

Inspection report for Collyhurst Nursery School and Children's Centre

Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	366345
Inspection dates	9–10 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Lorraine Rowson-Clark HMI

Centre governance	The Governing Body of Collyhurst Nursery School and Children's Centre
Centre leader	Christine Rigby
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Collyhurst Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Collyhurst Children's Centre & Nursery EY309882

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

The inspectors held meetings with the centre managers, staff members, members of the governing body, partner agencies, parents and users of the centre.

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

Information about the centre

Collyhurst Children's Centre was designated in March 2006 and is co-located with a maintained nursery school offering early education, childcare, family support, speech and language therapy, youth services, health services, activities for parents and links with Jobcentre Plus. Collyhurst is recognised as being in the lowest 15% most disadvantaged areas within the country, in an area of very high unemployment. The majority of the population is of White British heritage with an increasing number from minority ethnic backgrounds, largely African or Asian heritage. The increasing number of families moving into the area from abroad has resulted in approximately 16% of children speaking English as an additional language. There is a mix of socio-economic backgrounds with double the national average of those claiming incapacity benefit, as well as a diverse range of working parents and those in further education. The majority of families live in rented housing and 25% of families claim loan parent benefits.

The centre provides wrap-around and holiday care for nursery school children of working and student parents. There is also full day care for children from six months to three years, which is open 49 weeks per year from 7.45am to 5.45pm. Additionally, the centre offers places to children from families identified as being vulnerable; this is funded through the Sure Start 'free early years entitlement for two year olds' pilot project.

The centre's reach area has an approximate population of 1,712 with 485 children aged under five years. Most children enter early years provision with a narrower range of skills and abilities than those typically 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 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

'The centre is a godsend; I couldn't cope without it'. This comment typifies those expressed by parents and helps to explain why Collyhurst Children's Centre is a good centre overall. The quality of the leadership, staff and governing body ensures high quality provision and services. Staff are effectively supported by management and all are committed to further improvement in order to improve the life chances of the families served by the centre. Due regard is given to the inclusion of all families and staff show respect for and understanding of the different sections of the community, valuing difference and celebrating diversity. As one parent commented, 'Everyone is made welcome and looked after.'

The centre consistently gives high priority to safeguarding children and their families, and the quality of care, guidance and support provided is good. The centre is very effective in using the Common Assessment Framework and records are detailed and clear, thereby ensuring appropriate support and intervention. During times of family crisis, good partnership working enables the centre to respond rapidly and offer effective support, thereby ensuring children are safeguarded and well cared for. However, sometimes information from partner agencies is not forthcoming and so the centre is not able to plan effectively in advance. In such cases, the centre has to react at the last minute in order to advise and support families. This has resulted, for example, in families arriving for services which, unbeknown to them or the centre, have been withdrawn or curtailed by the partner agencies.

Outcomes for users are good overall. The centre is effective in keeping users safe and protected and in promoting their enjoyment and achievement. Children actively engage in the range of exciting and stimulating learning opportunities within the nursery school and day care, and they make progress in their learning. They are

becoming confident and self-assured. Staff are particularly effective in supporting children's language development through the centre's language-rich environment, which has been established with the advice and support of the speech and language therapists.

The centre's outreach worker is particularly successful in establishing trusting working relationships with families, which enables her to help them identify their own needs and raise their own aspirations. Consequently, adults are effectively supported in accessing training to improve their employment opportunities. Many adults told inspectors that the centre is particularly good at helping them build their confidence and recognise the skills they already have, such as organisational skills. A small number of adults have embraced long-term training and development opportunities which lead to recognised qualifications and some have been successful in securing employment.

The centre's own detailed data collection is being used increasingly to evaluate how effective activities are. However, accurate data are not yet being used to fully assess how well the centre is making a difference over time to the lives of the families within its reach area, particularly in relation to their health. This is because complete information is not always available from either the local authority or the health service. That which is available is not always accurate enough nor is it always specific to the centre's reach area.

