

Inspection report for Brentford Children's Centre

Local authority	London Borough of Hounslow
Inspection number	362449
Inspection dates	7–8 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Paul Armitage

Centre governance	London Borough of Hounslow
Centre leader	Amanda Foley
Date of previous inspection	This is the first inspection
Centre address	Brentford Children's Centre, North Road, Brentford, Middlesex TW8 0BJ
Telephone number	020 8569 7969
Fax number	020 8569 7969
Email address	brentfordcc@hounslow.gov.uk

Linked school, if applicable	Green Dragon Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	(1) Green Dragon Holiday Playscheme & After School Care (2) Green Dragon Playgroup

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.

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 is the first inspection of the centre. This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector. The inspectors spoke with parents and carers and held meetings with staff, partners and representatives of the local authority and advisory board. They observed the centre's work, looking at a range of relevant documentation, including the centre's self-evaluation, case studies, training and other sessions for users and comments from partner organisations and users of the centre.

The Green Dragon Playgroup was last inspected in 2008. The inspection report can be found on the Ofsted website at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

An inspection of the Green Dragon Holiday Playscheme and After School Care was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website, www.ofsted.gov.uk.

An inspection of the Green Dragon 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 also available on our website, www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Information about the centre

Brentford Children's Centre was partially opened in March 2007 using a number of temporary locations and with limited staff. It was not until May 2010 that it was fully opened in a purpose-built site next door to Green Dragon Primary School. A centre manager began work in March 2009. The new building now houses the children's centre, the Green Dragon Playgroup for children aged two to five years and the Green Dragon Holiday Playscheme and After School Care. All are independent of each other but work in cooperation. The centre uses outreach locations in different

parts of Brentford, including a toy library, a community centre and Brentford Football Club. In addition, it has provided funds for other bodies.

The centre is a phase two centre providing health, education, vulnerable children’s services and outreach support to families in areas of Brentford with considerable deprivation. Provision includes activities for parents, carers and children under five years of age. It currently serves 413 children and their families. Children and adults attend the centre and participate in outreach activities for different lengths of time and for a varying number of days.

There is substantial deprivation in the areas immediately served by the centre. Unemployment is currently about 18%, compared to a national average of just under 8%, and free school meal entitlement is high. The area served is ethnically diverse. Thirty-three per cent of the population is White British, 11% White other, 10% dual heritage, 9% Black African and 3% Indian. There is a substantial Somali population.

The centre is governed by the local authority, led by the headteacher of the Green Dragon Primary School and managed by the centre manager, who is supported by other members of staff. An advisory body provides advice and monitors the centre’s performance. Its membership comprises representatives from a broad range of partners, including Jobcentre Plus, a parent, healthcare representatives, a senior social worker from the early intervention team, a governor from the primary school, and a representative of the playgroup.

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 users and the wider community

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Brentford Children’s Centre provides good opportunities for children, their families and other adults, and the outcomes for these users are good. The centre is successful for many reasons. Its leaders and managers at all levels, including the advisory board and officers from the local authority, have clear objectives and high expectations, and these are shared by all staff and others associated with the centre. The sense of corporate management and vision to make the centre work is very

strong and explains why the capacity to improve further is good.

A very significant characteristic is the strong relationship that the centre has with many local bodies who themselves are concerned with welfare and community issues. This ensures that centre managers are well informed of the needs of the local community and fine-tune what is provided at the centre to meet these needs. The result is high quality outcomes for both children and their parents and carers and identification of needy groups. Children develop new skills and knowledge and grow in confidence. Helping parents to understand themselves and how they can support their children's learning is a crucial element in what the centre does. It does this well because of high expectations. However, managers know that there is still more to be done and have appropriate plans to do even better. Equally important is the self-confidence the centre gives to adults who have specific problems or issues to resolve, such as needs in language or for strategies to develop their own knowledge and skills to find a job.

Building on this success story, the centre's advisory board is keen to extend its work beyond the current core geographical areas it serves. The view from the board is that if the centre is to be a truly *Brentford* centre, then further expansion is necessary. In addition, local authority data support the need. The centre already has some links with people and organisations outside its core; now it rightly identifies that more links are necessary to facilitate successful expansion.

The centre is very successful in promoting equality and respect for diversity. This is particularly evident in the very enjoyable sessions where children and adults from many different backgrounds come together to play and talk.

