

# Inspection report for Chessington Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Surrey
<b>Inspection number</b>	383408
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 March 2012
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<b>Centre leader</b>	Lou Anderson
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Castle Hill Nursery and Primary School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Piglets Pre-School Chessington Kids Club

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.

An inspection of the co-located/partner primary school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

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

The inspectors held meetings with the managers of the centre and other staff as well as two representatives from the local authority, including early childhood services and health service professionals. Meetings were also held with the assistant headteacher of the adjoining primary school. Inspectors talked to parents and other users of the centre. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documentation, including evaluations of services, safeguarding arrangements, case studies, development plans and the centre's most recent review report together with local authority data.

## Information about the centre

Chessington Children's Centre is a phase two centre which serves the community of Chessington. It is a 70% centre which delivers the full core offer, with the exception of childcare. It was designated in 2007. It shares a campus with Castle Hill Primary and Nursery School, Piglets Pre-School and Chessington Kids Club and is located in purpose built accommodation which includes a garden area. Statistical data indicate that the centre is situated at the heart of a significantly disadvantaged socio-economic area within Kingston, and it is the third most least deprived local authority in England. The local population is mainly White British and other heritages represented include Asian, and more recently, families of Eastern European heritages.

A majority of children aged under five live in workless households and in receipt of benefits. Most children enter early years provision with a much narrower range of skills and abilities than typically expected for their age. The centre is managed under

the same leadership and management team, this being the headteacher, assistant headteacher and the governing body of Castle Hill Primary School. Day-to-day management is undertaken by two job share centre managers. The work of the centre is monitored by the governing body, the children's centre sub-committee and local authority.

## 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

Chessington Children's Centre provides a good and improving service which meets most parents' and children's needs well. The centre's own surveys show that more than 80% of parents and users are very pleased with the increasing range of courses that they can attend. They told inspectors how good the care, support and guidance they receive is and have special praise for the staff. Typical comments include, 'Nothing is too much trouble' and 'We would be lost; the centre gives us a purpose to get out and go.' The centre is viewed by many parents as the best place to get advice and support. Staff have good local knowledge of the families who use the centre and are highly supportive of them.

Many parents and families attend from the centre's locality and from West Chessington beyond the reach area. The close working partnerships on the campus are one of the centre's strengths. Children benefit from a seamless transition, to the on-site Nursery, school or other providers. Effective communication between all agencies ensures a high priority on children's safety and parents say they feel safe at the centre.

Multi-agency work, including effective partnerships with health, education and social welfare agencies, ensures parents are helped to improve their own and their family's social, emotional, mental and economic well-being. This leads to the majority of users widening their achievements and improving their confidence. The higher ambitions and aspirations of parents means outcomes for children are rising fast.

Comprehensive services are delivered within the locality and health visitors and midwives drop into the centre regularly to offer support and advice. The centre works hard to include all target groups, but knows it has more work to do to

encourage expectant mothers to breastfeed, in particular for young mothers. The centre has successfully engaged some target groups in activities provided, including those at risk from isolation, but attendance tends to drop off part-way through programmes. Leaders know that in order to build on this work they need to identify more precisely who and where the target groups are so that they can encourage them to attend regularly and meet their needs even more effectively.

Many centre users engage in volunteering and/or training, from basic literacy and numeracy skills to higher-level qualifications leading to employment. The wide range of courses offered promotes good opportunities for parents, babies and young children to take part in activities that promote learning and development. New courses are piloted and are often tailored in response to users' needs. Activities range from Baby Massage, Cook and Eat, Resuscitation, Stay and Play, to Behaviour Management, Speech and Language, and Dads' groups. The centre is inclusive and promotes equality and diversity. Language courses enable parents to develop confidence in helping their children and family to settle into the community.

The culture of seeking continuous improvement is underpinned by robust self-evaluation. Staff are ambitious and use development planning, information data and users' views well to focus and monitor the quality of the centre's work. Governors know the centre's strengths and weaknesses but are not yet using data information rigorously to show the good value the centre provides. Given that the centre shows year-on-year improvement leading to good outcomes for most of its families and from children's starting points, it has a good capacity to further improve.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the effectiveness of the centre within one year by:
  - working more closely with midwifery to increase breastfeeding rates within the reach area, in particular with young mothers
  - ensuring that the centre is clear about who and where the 'target families' are, encourages more of them to be involved in the centre and helps them to continue with activities and courses set up to improve their own and their families' life chances
  - helping governors to use data information as rigorously as possible to measure and show the effectiveness of centre's impact more precisely.

