

St Martin's Children's Centre

Worple Road, Epsom, Surrey, KT18 7AA

Inspection dates	11–12 February 2015
Previous inspection date	Not applicable

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 centre staff know the area very well. More and more families with children under five are registered at the centre and a large majority are taking advantage of the services and support provided at St Martin's and other children's centres.
- The centre has been particularly successful in ensuring that most families in the areas it has identified for particular support, around Horton and Epsom town centre, are taking advantage of the services on offer.
- The centre is very successful in supporting families in need of particular support in their own homes, to improve family life and keep children free from harm.
- In collaboration with its key partners, the centre provides a range of good quality services to help parents to support their children's early learning and development and health and well-being.
- In a short time, the centre leader has gained the confidence of the community, brought further improvements to the centre's work and involved more families. She is well supported by the effective and dedicated staff team.
- The local authority, governors and headteacher of St Martin's Infant School all play an important role in supporting the centre's work. They also challenge the leader to improve it further to the benefit of even more families.
- The centre provides excellent levels of care, guidance and support. Parents always find a warm welcome at the centre. They also find staff ready to provide advice and listen to any concerns they might have.

It is not outstanding because:

- Not enough parents have the opportunity to volunteer and to take part in adult learning to improve the economic well-being of their families
- Systems to track the long-term impact of the centre's work on children's learning and development, the parenting skills of adults and the economic well-being of families are at an early stage of development.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Provide more opportunities for parents to volunteer and to take part in adult learning to improve the economic well-being of their families.
- Develop systems to track the long-term impact of the centre's work on children's learning and development, the parenting skills of adults and the economic well-being of families.

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 leader and staff, two representatives of the local authority, the headteacher of St Martin's Infant School and members of the responsible body and advisory board. They also talked, either in person or on the telephone, to parents and representatives of key partners, for example in health, adult education and social care.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness, plans for improvement and information about the safeguarding of children. They also considered the views of parents expressed in their feedback about the centre.

Inspection team

Graham Lee, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Elizabeth Dickson, Team inspector	Additional inspector
Peter Towner, Team inspector	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

St Martin's is a stand-alone centre which opened in September 2009. It is housed in its own purpose-built accommodation which it shares with the St Martin's pre-school, an independent organisation. The centre does not manage the pre-school, which is subject to separate inspection arrangements. The centre is located on a site it shares with the St Martin's infant and junior schools. These schools are also subject to separate inspection arrangements. The infant school manages the centre on behalf of the local authority, whilst the junior school is responsible for the buildings and grounds. The schools manage these aspects through a responsible body consisting of governors from both schools. The centre is also supported by an advisory board, made up of key partners. There have been a considerable number of staff changes in recent years. The interim centre leader has been in post since July 2014. The centre provides early education and health services in conjunction with its key partners. It offers family support and works with some families in their own homes. It also provides help for parents to enter training and employment, and parent information services. The centre works closely with Epsom Children's Centre to meet the needs of the local community

The centre serves a relatively affluent area around Epsom, Woodcote and Stamford, although there are pockets of deprivation and temporary accommodation in some areas. The northern part of the area is urban, whilst to the south around Epsom racecourse, it is more rural. A large number of parents living in the area are educated to a good level. Nearly one in ten of children under five are living in households where no adult is working. About a quarter of families are from a wide range of Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. Children's skills on entry to early years education are generally above those typically found. The centre is providing particular help for individual families identified as being most in need of intervention and support. It is also focusing on supporting families in two of its relatively less affluent areas, around Horton and Epsom town centre.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The centre works in close collaboration with its partners in health, early years settings and social care to identify families with children under five in the area and those expecting children. As a result, more than four out of five of these families are known to the centre, including all those identified as being in need of particular support.
- The number of families with children under five in the area receiving help from St Martin's or other local centres has been rising steadily over time, especially in the past year. As a result, a large majority are now benefitting from the services, support and advice they need.
- The centre has successfully focused its attention on supporting families in its two relatively less affluent areas around Horton and Epsom town centre. In these areas, almost all families are registered and most are involved in the centre's activities.
- A priority for the centre is to work with the relatively small number of families referred to them for additional support and advice. The centre is very successful in providing support to all these families, often in their own home in the first instance. This often leads them to become involved in other services on a regular basis to the benefit of their families.
- Most families entitled to free early years education for their children take up the offer. The centre helps them to take up places for their children in good and outstanding settings in the local area.
- The one in four families of British and Minority Ethnic heritage represent a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. The available information shows they are involved as much, or more than, their White British counterparts in the work of the centre.
- The centre works in close and effective partnership with Epsom Children's Centre to provide services and support that are tailored to the needs of families and avoid duplication. For example, families on the Traveller site in the centre's area attend Epsom Primary School and have forged close relationships with the centre located on the same site. It has, therefore, sensibly been agreed that

Epsom Children's centre should work with these families.