Children and adults are safe at the centre. All the necessary checks on staff and other adults have been done and risk assessments made. The way in which the results of some of the checks are recorded in the centre is satisfactory but currently does not reflect best practice. Centre managers are now aware of this and already have plans in place to improve their practice.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Exploit existing partnerships to target more families in need and, whenever possible, develop new partnerships.
- Increase parents' and carers' awareness of the impact they can have on children's well-being and development.
- Ensure that the content of the centre's record of staff checks reflects best practice and that it is fully supported by information in the centre's personnel files.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Outcomes for users are good. Children and their families enjoy and benefit from all that the centre offers and from its outreach facilities. For example, in 'Messy Play' children have the opportunity to explore texture to understand their senses, as they touch and smell different substances. The centre helps families learn activities that they can do at home and develops communication between parents and children beyond simply giving orders. Children also develop personally because cooperation is a strong feature. With very few exceptions, behaviour is good and where there is a problem, it is dealt with constructively as part of a child's educational programme. Skills for the future are developed in virtually every feature of the centre's activities, for example, social skills around turn-taking, sharing and learning about personal hygiene.

The centre works hard to promote healthy lifestyles for children and their families and to support specific difficulties through provision such as breastfeeding support, healthy eating workshops and physical activity sessions, including football classes, music and movement and family yoga sessions. Healthy lifestyles are also promoted in sessions for children, for example by discussing pictures of healthy food. Parents confirm that they very much appreciate these sessions and there is evidence of much success, although the centre recognises that there is more to do in sustaining the good achievements of existing members and seeking out and meeting the needs of new ones.

Vulnerable groups, such as those with severe physical disability, have the space and opportunity to exercise with qualified carers, and there is evidence that this is having a beneficial effect on their health and well-being. A sensory room is also well used to support emotional and other needs.

Children are well protected and the safety of all centre users is given a high profile. The child protection policy is a thorough document and the procedures in it are known and operated correctly by staff. All staff are properly trained in child protection procedures. There are rigorous checks on adults entering the premises. Risk assessments are carried out properly and staff are acutely watchful of even small threats during play and other activities. There are currently no children with a child protection plan. Equally there are no children currently subject to the common assessment framework and no looked-after children. However, in all instances, staff are well versed in the necessary procedures.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable 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 users 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 users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	2

How good is the provision?

2

The centre's good provision ensures its success in attracting an increasing number of families. Local authority data provide clear guidance on the socio-economic status of the areas served by the centre. In particular, the data give reasonably accurate information on the number of young children in each area, thus providing the centre with a measure of its own performance in attracting families.

The centre also benefits from the advice and knowledge of others and this has helped extend provision. For example, a suggestion from the Brentford Health Centre led to the establishment of a breastfeeding group linked to the 'New Mums' Group'. Some suggestions come through the members of the advisory board, for example, the proposal for the childminder development group, which is a successful initiative. Users are regularly given questionnaires. As a result of suggestions received, the centre has introduced highly popular language development ('Toddler Talk') sessions. Suggestions from the leaders of the Green Dragon School, playgroup and childcare provision have also been invaluable. There is considerable cooperation between all four organisations, for example, by ensuring continuous support for children and their families with specific health and social needs.

The centre is very sensitive and alert to the needs of hard-to-reach groups within the community. For example, it is making considerable efforts to include Somali and lower-income White families, who have a tendency not to access services. One example of addressing their needs is a successful money management course. However, the centre's management is aware that this is an area which warrants greater focus, especially in relation to the Afghan and Polish communities. In response to the view that more needs to be done to attract fathers, a 'dads' group' has recently been established at Brentford Football Club. The centre is considering how it can best respond to a request from Somali fathers to help them prevent their sons joining gangs. The advisory board has recently been considering how to extend provision to the Docks and other areas. The need is supported by local authority data as well as the centre's own intelligence. To develop these new initiatives, the centre's board and managers are well aware of the need to exploit existing partnerships and create new ones.

On a more personal level, children are regularly assessed and this information is used to influence subsequent activities. This assessment is in its infancy and is being

trialled. Staff are considering carefully how best to use the information generated, the more so because there is already considerable awareness of the needs of individual children and their families.

The centre is successful in promoting purposeful learning for both children and adults. For example, in a 'Stay and Play' session children responded well to the activities, which included using playdough to make fruits and vegetables as part of a simple exploration of healthy eating. They also cut out pictures of fruit and vegetables from magazines. Both activities encouraged children to work together, take initiative, show patience and creativity and develop an understanding of material. They also enjoyed playing with the toys and the sand pit and water outside. A large number of parents and carers were present, both male and female, from different ethnic groups. There was considerable social interaction between them, thus supporting the centre's aim of encouraging mutual respect. The adults learnt a lot about their children's learning and their potential roles in this. Centre managers are aware of the need to make even greater efforts in this direction.