## How good are outcomes for families?

2

Health outcomes are generally improving. Health visitors hold drop-in clinics for weaning at baby massage courses. A drop-in breastfeeding support group runs alongside the health visitor's clinic and attendance has risen from nine families to 15 recently. Overall, 40% of mothers are breastfeeding at six to eight weeks but rates remain low despite the centre's work with midwives to raise awareness of the benefits of breastfeeding with mothers during pregnancy. Immunisation rates show an increase at 12 months but are rising slowly at 24 months. Obesity rates of children in Reception class, at 19%, show a slight reduction. The centre's 'Cook and

Eat' sessions help parents to learn about healthy eating. In 'Stay and Play' sessions, babies and young children enjoy choosing different fruits for their morning snack. Activities in the centre garden, 'Happy Feet', ball skills and subsidised mother and baby swimming for vulnerable families all help parents to be more aware of the need for young children to be active. Many families use the healthy start vouchers distributed at the centre, but few use the health vitamins.

Case studies and other evidence show that families most at risk are well supported by the outreach work of the family support worker and centre staff. The use of the Common Assessment Framework and multi-agency meetings result in good quality safeguarding. Strong partnerships between social, health, education and family workers ensure most vulnerable families are effectively supported by a range of nurturing and parenting programmes. Parents say they feel safe. Children are active, inquisitive and enjoy their time in the centre. Parents say, 'I've had such good support.' The skilled delivery by staff in the 'Behaviour Matters' workshops helps families in developing positive behaviour patterns in their children, helping to reduce family stress. The school also reports improved behaviour in lessons.

A high proportion of lone parents who attend the centre make new friends and develop their parenting and learning skills. A strong informal support network has developed from the dads' group. The work of the centre is helping most of its users to develop educationally and socially. Since 2008, the percentage of children achieving expected levels in personal, social, emotional development has risen from 62% to 73%. Ongoing assessment indicates that target children are making good progress in their personal development. The 'learning journeys' which record and celebrate children's achievements confirm this.

By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, children's levels are lower than expected for their age, but those who benefit from early years provision and activities at the centre are making better progress than others. Data between 2007 and 2010, show that the gap between the lowest-achieving 20% and the rest has decreased by 4.2% in the three years the children's centre has been designated. The majority of parents access and make good use of courses, training and adult learning. During 2010/11, three parents completed the early years numeracy course enabling them to help their child's mathematical development at home. The recent 'Talk to Me' family learning course resulted in many achieving Level 1 in literacy and numeracy and enrolment on additional language courses. The centre provides good opportunities for parents to develop their employability skills as volunteers and through this route several have secured further education and employment. Job Centre Plus advertises local jobs and provides services for the centre. Course evaluations show that many benefit from the activities at the centre and that families' lives are improved as a result.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for families*

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
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<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>

## How good is the provision?

**2**

Multi-agency meetings provide a good forum for professionals to assess and plan tailor-made courses and to share their knowledge of families. This means that the centre successfully meets the needs of most target groups. Leaders' expectations of the centre are good and provision is increasingly focused on target groups. For example, in response to analysis of local data the centre provided an outreach domestic violence group. The attendance at the centre by target groups has increased from 91 in 2010 to 174 in 2011. However, the staff know that all target groups are not accessing the centre and some of those that do, have difficulties in continuing their involvement on courses. Since January 2011, the number of young parents attending the centre has increased by over 50%.

A growing number of families with English as an additional language (EAL) are registering with the centre. The centre has provided language classes leading to an increase in those gaining entry Level 1 qualifications. The school EAL coordinator supports parents and their child's development in 'Stay and Play' sessions. This has resulted in more EAL parents joining English for Speakers of Other Languages courses in the school.

The centre is seen as a community resource in times of need or crisis. Parents say, 'We really value the good support, care and guidance we get on employment, benefits, health and education.' Dads involved in the centre value the time and activities they share with their children whether through messy play or visits to Hampton Court. More parents are aware of effective strategies to support the development of language and communication through the staff's good modelling in the 'Just Playing?' groups. Consequently, the quality of their interaction with their children has improved.

Outreach work through home visits helps break down potential barriers and parents are helped to overcome any fears of attending somewhere new. Once at the centre they receive a warm welcome. Staff are very sensitive and ensure that support and interventions build on attendees' confidence; so much so that the progression of services ensures that when users complete one course they usually follow up with

another one.