The range of provision on offer meets the needs of users well and there are opportunities for parents and users to express their views through feedback and representation on the governing body. However, despite encouragement by the centre, parents are not as fully involved in decision making as they could be as the advisory board and parents' forum are not yet fully established. The governing body and senior leaders are actively committed to further development by looking at ways of ensuring that the most vulnerable in the reach area are targeted. This is, however, somewhat dependent on the information available to the centre about the community it serves, which is not always reliable. Despite this, the centre has a proven track record in securing improvement and as leadership and management are strong, the centre has good capacity to improve further through effective and realistic targeting.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work with users, parents and the wider community in order to establish an effective advisory board and ensure their views help to shape services.
- The local authority and health service should strengthen strategic partnership working with the centre and provide more accurate localised data to help the centre effectively target improvement and ensure the most vulnerable access the centre's services.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Across most of the five areas, outcomes are good. The outcome for being healthy is satisfactory rather than good. This is because, although parents and children benefit from the range of activities on offer and are developing a good awareness of adopting healthy lifestyles, data from the health authority is not always available or accurate enough to be reliable. Therefore, the centre is not able to accurately demonstrate impact over time. However, a range of activities are helping families to live healthier lifestyles. Parents who have become involved in the centre's 'Adopt a Chef' and 'Love Food, Hate Waste' programmes report a greater understanding of healthy eating and how to provide healthier meals on a budget. 'I wouldn't have believed my child would eat such healthy food' and 'I can cook affordable healthy food now', typified the comments from parents. Children in the centre engage in a wide range of physical activities and are learning how to keep themselves healthy. Such initiatives are helping to reduce the levels of obesity in children in Reception Year. Whilst data suggest that breastfeeding rates at six to eight weeks after birth are increasing, levels still remain low. Additionally, the centre management was dismayed to discover at the time of the inspection that breastfeeding support sessions, provided by health services, are being withdrawn from the centre.

The centre is effective in helping parents and children keep themselves safe and free from harm. Parents are given advice on how to ensure the safety of their children in the home, and home safety equipment can be provided for those who need it. Children are learning how to keep themselves safe by adopting safe practices, such as tidying away toys and equipment when they have finished with them. The centre building is a safe and welcoming place due to the vigilance of all staff and the completion of comprehensive risk assessments of all areas and activities. Good intervention strategies ensure that families whose circumstances have made them vulnerable are supported well and effective use of the Common Assessment Framework ensures cohesive support is available to them when they need it. As a result, outcomes for staying safe are good.

There are opportunities for parents and children to play and learn together and a good range of high quality information and advice is available to parents on all aspects of child development. Staff have good knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage and activities are skilfully planned to encourage children's learning and development. Children's language development is supported particularly well through the centre's language-rich environment which has been established with the support and guidance of the speech and language therapists. As a result, the nursery school has seen a marked improvement in children's language skills and staff support other centres by sharing their knowledge of how to encourage children's speaking and listening skills in all activities. Data for the last three years show a continued increase in the number of children reaching 78 points across the assessment scales of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile, from 36.2% in 2008 to 53.9% in 2010, and the gap between outcomes for the most vulnerable groups and others is narrowing.

Children behave very well at all sessions; they are learning to share, take turns and show respect, care and concern for others. Parents are able to express their views through evaluations of activities and by giving feedback to centre staff. Centre staff support those with limited communication skills to comment and express their satisfaction levels. Some parents are engaged in decision making and the governance of the centre through the governing body. However, despite efforts by the centre to encourage centre users' participation, the advisory board and parents' forum are not yet fully established. The governing body knows what it needs to do to raise the centre's profile and is working hard to engage with more members of the community.