Examples of purposeful learning were also observed in the Somali parenting class, a computer session for adults, the 'New Mums' Group' and a session devoted to English language development.

Outreach is an important and successful part of the centre's work, ranging from 'Stay and Play' to football activities at local centres to more personalised work by a trained member of staff, which is tailored to need. For example, the family support outreach worker provides in-home support for deprived, isolated and vulnerable families. She also provides some language support, often linked to advice on benefits.

Not all the centre's work is directly staffed by people at the centre. It also funds sessions run by other organisations, for example, the toy library.

Consistently good care, guidance and support are evident throughout the centre. Two particularly good examples were the patient delivery of baby massage and baby signing sessions. These significantly helped parents to understand their babies better and also, in some cases, to overcome post-natal depression.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	2
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Leadership and management at all levels are effective and ensure the centre provides good value for money. There is clear, inspirational leadership and effective management at all levels. Expectations are high and, as a result, everyone at the centre works hard to ensure that what is provided meets the needs of the local and wider community. There is a great deal of passion and care. At the heart of this is a strong desire to promote inclusion, equality and respect for diversity.

The advisory board provides effective oversight. The overall leadership provided by the primary school headteacher has been critical in establishing the centre in all its diversity and providing an effective sounding board for the centre manager. The centre manager provides inspiration with a strong understanding of local needs and a desire to do better. This is reflected in the centre's accurate self-evaluation and pragmatic development plan with sensible targets. The centre manager is ably supported by staff and volunteers, all of whom show appropriate initiative and understand each other's roles. The local authority has overall responsibility for governance and accountability, which it does by close contact with staff at the centre and the advisory body as well as more formal monitoring and reporting requirements. The authority's staff have been very supportive at every level.

The facilities and atmosphere of the new building are used to good advantage. Interaction and respect between different groups are promoted, often gently and incidentally. Children with disabilities are well supported by the outreach worker at home and in dedicated 'Stay and Play' sessions for children with disabilities. Different teams use the sensory room, for example, local authority teams for sight and hearing loss.

Appropriate safeguarding checks are made by the local authority and meet all requirements. The centre's local record meets the minimum requirements in that it has a record of the date and number of the Criminal Records Bureau checks. However, it does not yet reflect best practice. Currently the centre leader cannot easily access the full record of checked people who have unsupervised contact with children and vulnerable adults. The centre's practice is therefore not in line with the local authority's and the government's best practice guidelines. The content of personnel records is not standardised sufficiently to support an improved version of the centre's record.

Early intervention arrangements are good, reflecting effective multi-agency cooperation. For example, when supporting pupils with speech and language delay, centre managers liaise closely with the local authority's early years support team, which provides assessment and on-going support using other specialist agencies.

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 extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	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	3
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community 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

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance ‘Complaining about inspections’, which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the Brentford Children’s Centre on 7–8 October 2010. We judged the centre to be good overall.

Firstly, we would like to thank all of you for helping us with the inspection. We found your views very useful and have used them when writing this report. Above all, after

consulting you, we were very struck by your appreciation of the centre and the help that it gives you in so many ways.

You will therefore not be surprised that we have agreed with you and judged the centre to be good overall. It does many things very well. If it continues in the way that it has begun, it has the potential to become outstanding.

The centre is successful for many reasons. Those who lead and manage the centre know what they are doing. They have high expectations of themselves and what the centre should be doing to help you. This also applies to all staff, including those people who come from outside to lead sessions in the main centre and elsewhere. There is a real sense that staff want you to succeed and do well.

The managers at the centre have strong links with the large number of community organisations in Brentford as well as the local authority. This means that the managers are well informed of your needs and so can set up activities that will help you. They do this well and your knowledge, understanding and personal development improve as a result. So does the development of your children. Staff at the centre are particularly good at showing you how to help your children learn at home. We have asked them to do even more of this work with groups in your community who are not yet fully benefitting from what the centre offers.

Your centre's staff make good use of local contacts to identify the particular needs of different groups in Brentford's community. They recognise, however, that the level of contact between the centre and the different areas in Brentford differs considerably and have good plans to improve this. We have asked managers to do more to expand into more areas and to use the new local contacts to determine what help and support is needed.

Your children and all the adults who use it are safe at the centre. All the necessary checks have been done. However, we have asked managers to improve the way in which security information about staff is recorded and saved.

Lastly and, in some ways, most importantly, we have recognised that the centre makes a real contribution to helping all of you from very different backgrounds to mix together and get to know each other. This applies equally to adults and children. We thoroughly enjoyed watching 'Stay and Play' sessions where some of you and your children from many different backgrounds come together to play and talk.

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

Thank you again for your help.