

# Riverboats Children's Centre

Price's Lane, Upton-upon-Severn, WR8 0LY

<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 July 2014
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

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

- Not enough families from some priority groups are using the centre's services.
- A low proportion of two-year-olds are taking up their entitlement to funded early education and the centre has not been given the information it needs to identify those who are not.
- Leaders and managers do not effectively track the development of children who regularly access the centre or sufficiently analyse information about their achievement at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. As a result they are not able to show the difference that the centre makes to narrowing the achievement gap between the most disadvantaged children and their peers.
- The centre does not track the progress of parents to demonstrate how effective services are in helping them to gain qualifications, access further learning or gain employment.
- Opportunities for adults to volunteer and contribute to the design, delivery and evaluation of children's centre services are under-developed.
- Leaders and managers are clear about what the centre needs to do to improve. However, their action planning is not precise enough. Some members' attendance at the advisory board is adhoc and its challenge role is not as strong as the support it gives to the centre.
- The monitoring of the quality of services delivered by children's centre staff is underway but leaders and managers do not routinely monitor the quality of commissioned provision, such as the crèche, or adult learning courses.

### This children's centre has the following strengths:

- The 'Parents to Be' programme, which is jointly delivered by a midwife, the National Childbirth Trust and a family support worker, provides effective support to expectant parents and ensures they are well engaged with early childhood services.
- Centre staff provide good quality and effective help, advice and guidance to vulnerable families. As one parent said: 'We were at ground zero and we're now back on our feet.'
- 'The centre is the strong glue lot of partners', is a typical view of those organisations working closely with the centre. Partnerships with health services are particularly good.
- Safeguarding policy, practice and procedures are highly effective and a strength of the centre.

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

- Target services more effectively so that at least the large majority of families from the priority groups identified by the centre and the local authority, including those living in workless households, access early childhood services and adult learning.
- Work with the local authority to ensure that at least the very large majority of eligible two-year-old children take up their entitlement to free early education.
- Enhance the achievement of children and their parents from priority groups, by:
  - developing a coherent approach to tracking children's development from birth to the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage
  - tracking the progress of parents who attend adult learning programmes to show their journey on to further education, training or employment.
- Create more opportunities for parents to volunteer and contribute to the design, delivery and evaluation of children's centre services.
- Strengthen leadership, governance and management by:
  - Improving the partnership with the local authority to create a development plan that clearly sets out how the centre will improve and includes specific, measurable targets to increase both the access of priority families and the impact of services
  - monitoring the quality of all services delivered by children's centre staff and commissioned provision, such as the crèche and adult learning courses
  - improving parents' and partners' attendance at the advisory board and enhancing its challenge role.

## 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 coordinator and former centre coordinator; the early help manager and former area manager for the locality; representatives from the local authority; health visitor; midwife; police officer and police community support officer; representatives from a range of partners and commissioned services including the crèche provider and adult learning. The inspectors also spoke with several parents, including by telephone.

The inspectors visited all of the activities that were delivered and jointly observed 'Sensory Sailors' with the part-time centre coordinator.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including all of the current family support work case files.

## Inspection team

Michael Blakey, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Catherine Hairsine

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Riverboats Children's Centre is designated as a stand-alone centre and delivers a range of services including midwife and health visitor clinics, early learning activities, family support and adult learning. It started delivering services in 2010 and moved to its current purpose built site in 2011. The centre has shared a Head of Service since April 2013 when Action for Children was awarded the contract to manage four children's centres across the Malvern Hills district. The centre coordinator has been in post since November 2013 and is also responsible on a day-to-day basis for Teme Valley Children's Centre, which was inspected in 2012. Staff deliver services across the wider Malvern Hills district. The local authority has immediate plans to formally group the four children's centres.

The centre shares the site with Upton upon Severn CofE Primary School and Upton upon Severn Pre School. The reports of these settings are available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Over the past six months there have been significant changes to leadership and management and high levels of absence in the wider staff team. The centre has a part time centre coordinator, a family support worker, activity worker, and a part time administrator.

An advisory board is in place, and is chaired by the headteacher of the co-located school. Wider governance is provided by Action for Children and Worcestershire County Council.

The centre serves a large rural area of relative affluence from Kempsey in the North to Bushley and Eldersfield to the south. Within this wider reach area there is one area in the town of Upton upon Severn that is relatively more deprived than elsewhere in the centre's reach area. Unemployment rates are well below those seen nationally. Almost all families are from White British backgrounds.

Overall, children enter early years provision with skills and experiences that are in line with the expectations for their age.

