

Inspection report for Forest Children's Centre

Local authority	Enfield
Inspection number	383934
Inspection dates	31 January 2012 – 1 February 2012
Reporting inspector	Deavon Baker-Oxley

Centre leader	Heather Allen
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Galliard Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Galliard Children's Centre Day Care

The inspection of this Sure Start children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with parents and carers, children and centre staff including the centre's manager. Interviews were held with local authority representatives, partners and members of the local advisory board.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Forest Children's Centre was designated in 2008, as a phase two centre. It forms part of a cluster with Galliard Children's Centre, following local authority reorganisation. Both centres are managed under the same leadership and management team, this being the Headteacher of Galliard Primary School, Board of Governors, Centre Manager and the Business Manager for the primary school. Forest Children's Centre operates as a community service, operating from a church building. The centre serves 759 under fives. Statistical data for the area indicate that it is in an area of significant social and economic disadvantage. The percentage of families from minority ethnic populations is high with the highest being White Turkish. The number of children under five from families dependant on workless benefits equates to 73.7%. Whilst many Children entre early year education with knowledge and skills expected of them, a small minority are below those expected for their age.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children’s centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for families

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre’s capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

2

Main findings

Good leadership and management have taken the children’s centre on a very positive journey since its designation in 2008, and local authority reorganisation bringing in the clustering of children's centres and ensuring sustainability of its services. An effective culture prevails of reinforcing continuous improvement. This is underpinned by robust, effective and inclusive self-evaluation. The centre is well established within the community and is viewed by many families as a one-stop shop for advice and support. The number of families using the services of the centre has seen very positive and sustained growth.

Centre staff are highly committed and supportive of the families and young children within the reach area, providing inclusive and confidential advice and guidance. Families reported feeling valued and respected by centre staff and other families.

Safeguarding arrangements are robust. The centre meets its legislative requirement, and all staff have access to good quality training at advanced levels and clear access to highly qualified and experienced advanced safeguarding practitioners. There is effective communication between all agencies, ensuring that children’s safety within the reach area is prioritised.

The centre is a bustling, safe and welcoming environment. It provides a wide variety of good quality activities and support for children and their families, particularly for those that are vulnerable or at risk of having a poor start in life, for example stay-and-play with story and rhyme time, and coffee mornings for parents and carers of children with autism. These activities have a positive impact on children's start in school. The offering of English for speakers of other languages courses enables parents and carers to develop in confidence in helping their children and family settle into the community.

Assessment of need is good. Data are used very well to record the progress that children are making, and to provide staff with challenging targets to further improve the outcomes for families. The majority of parents, carers and children are improving in their achievements and gaining in self-confidence. A good range of learning opportunities is provided by the centre, and families are actively encouraged to attend the nearby Galliard Children’s Centre which shares resources. This also ensures sustainability of the services for families within the reach area.

The centre embraces and celebrates equality and diversity. The work of the centre is sensitive, inclusive and attractive to the multicultural society of the area. Speakers of English as an additional language are well supported. Many adults take part in child-centred activities which gives them confidence when playing with their children so aiding their children's development. One good example of this is the weekly Community Brunch that brings different ethnic groups together.

The centre has demonstrated year-on-year improvement in both the proportion of reach families attending, and the achievement of children once they start school. The centre has a good capacity to improve further. It knows its strengths well and bases its improvements and priorities on sound assessment and evaluation. The centre is responsive to the views of its users and partner organisations. However, the centre has recognised that it needs to give further attention to the collection, recording and analysis of data; and the effective deployment of human resources to better meet the needs of the centre and reach area.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop the collection, recording and analysis of data with a better focus on the target group, paying attention to the key performance indicators and setting challenging targets that are measurable and time bound.
- Improve the deployment of human resources to better meet the needs of the target group, increasing the uptake of centre services by parents, carers and children.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Centre staff are committed to improving the health outcomes for children and families, with increasing success. A large majority of the reach group attend the centre, and are developing a better understanding of how to live healthy lives. The obesity rate for the reach area is at 17.7%, which is 4.5% above that of Enfield. To improve this rate the centre has introduced a change 4 life parenting programme. Parents and carers are encouraged to read the ingredients of processed foods, concentrating on the fat and sugar content. They are encouraged to take part in cooking classes based on a budget, discussing the use of tinned vegetables and their nutritional value. Parents and carers are given information regarding dental health, working in partnership with an oral health improvement practitioner, who has trained five parents, three of whom are actively supporting parents and carers within the centre. The practitioner also gives advice about dental practices within the area of the reach including those who deal with disabilities. The immunisation up-take rate within the reach area is low at 44%. The centre and health authority organised an immunisation event that 30 children attended (10% of the target group). The centre outreach workers undertake promotion on a frequent basis, visiting shopping centres and parks. The breastfeeding rate at six to eight weeks for the reach area is low at

68.7%. The local authority, working with the health authority, has introduced breastfeeding champions, who will be visiting mothers in their homes to advise and encourage them to continue breastfeeding.