The centre is successful in promoting families' economic stability and social well-being, and very effective and sensitive support is offered to families to help them manage their finances and secure the benefits they are entitled to. For example, sensitive support is given to families to access independent debt management and to solve their housing problems, which has resulted in families being successful in securing housing appropriate to their needs. Children are developing skills for the future and are becoming increasingly articulate, confident and skilled in the use of information and communication technology. The centre demonstrates a positive attitude to supporting adults seeking further training and future employment by signposting to other agencies and by enabling adults to have access to the computer suite, supporting them in their studies and helping them with job applications or with writing successful curriculum vitae.

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	3
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 children's centre is effective at assessing user need on an individual basis and provides good quality care, guidance and support, particularly during times of family crisis. One parent reported that, 'Without their (the centre's) help I would have gone

under.’ The centre’s outreach worker and leaders provide very effective emotional support to families within the community to raise their self-esteem and work very well with partner agencies to ensure that assessments carried out under the Common Assessment Framework are robust and well informed. As a consequence, support offered to families is well targeted and effective. Partnership working with the Early Intervention Team and children’s services is carefully monitored to ensure needs are met and children and families are safeguarded. Parents state that there is always someone to talk to at the centre and that they are well supported.

Assessment is being used increasingly by the centre to determine the needs of the community and families within the reach area and the centre demonstrates a good knowledge of those families using their services. The experienced outreach worker works tirelessly in an effort to make contact with hard-to-reach families and has made good progress in engaging with more families, which has resulted in 68% of families within the reach area registering with the centre. Consequently, the centre’s leadership team and governing body are now targeting the other 32%. However, strategic data relating to families moving into the reach area from abroad are not always available. The centre is continually striving to develop its knowledge of the whole community within its reach area, as the area is constantly changing and developing. Without accurate strategic data about families in the reach area, the centre is heavily reliant on cold-calling and leaflet drops in order to make the centre’s services more widely known.

There are clear plans in place to access play sessions within the community in order to provide outreach support to families and ensure value for money during forthcoming financial constraints. Links with health services are not as strong as they were due to the withdrawal of some commissioned services, although baby clinics and breastfeeding support sessions, which had until recently operated from the centre, are available nearby. The centre effectively signposts adults to Jobcentre Plus and adult education services for help and support with training and employment opportunities.

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	3
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 are good overall: all individual judgements are at least satisfactory and they are particularly good in relation to ambition and prioritisation, safeguarding vulnerable families and effective use of resources. There is a clear management structure in place within the centre and effective line management and supervision. As a result, staff are supported well. However, there is minimal strategic guidance and support from the local authority and a lack of clarity with some partner agencies about services which are to be provided. Consequently, some services have been withdrawn from the centre without the centre's prior knowledge, leaving the centre with a new supply of inaccurate advertising flyers. The centre focuses on activities that are sustainable, building upon existing provision and sharing costs and resources, including staffing, with other agencies where possible to ensure good value for money.

The governing body and senior leaders together have a clear vision for the centre which is effectively shared with and fully embraced by staff. All show high levels of enthusiasm for their work and demonstrate a shared commitment to making a difference to families within the community. Staff value each other's expertise and support one another to continually improve, for example through effective peer assessment and mentoring. All staff know how important it is to put families at ease in order for them to trust the centre and become fully engaged. For example, the receptionist's warm welcome helps to set the right tone with families, and parents told inspectors how that warm welcome made them feel valued and respected the first time they came to the centre.

The centre promotes the inclusion of all children and families. There is evidence of how diversity is celebrated and differences are valued through displays in the centre. All children and adults, regardless of background, aptitudes or other differences, have access to the range of services and activities on offer and some parents report how well the centre has supported their children with special needs. Information displayed within the centre promotes equality and diversity and the centre is fully accessible for disabled people.

Good arrangements are in place to effectively safeguard all users. Recruitment and vetting procedures are robust and detailed records are maintained of staff clearances, including Criminal Record Bureau checks. Clear arrangements are in place for ensuring staff from partner agencies are suitably vetted and appropriate records are maintained on site of the checks carried out by partner agencies. All staff are appropriately trained and are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. They are vigilant in identifying and responding to potential dangers that users may encounter. Comprehensive risk assessments are in place for all areas, indoors and outdoors, and staff's thorough knowledge of the safeguarding procedures helps to protect children and families well. There are clear procedures and protocols in place for sharing information about families whose circumstances have made them vulnerable. These, together with secure arrangements for inter-agency working when

families are assessed under the Common Assessment Framework or when child protection plans are in place, ensure that children and families at risk or in need are prioritised effectively.