The centre has identified the following key priority groups: lone parents; fathers; children living in workless households; minority ethnic families; and teenage parents.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

### Requires improvement

- As one parent said: 'not enough people come...but once they come through the door they tend to stay.'
- The overall number of families using the centre has improved since the centre moved to its new site in 2011. However, although the centre and the local authority have correctly identified a number of key priority groups: lone parents; fathers; children living in workless households; and families of minority ethnic heritage, their engagement is not yet good. Teenage parents are well engaged.
- The local authority has set appropriate targets for the engagement of these groups but most of them have not yet been met by the centre. The most recent information shows that 54% of the vulnerable families, as defined by the local authority, access services.
- The overall picture is more positive with the large majority of children living in the reach area accessing an early childhood service including free early education anywhere within Worcestershire. Once these families are engaged with the centre they tend to remain engaged and this reflects the positive views of parents about the welcoming and supportive nature of the centre.
- The proportion of eligible two-year-olds accessing their free entitlement to early education, at 68% is not yet at the level seen nationally. Almost all three and four year olds access their entitlement.
- The centre delivers two main parenting programmes across the group's reach area, which are often oversubscribed. However, retention rates are variable and some programmes are not as well attended as others.
- Information is shared effectively between partners. The centre knows all of the children with social care involvement, including those subject to child protection plans; children in need; and looked after children. As a result of effective partnership working with health services, including the sharing of live birth data and onsite antenatal clinics, most families, including those expecting children, are known to the children's centre at an early stage.
- Despite an uncertain period during re-commissioning, long periods of staff absence and changes to leadership and management, access to family support for some vulnerable families, including some reluctant to engage in services, has been maintained effectively.

### The quality of practice and services

### Requires improvement

- The centre delivers a range of services, many of which are open to all families and some of which are more targeted towards families who need additional support. Although these services are typically of good quality, with a clear rationale, they are not yet well enough attended by priority children and families.
- Overall, children from the area achieve well at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, the centre does not know whether there are any achievement gaps because leaders and managers do not routinely analyse data. Data provided by the authority shows large variations in children's achievement by school, but the centre is not using this information to plan appropriate services.
- The centre does not routinely track the progress of children so is unable to fully demonstrate the impact of services, particularly on narrowing inequalities. Learning journeys are used for a few children, but the approaches to assessment in the crèche, centre activities and co-located pre-school are inconsistent.

- Health outcomes for children, although better than national levels, are declining. The proportion of mothers' breastfeeding at six-to-eight weeks has fallen from over 60% to 50% and the proportion of Reception-age children who are obese is rising steadily year on year. However, families' attendance at 'Baby Latte' has increased considerably and as a result parents have access to the good quality advice and support. The promotion of healthy lifestyles through effective information, advice and guidance is appreciated by parents.
- Although leaders and managers have begun to more formally monitor the quality of practice by observing a session and a family support visit these quality assurance processes are not sufficiently well developed so that leaders and managers have a complete picture of the quality of services offered.
- The quality of case file recording is good and reflects the positive and highly effective family support provided.
- Parents value the prompt action, welcoming atmosphere and continuity of care that they receive from all centre staff. The co-delivered 'Parents to be' courses introduce new parents to relevant support agencies whilst preparing them well for parenthood.
- Despite their positive impact on some parents, the impact on others is restricted by their poor attendance on a minority of programmes.
- Data collated by the local authority from the Early Help electronic case management system shows that almost all parents and most children think that the support they receive has made a positive difference to their lives. Similarly, when used, 'distance travelled' tools show that the outcomes for families receiving intensive support are improving.

### **The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management**

### **Requires improvement**

- The new centre coordinator, head of service and the small staff team are committed to driving improvements and have broadly identified what the centre needs to do to improve. However, the improvement plan is not sufficiently detailed, and lacks clear performance measures. This is impeding the otherwise secure capacity of the centre, to move forward.
- Most of the data that the centre requires is readily available. The exceptions are the detailed data on children's achievement and information about the eligibility of two year olds for free education which impedes the centre's ability to undertake effective follow up.
- Governance arrangements are generally effective. Local authority performance monitoring processes are well established and regular meetings to discuss the centre's performance take place. The annual conversation is thorough and correctly identifies what the centre does well and where improvement is required.
- The advisory board is well established and has a wide membership but the attendance of a few partners and parents is too variable and decision-making lacks sufficient challenge.
- Centre users complete evaluations following the activities they access and staff take these into account in planning future sessions. However, the absence of a parent's forum limits parents' wider influence in service design, delivery and evaluation.
- Financial resources have been reduced in the last two years and the move towards a group model of service delivery is contributing to a more sustainable approach, especially in terms of staffing services across the Malvern Hills Early Help area.

- Supervision and performance management are effective as staff receive one-to-one supervision and group supervision on alternate two week cycles. Staff say they value this support particularly through the recent changes.
  
- Safeguarding arrangements are a strength of the centre. Close partnership working with health services and children's social care ensures that children and families receive effective early help. Those children who are subject to child protection plans, children in need and those who are looked after are known to the centre and staff contribute to their support packages as appropriate. All staff are safely recruited.

## 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**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	23389
<b>Local authority</b>	Worcestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	442900
<b>Managed by</b>	Action for Children on behalf of the local authority.

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	590
<b>Centre leader</b>	Sue Raymond
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01684-594806
<b>Email address</b>	sue.raymond@actionforchildren.org.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

This template is available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130186](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130186).

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store St  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

No. 130186

© Crown copyright 2014

