyles has been a strong focus of the centre's work. Courses such as 'Feed your family for less', 'Sharing family food' and 'Toddler cookery' have enabled families to feel more confident in preparing healthy and nutritious meals. As a result, the healthy weight of Reception age children is improving and is just above the national average.
- Initiatives to improve breastfeeding rates at six to eight weeks have been successful. Helpful advice and support from the centre team, together with health professionals, has ensured that rates have improved and are just above average. However, immunisation rates are below the national average.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Centre staff and the headteacher of Epsom Downs Primary School and Children's Centre are strongly committed to improving the life chances and reducing inequalities for children and their families. They, together with governors and members of the advisory board, have a very good understanding of the local community and the problems that affect its families. Leaders and those responsible for governance have an accurate view of the centre's performance.
- The local authority monitors the work of the centre regularly through the annual conversation and targeted visits to provide advice and support. During the inspection, the advisory team manager was able to provide very helpful information regarding the progress of priority families.
- Governance arrangements are effective. The work of the parents' forum, advisory board and governing body is carefully interlinked. This is to ensure a consistency of approach across the school and nursery settings. These groups, made up of key professionals, partners and parents, bring a range of expertise and experience. They know about the process of setting targets for staff and are involved in the annual review process, where their views are regularly sought.
- Arrangements for supervising and reviewing the performance of staff mirror those deployed in the primary and nursery schools and are understood well. However, information on the centre's performance is not always collected effectively enough to enable staff to conduct robust analysis. that will inform future planning and demonstrate the centre's impact.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the centre. The child protection and safeguarding children policy reflects the most recent guidance for keeping children safe in education. As a result of effective early help procedures, children who are looked after, subject to child protection plans and those deemed to be children in need, are well supported.

- Resources are of high quality. Children and parents have access to the full range of facilities across the site, which provide a wealth of opportunities for outdoor learning and development. For example, families can enjoy activities which range from feeding goats, pigs and chickens on the farm to growing fruit and vegetables on the allotment.
- The centre is at the heart of the local community and its work is valued highly by families and children. Parents and their children have a positive voice through the parents' forum in shaping future activities and believe their views are valued and supported, where possible. Typical comments include: 'The centre is a place of safety and is like a home from home', 'Staff go above and beyond their duties', and 'This centre 'brought me out of my shell.'

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

Unique reference number	21106
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	464562
Managed by	The governing body of Epsom Downs Primary School and Children's Centre, on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1274
Centre leader	Cheryle Sutherland
Date of previous inspection	7–8 July 2010
Telephone number	01737 850517
Email address	family@epsomdowns.surrey.sch.uk

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