Good support and careful planning from the early years teacher has encouraged a common approach towards teaching early language skills across the campus. Speech and language expertise enables the centre to provide free speech and language workshops to families. A wide range of training opportunities for educational and personal development leads to accreditation and qualification.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

**2**

The good leadership and shared determination to secure improvement underpin the centre's work. Staff are very skilled and knowledgeable and build effective relationships with families so that they are provided with the support they need. The centre is a welcoming friendly place. Leaders at all levels promote inclusion, equality of opportunity and counter any form of discrimination. Diversity is celebrated through leaflets in different languages and recruitment of volunteers representative of the local community. 'Family Link' meetings provide a forum for inter-agencies to share and meet the specific needs of vulnerable children and families. Centre staff are exploring the initiative 'Every Child a Talker' to link with the centre's aim to be a centre of excellence for speech and language. The centre has adapted its activities to meet the needs of disabled children and those who have special educational needs, and has referred families to agencies for early intervention and support.

The centre's development plan is focused on improving the lives of all families, including target groups. Through the centre's integrated multi-agency partnership and good use of resources, it increasingly meets the needs of those families living in the reach area and wider community, ensuring good value for money.

Statutory requirements, safeguarding, child protection arrangements and recruitment checks are secure. Staff are well trained and vigilant. Early intervention and close partnership with the 'Multi-Agency Collaboration and Evaluation' group ensure an inclusive approach to those vulnerable, including those at risk of domestic violence.

Parents and others' views are acted upon. Focus group discussions enable users to contribute to planning; an example is 'Behaviour matters' which was a suggestion from parents who wanted a short workshop style parenting course. Parents help with activities and take a formal lead in sharing their views through governance.



Governors are actively involved in the centre and the newly named sub-committee (formally the Steering Group) has clear accountability arrangements. Leaders use data effectively to strengthen their evaluation of outcomes for all groups, whereas the board of governors is not yet using such information as rigorously as a means to effectively measure the impact of the centre.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>

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

The inspection reports of Piglets Pre-School, which was judged to be satisfactory, and for Chessington Kids Club, which was judged to be good, were considered.

The inspection report for Castle Hill Primary and Nursery School, which took place on the 13–14 March 2012, can be found on the Ofsted website.

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Chessington Children's Centre on 14–15 March 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank all of you who talked with us and let us observe your groups during the inspection. It was so helpful to hear your views because this helped us to understand the centre and how well it works. We also met with centre staff, and a wide range of partners and representatives of the local authority. We observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of documents. You told us how good your centre is and we agreed, judging your centre to be good overall.

The good leadership of the centre and skilled and welcoming staff provide you and your children with a wide range of good services. They adapt and change these to best meet your views and needs. Many of you told us how much you valued the centre staff and what a positive difference the centre has made to you and your families' lives. You told us that it gave you a reason to get up and go and that without it you would not have known how you would have coped. Another parent told us that the centre 'has been a lifeline'.

Everyone works together to make sure that your individual needs are met. The good partnerships with different organisations ensure the centre manages a seamless transition for you and your family whether you are moving on to different courses on learning and development or on to education, training and/or employment. The centre helps you and your families to lead healthier and safe lives. You enjoy the 'Cook and Eat' and 'Stay and Play' activities, and value the health advice you gain from the drop-in clinics. We know that the dads enjoy 'Happy Feet'. Many of you told us how important it has been to learn about the different stages of your child's development. You say it is great that the children can get stuck into messy play and do things that they cannot do at home.

Many of you say you feel much more confident and that this has given you the chance to develop life changing skills linked to getting back into education and/or training. You have attended basic literacy, numeracy and other language courses. Many of you go on to gain qualifications. Some of you are also volunteers and you told us how this has helped you 'to spread the word' in the local community and bring others into the centre because you know first-hand how much it has benefited you and your families and how it can benefit them. Lone parents and the most vulnerable benefit considerably from the centre. The work of the centre reduces depression, family stress and loneliness. You told us you have fun and have made lots of new friends since attending.

We know that you regularly contribute your ideas and views about the centre and that some of you are involved in its governance. The centre is rightly focused on trying to reach those families most in need and to find out how they can best be helped but there is still more to do in this area. We have also asked the staff to work more closely with the health service to involve more mums to be, especially teenage and young parents and to increase breastfeeding rates. We know that centre staff are using data information effectively to pinpoint the services that you would like and check how effective they are. We want the governors to develop their skills in using data so that they can become even more rigorous in checking that the centre is as good as it can be.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).