The governing body and centre management have a good understanding of the centre's strengths and know where further improvements can be made. Self-evaluation is largely accurate and the centre sets appropriate yet challenging priorities for improvement. Action plans with clear success criteria are monitored regularly by the governing body. The centre's data collection system is enabling the centre to measure the success of its provision on outcomes, although the impact over time is yet to be fully realised as there have been some gaps in inputting full details. The centre managers are aware of the need to have more accurate strategic data to support the centre's work. For example, limited health data relating to babies born to teenage mothers, ongoing childhood obesity levels and hospital admissions make it difficult for the centre to demonstrate the impact its services are having on families and young children over time. Additionally, a lack of clear, accurate information about families moving into the reach area makes it difficult for the centre to plan future services.

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	3
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	2
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	3
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	3

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 Collyhurst Children's Centre on 9–10 February 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

As part of the inspection we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's documentation, and talked with a range of children and adults including parents, staff, community representatives and partnership workers. We were pleased to speak to so many of you and to listen to your views. We really enjoyed talking to you around the centre and in the various activity sessions you were engaged in. You made your views very clear to us and we appreciated your honesty in telling us how things really are.

We are pleased to tell you that the centre provides good support to you and your families. The centre does some things particularly well, such as the way everybody works together to make things better for you when you need help and support and the way you are encouraged to keep safe and take up learning opportunities that are available to you. You told us that staff welcome you warmly to the centre, that you are well cared for and that staff offer you good levels of support and encouragement. We were delighted to see this for ourselves.

We were pleased to hear how you feel your children have made progress in their learning and we saw how confident and independent they are while taking part in the many exciting play and learning activities on offer. We saw how caringly staff supported your children to try new things. We saw your children behaving very well, thoroughly enjoying their play and learning in the good quality activities they were taking part in. You told us that you have been helped to understand about play and how children learn by talking to the staff and sharing ideas about how you can support your children's learning at home.

You told us how the centre has helped you live healthier lives and cook healthier meals for your families through the centre's 'Adopt a Chef' and 'Love food, Hate

Waste' programmes. Some of you told us how you have become more confident and how you have been encouraged to recognise and build on the many skills that you already have. We were delighted to see how the centre is making a real difference to improving your lives and to hear how much more confident you feel.

We were very pleased to see how well the centre staff work with others to provide good care and support to you when you need it most. You told us how the outreach worker has helped you get advice and support for many areas of your lives, such as housing and financial management. We know that some of you use the midwifery services on site and the baby clinics have been useful in helping you get advice on all aspects of caring for your children.

It was clear to us that the centre's staff and governors are working extremely hard to make the centre even better. They regularly consider how best to improve services for you and your children and are aware of the need to encourage more families to come to the centre and get more involved. You can help them achieve this by talking to friends about the exciting things on offer to you at the centre. We have asked the centre to support you in becoming more involved with the centre as we know that many of you will have good ideas about how the centre can make things even better, so we would encourage you to get involved in helping to make decisions about what activities should be offered and where. You can do this by joining the advisory board and parents' forum which the centre is trying to develop, or by telling staff or governors what will make things better.

We have suggested the centre works with others to find out more about families in the centre's catchment area in order to make sure they are reaching as many families as possible. We also asked them to look more closely with their partner agencies at how the activities on offer and the work that they do are making a lasting difference to you, particularly in regard to your health. By doing this they will be in a stronger position to show how well they are doing and will be able to plan even more worthwhile things for you.

Thank you once again for your welcome and your willingness to talk to us. We can see why the staff love working with you and wish you every success in the future.

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