The arrangements for families to stay safe are good and well promoted. Care is taken to ensure that all the activities undertaken are well organised and supervised, with thorough risk assessments. Families report feeling safe and protected. The centre provides an effective support group for women who have suffered domestic abuse. Women are able to seek support and advice in confidence. Children behave in ways that are safe for themselves and others. During cooking sessions children are encouraged to wash hands and to develop good hygiene habits. The staff ensure that the environment is safe by checking the premises daily, and between sessions. Parents and carers have attended sessions given by the fire services and police within the centre. Many are having smoke alarms fitted in their homes following these sessions. Most families using the centre report feeling safe, and are able to discuss very personal issues with centre staff and ask for advice. Many are signposted to other services.

There are many activities where parents, carers and children play, have fun and learn together. Parents and children enjoy attending activities such as Tatty Bumpkin's Healthy Lifestyle Active Yoga Adventure Course, and physical play including trampolining, wheelie bugs and tunnels. One parent stated that the centre made her happier, feeling positive energy, more confidence, more sociable, and sharing special times playing at home with her child.

Parents and carers make a very good contribution to the work and development of the centre, particularly through the frequently-held Parents Matter Community Brunch, bringing many vulnerable families together and creating a safe forum where parents and carers from diverse backgrounds can meet and develop a better understanding of each other, breaking down barriers and creating community cohesion. Many activities engage all groups well; stay and play with story and rhyme time promotes early years outcomes very effectively. Parents' and carers' views are collected weekly; suggestions are discussed and acted upon, for example for a course on paediatric first aid. The Strengthening Families, Strengthening Community Parenting Course encourages parents and carers to become more actively involved in their child's learning; they are involved in creating learning journeys, and also play with their children during the many activities. The outreach library session encourages families to become active users, by borrowing books and attending sessions, contributing to preparing children for school. The library also becomes part of the community.

The centre provides good opportunities for families to improve their economic well-being through a range of services. The English for speakers of other languages accredited course, both entry level and level 1 is well attended, with crèche facilities. This enables participants to develop in self-confidence, and become more actively involved in their children's education and the job market. The data from the primary school show an increase in achievement at the Early Years Foundation Stage, from

52.2% to 65% of children reaching the target of 78+, including 6+ in personal, social and emotional development, and communication, language and literacy. The primary school has reported that the children come into school ready to learn; they know how to play with good sharing skills and demonstrate a good imagination within role-play activities. The centre provides a weekly Jobcentre Plus with individual weekly appointments, supporting families into work. A vacancy board is updated weekly, advertising jobs within the local area. Individuals are signposted to education and training in local colleges. A number of parents and carers have moved into paid jobs, developing in self-esteem and confidence. Others become parent helpers within the centre, and ambassadors for the centre; for example, for oral health and breastfeeding. Parents and carers are able to use the services of the Citizen Advice Bureau on a weekly basis for advice on benefit and financial matters.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment	2

How good is the provision?

2

The centre provides a good range of services. A large majority of families in the area use the services to a high degree and most rely on them. The needs of the area, particularly for those families in the target group, are well understood by the centre staff. Assessment methods are very effective, and outcomes are well recorded. Outreach work is good – it is flexible, individualised and promotes independence. The continued uptake of services offered by the centre is evidence of its impact in meeting the immediate and personal development needs of the reach families and the target group. Children’s achievements are well recorded in their profiles. Prior learning is acknowledged well and recorded, and used well to signpost families to further learning.

