

Inspection report for Crawford Children's Centre

Local authority	Southwark
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Crawford Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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.

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, parents and carers, and representatives from a range of partner organisations, including the health services, charities and early years providers. They also held meetings with local authority staff, senior managers from the Gypsy Hill Federation of schools and members of the advisory board.

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

Information about the centre

Crawford Children's Centre is a phase two centre in Camberwell, London which opened in 2009. The centre shares its location with Crawford Primary School. The report of the school inspection is available at: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

The school and the centre are part of the Gypsy Hill Federation of schools. The headteacher of Crawford Primary School has overall management responsibility for the centre but day-to-day management is the responsibility of a part-time centre manager. The governing body for the school manages the centre on behalf of the local authority and is supported by an advisory board. The centre offers early years provision, adult learning opportunities, health services, family support and outreach activities.

The reach area for the centre has pockets of affluence and of deprivation. Child poverty data indicate that around 35.2% of children under five live in poverty. All of the seven super output areas within the Camberwell Green ward are in the 30% most disadvantaged areas in the country. Take-up rates of childcare by low income families are around 28.9%.

Most families in the reach area are from minority ethnic groups. A high proportion of families speak English as a second language. Accommodation is a mix of privately owned and social housing. Children’s skills on entry to early years provision are generally lower than the level expected for their age group.

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

Crawford Children’s Centre is an effective centre which offers good quality provision for families. The centre responds well to the identified needs of the communities it serves and outcomes for families are good. As one parent who successfully completed a parenting course explains: ‘I feel much more empowered and I value being a parent today which means my children feel more confident and secure.’

The headteacher’s role at the aligned school also includes management responsibility for the centre. However, there have been several changes of headteacher within a short space of time. In spite of this, the provision at the centre has been well maintained with no detriment to families or partners who all speak very highly of the work of the centre and its staff. The school is now part of the Gypsy Hill Federation of schools and the strategic management of the centre is strong.

The role of the centre to promote the education and social well-being of children and their parents is seen as an integral part of the work of Gypsy Hill Federation. The centre is contributing well to the increase in the number of children who now achieve 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Safeguarding is given a high priority by staff. As a result, when safety concerns are identified in families, the centre works effectively with a range of partners to respond to their needs. Inclusion and equality are well promoted and the centre constantly monitors participation by different target groups to ensure their respective needs are well met.

The centre works productively with a range of partners to provide services and

support for families and uses data well to monitor the profile of the reach area. Centre staff also use data and other qualitative information effectively to assess the impact of provision. However, the methods used to capture and record data are not always consistent which makes it harder for staff to fully and accurately reflect the impact and success of their work.

Evaluation is a thorough process that involves leaders, managers and families. Although leaders and managers know what actions need to be taken to improve the quality of provision, these actions are not reflected in the centre's self-evaluation report. However, the report accurately reflects the strengths of the centre.

The good quality leadership and management at all levels, the clear strategic vision for the centre and the consistently good outcomes demonstrate that the centre has good capacity to improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure the self-evaluation report includes and records agreed areas for improvement.
- Review methods of capturing data to further ensure the centre can accurately monitor participation and impact.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The centre and its partners know the reach area well and have a good understanding of what needs to be done to improve the lives of families. Data show that the centre is contributing well to the improving health of families, with the result that a large majority of families in the reach area are engaging well with health services. For example, breastfeeding rates at birth are higher than average, as are immunisation rates. The centre works well with health professionals such as health visitors and nutritionists to promote healthy living. Parents are also well engaged with the centre's agenda to reduce obesity rates which, at 23%, are much higher than average. For example, two parents help to deliver a programme that promotes healthy eating. In response to poor nutritional habits among some families from minority ethnic backgrounds, focused work is being undertaken to develop their understanding of the impact of excessive use of fats and sugars.