- The centre prioritises support for children with additional needs through its Rainbow Group and draws families from across the borough to take advantage of the centre's expertise and help.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The centre provides a good range of activities such as 'Messy Play', 'Stay and Play' and 'Movers and Shakers' to help parents support their children's early learning and development at different stages. The centre works closely with the pre-school and infants to provide activities that support children's learning in a fun and stimulating environment. These activities benefit all families as well as those the centre has identified as being in need of particular help.
- The centre's work helps prepare children for school and contributes to outcomes at the end of the Early Years provision that are above those typical for their age. Gaps for the most disadvantaged children, whilst remaining significant, are also reducing. The centre is at the early stages, however, of tracking the impact of its support on these outcomes, particularly of those children it has worked with closely.
- The centre's effective partnership with the health services ensures that information is shared easily to provide families with the help they need. Various clinics and activities such as Baby Massage take place at the centre and are often the first links forged with parents, which encourages them to benefit from other services. Consequently, the centre has exceeded its health-related targets for the sustaining of breastfeeding and children maintaining a healthy weight.
- There is a range of parenting courses on offer, such as 'Parenting Puzzle' to support parents in need of particular support. Most of the adults concerned have sustained their involvement and this has also been followed up on a one-to-one basis by staff in some cases. Whilst these courses are undoubtedly having an impact, the centre is not yet tracking the long-term impact of this work on parenting skills and the well-being of families.
- The centre works closely with Epsom Children's Centre to enable families to access adult learning. The centre is also forging links with the local college and employment agencies. However, there are not yet enough opportunities for parents who need to improve the economic stability of their families to benefit from adult education to increase their prospects of employment. Moreover, the impact of this work on families' economic stability is not yet being tracked.
- There are a few parents who have volunteered at the centre with notable success; one, for example, has gone on to secure a job at the centre. However, the numbers are relatively few and only one parent is currently volunteering.
- The centre has been especially successful in working with teenage parents through its 'Young Chums' group. This has helped to build up networks of support and to improve the self-esteem and parenting skills of the parents involved to improve the well-being of families.
- Case files are kept to a high standard and show that the centre's work with families most in need of support in their own homes is successful and leads to improved outcomes for families and children.
- The centre is a very warm and welcoming place which provides excellent levels of care, guidance and support to families. One parent commented, 'I don't know what I would have done without knowing the centre was here to talk through issues that come up.' This was typical of the views expressed by parents.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The interim centre leader has only been in post for a short period of time but has quickly gained the confidence of the whole community. She has contributed significantly to the centre's continued improvement and the increasing number of families benefitting from its support.
- She is supported by a small and dedicated staff team who assume multiple roles and are committed to the families with whom they work. They are well qualified and trained and arrangements for their professional development and supervision are rigorous and supportive.

- The local authority has provided very good support for the centre through a period of significant change. They have helped the new leader to settle into her role as well as challenging her to make further improvements. The local authority ensures that the centre is focused on improving outcomes for the most vulnerable families.
- Arrangements for the governance of the centre are necessarily complex because of the structure involving both schools on the site. Nevertheless, the responsible body and the advisory board know their roles well and have a good understanding of what is happening in the centre. They know about the increasing number of families involved in the centre's work and the groups prioritised for special help. The headteacher of the infant school is passionate about the centre and has provided invaluable support to the centre leader.
- The centre leader, supported by the local authority, is making very good use of information about families in the area to ensure that the centre is reaching more families with children under five, especially those most in need. This analysis is supported by regular feedback from parents about activities which is used to shape services in the future. As a result, the centre has an accurate view of how well it is doing and what it needs to do to improve even further.
- There are very good procedures and policies in place for safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. The centre works effectively with its key partners to support children identified as being in need and those subject to the child protection plans and the Common Assessment Framework. This work shows marked improvements in the well-being of families and children over time.
- The resources available to the centre are used effectively to support families most in need. The relatively small activity room is supplemented by an attractive garden and outdoor area. The partnership with Epsom Children's Centre enables services to reach more families. Staff are adaptable and work well together to do whatever needs to be done.

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	22866
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	455654
Managed by	The governors of St Martin's Infant School on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1400
Centre leader	Kerry Lapsley
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01372 730453
Email address	manager@stmartinschildrenscentre.com

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