The sensitive and individualised care, guidance and support provided to families are good. The quality of support for families in crisis is good and effective work is done to minimise or prevent crisis events. This is evident in the effective working between

the local authority and other services to rigorously assess the needs of the most vulnerable children and families. One parent said 'I am so happy to come here, share my problems, and going through a hard time, we can always talk.' The centre offers crèche facilities for parents and carers attending development sessions. Parents and carers consider that the good access to financial support and advice provides them with invaluable specialist support.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The governance and accountability of the centre are good with clear links between the local authority targets and priorities with good focus on the target group. There is a clear day-to-day management arrangement in place for the centre; the staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. The centre is the responsibility of the local authority, with the day-to-day responsibility shared between the primary school headteacher and the children's centre manager. There are planned meetings at all levels to ensure the effective management of the centre. There are planned monthly meetings with finance. There is good financial management of the centre budget. The governing body members, who are members of the advisory board, are very committed, and very active in monitoring the work of the centre on a regular basis, contributing to the centre's self-evaluation which is thorough and effective. The governing body plays the role of a critical friend, and is able to challenge the centre manager regarding performance. The governing body understands the need for effective deployment of staff resources to meet the needs of the centre and that of the target group. The central focus of the centre, to promote consistently good outcomes, is making a very positive impact on the community, and ensuring good value for money. Service level agreements between all the partners are effective, with clear objectives, monitored at regular intervals. Effective recruitment procedures are in place. Opportunities for professional development are based on staff appraisal and the needs of the centre.

Although there are good opportunities for users to voice their opinions at activity level, they are currently not fully engaged in strategic planning and evaluation, The Centre is in the process of recruiting more Centre uses to replace those who have found employment to become members of the advisory board.

There is clear management and direction from the local authority, with effective

strategic planning and change management, to ensure the sustainability of the children’s centre, and its ability to provide a good service and resource to the community and the target group. The local authority sets ambitious targets, which are supported by sound data linked to the key performance indicators. The centre has effectively improved its reach, and has seen a good increase in families accessing the centre: from 24 in 2008/09 to 454 in 2011/to date.

Good partnerships provide an integrated approach, to ensure that families, and target groups in particular, have more opportunities in life, and improved outcomes. Good displays and photographs throughout the centre celebrate diversity. An extensive range of events is provided, including Chinese New Year and Diwali, celebrating local, national and international cultures. The centre encourages children and families to come together. They are respected by staff and other parents and carers. Parents and carers are welcoming to new parents and carers, improving community cohesion. Resources, books and toys reflect the community mix. The centre is proactive in meeting the needs of its diverse community, for example by organising coffee mornings for parents and carers of children with autism. It actively promotes equality of opportunity and has zero tolerance of discrimination.

Safeguarding is given high priority, and all policies and procedures are consistently implemented. Good vetting and recruitment processes are in place for all staff and volunteers. Training in safeguarding and child protection is given high importance. The centre plays an important role in seeking to ensure that children are safe, and in promoting their emotional health and well-being. Where necessary, child protection plans are implemented effectively, as well as working to ensure that victims of domestic violence are supported. The existence of very few active cases demonstrates that staff take swift and appropriate action when safeguarding concerns are identified. The centre works very effectively with external agencies such as health visitors and the Child Development Team to reduce the number of children who are at risk of harm.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre’s policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2

The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	2

Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

None

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Forest Children’s Centre on 31 January 2012 and 1 February 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank the many of you who spoke to us. You told us that the work of the centre is valued, is changing lives, and improving the chances of your children and families, and we agree with you.

Your children are making good progress relative to their starting points. You receive good guidance and support in parenting skills, and this is enabling your children to do well when they start school. Children who have attended the children’s centre do better at school than those who do not.

The centre provides you with good access to specialised services, and many of you told us you would not use these services if they were not provided locally at your centre. You value and trust the information, advice and guidance that you are receiving.

You have access to high quality resources and you use them to the best advantage for your children. The centre staff have very good knowledge and experience, and they use these to provide you with the services and activities that you want and need.

Many of you attend the Parents Matter Community Brunch sessions and complete family questionnaires. Please continue to do this as it gives the staff at the centre good opportunities to hear your views, and to make the services even better. The centre does good work with those who wish to volunteer their services. The volunteers live in the local community and are doing a good job. As a result of volunteering, a number of parents and carers have moved into paid employment.

The centre is successful at safeguarding the families who use the centre. Its arrangements for this are good, and its partnerships with other agencies are effective at reducing the number of children who are at risk of harm in the area. The centre is giving good advice and guidance to improve safety in the home, and improve child safety through improved parenting skills.

We have asked the centre to make a number of improvements. We have asked it to improve the collection, recording and analysis of data, with particular focus on the target group, paying attention to the key performance indicators, and to set challenging targets that are measurable and time bound; and finally to improve the deployment of human resources to better meet the needs of the target group, ensuring the uptake of benefits for parents, carers and children.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.