Through its parenting programmes and its well-integrated work with social care professionals and school staff about child protection issues, the centre helps to keep children safe. 'I couldn't do without the centre' was the comment from a staff member from the local school who regularly works with the centre to support families with identified safeguarding needs. The centre also works well with social care staff who use the centre for contact visits. Through integrated working with a

range of agencies, the centre is able to offer good support to children on child protection plans. Meanwhile, their parents improve their parenting skills and benefit by participating in the centre’s parenting programmes. Staff also use the Common Assessment Framework to ensure families receive the most appropriate level of intervention and support.

Parents and children are enthusiastic about attending the centre. They make good progress in achieving personal, social and educational goals. The centre contributes well to the good educational achievement of children. Data show that the number of children who achieve a good level of development in the Early Years Foundation Stage has increased significantly in recent years and at 65.6% is now higher than the average for both London and the rest of the country. The percentage gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest is also narrowing. Parents and carers also make good progress with their learning and personal development. A significant number of parents and carers have achieved accredited qualifications in courses such as English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).

Parents from different target groups, such as those from minority ethnic backgrounds and those identified as most in need of intervention and support, contribute well to decision making at the centre. They are active participants on the advisory board and the parents’ forum. One parent said: ‘I am now a parent volunteer and a member of the advisory board – I get a lot of self-esteem by being involved because I have gained so much and now I have an opportunity to give something back.’ Children behave well at the centre and staff actively promote positive behaviour. Achievements are recognised and celebrated and the ‘adult achievement board’ is used to celebrate the success of parents who have achieved qualifications.

Although links with Jobcentre Plus have not been productive, the centre has good arrangements with a range of agencies to provide employment advice and guidance to parents. Through these partnerships, parents receive good quality advice about how they can achieve economic independence or improve their financial circumstances. For example, through careful analysis of their benefits entitlement, one lone parent received an increased amount of financial support. Other agencies work with families to identify and reduce barriers to employment. In many cases, this has led to parents progressing to volunteering, employment or to self-employment. One parent who now runs a successful business said: ‘Staff at the centre really encouraged me and I set up my own crèche business.’

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	2

and social development	
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

Leaders and managers of the centre continually analyse data to ensure key target groups, such as families from the most deprived communities or fathers, access services. When low participation by key target groups is identified, programmes are changed from being open to all families to being targeted at these groups. Local intelligence is also used well to continually assess the needs of the community. For example, the centre has identified the needs of families who, because they lack the correct legal status, 'have no recourse to public funds' and whose needs are consequently not reflected in data. However, through successful work with partners from social care and legal advice centres, the centre makes a sensitive but effective response to the needs of these families.

The range of provision offered at the centre is good and promotes purposeful learning for children and adults. Activities such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Boogie Bites' help children to develop their communication, literacy and language skills. These activities for children are also used to help parents learn how they can promote their child's development, for example by replicating activities from the centre at home to help support their child's progress. Provision for adults is also good because it accommodates a wide range of interests and needs. For target groups such as the most vulnerable, parenting programmes and Early Years Foundation Stage training help them develop effective parenting skills and learn how they can become fully engaged in their children's learning. For fathers, through a partnership arrangement with a charity, a 'Story Book Dad' project is successful in helping fathers use storytelling to strengthen their relationships with their children and to promote their transition to school.

'Before I came to Crawford, I felt that I was a bad parent....now I feel like a proper member of my community with the support and friendship of other parents'. This comment from a parent illustrates well the positive impact of the care and support offered to families. The centre works with a wide range of staff from the statutory and voluntary sector to provide support, information and advice. The support strategy for families is clear and well understood. For families with low-level support needs, centre staff provide the support. They also make referrals to other agencies as appropriate or take cases to the local authority's multi-agency 'Early Years Collaborative Team' meetings for further assessment. These meetings are then used to identify which agency is best equipped to provide specialist or intense support to families.

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

At all levels leaders and managers have a good understanding of the characteristics of the reach area and work hard to ensure the centre meets the needs of its key target groups. Governance of the centre is effective and the advisory board provides both support and challenge to the centre to drive improvement and ensures that the centre is held to account. Leaders, managers and staff are conscientious in their approach to inclusion for all families. Through partnership arrangements with a voluntary organisation, the centre ensures that families with children who are disabled or have additional needs have good access to services. The centre promotes equality well and also celebrates diversity by organising activities linked to religious or cultural events that are valued by the community, such as 'Eid' or 'Black History Month'. The centre's carefully planned approach to engaging target groups such as fathers has also been successful.

Partnership arrangements with a wide range of organisations are effective and the quality of the centre's relationships with partners is good. Partners value working in close cooperation with the centre and share a strong commitment with centre staff to improve the lives of families. Evaluations from partners, parents and children are used well to evaluate the impact of activities and also to assess satisfaction rates, which are high. User engagement is good and outreach work in the wider community is actively used to promote the centre to potential users. The centre's process of self-evaluation is thorough and the development plan includes some measurable targets and is clearly linked to strategic priorities. However, the report that is produced as a result of the self-evaluation process does not fully reflect areas for improvement.

Data and information from partners are used well to assess the impact of the centre and also to monitor participation by the different target groups. However, the centre's approach to capturing and recording data from all its partners in order to cover all aspects of provision is not always consistent. Resources are well managed and outcomes are good, therefore value for money is good. The centre has a small staff team but their skills and experience are well deployed.

Safeguarding is a high priority at the centre and this commitment is valued by partners. Emotional health and well-being of families are well promoted. The centre

makes every endeavour to provide early intervention when safeguarding concerns have been identified. Staff receive appropriate training which covers different aspects of safeguarding practice. Recruitment and Criminal Records Bureau checks on staff and volunteers are diligently carried out and other statutory requirements are well met. Safeguarding practice is reviewed as part of the local authority's 'staying safe health check' evaluation. Action is taken to respond to any identified areas of improvements. Multi-agency work with other agencies is effective. The centre also works well with specialist organisations to provide support to victims of domestic violence.

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

Crawford Primary School inspection report.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Crawford Children's Centre on 14 and 15 February 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Many thanks to those of you who took the time to speak to us during the inspection. Like you, we found the centre to be a very welcoming place. Families from all sorts of backgrounds and circumstances are made to feel welcome and their cultures are well respected and celebrated.

We know from what you told us that the centre plays a very important role in your lives and those of your children. Many of you commented on how much more confident you feel since you started attending the centre. From the evidence we looked at, we could see that the centre staff work hard to help families make good progress in life. The statistics we looked at highlight the success of the centre in promoting the health of families. In recent years, the centre has also worked hard to prepare children well for starting school.

The safety of your children is something that the centre takes very seriously. The staff work well with other organisations to ensure that when problems arise which could affect the safety of families, swift and effective action is taken to protect children from harm.

The range and quality of activities that are offered at the centre are good. We were able to observe some activities and could see that you and your children really enjoy attending sessions at the centre. We couldn't observe all the activities offered at the centre during our short visit, but we know from talking to you that you and your children enjoy sessions such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Boogie Bites'.

We also know that many of you have also enjoyed attending parenting courses or have gained qualifications after attending courses such as English for speakers of other languages. We liked the photographs on the 'adult achievement board' and also like the way the centre celebrates the successes of parents and carers who have done well on courses. Some of you have also been helped by the centre to develop your skills as volunteers or have progressed to employment and this is something we recognise as another positive aspect of the centre's work.

From the case studies we looked at and also from our discussions with you, we know that some of you have faced real challenges in life. However, the support the centre offers is effective and has helped you to overcome these barriers.

We want the centre to continue to strive towards excellence. That's why we have asked managers to make sure that when they review the centre's performance, they include in the self-evaluation report, any actions that need to be taken to improve the quality of services. We also want the centre to be much sharper about collecting data so we have asked managers to review the way they collect, analyse and use

statistics to improve the services they offer and to make sure they meet the needs of families in the area.

Once again, many thanks for contributing to the inspection process. We wish you and your families all the best for the future.

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