

Inspection report for Granville Plus Children's Centre

Local authority	Brent
Inspection number	366474
Inspection dates	2–3 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Michael Blakey

Centre governance	Granville Plus Children's Centre Governing Body
Centre leader	Lesley Benson
Date of previous inspection	n/a
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Linked school if applicable	Granville Plus Children's Centre
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Granville Plus Children's Centre

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 two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with parents and carers, representatives of the governing body, the senior management and leadership team, a representative of the local authority and centre staff.

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

Information about the centre

The Granville Plus Children's Centre is a phase 1 centre in the London Borough of Brent. The centre serves one of the 20% most deprived wards in the country and has high levels of unemployment. Approximately 57% of children attending the nursery school are known to be eligible for free school meals. The centre provides the full core offer, under the direction of a governing body, and does not have a service level agreement with the local authority.

Children's levels on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage provision are generally below those expected for their age.

Centre users are from a diverse range of backgrounds with 17% of Black African heritage. Many languages are spoken with the most common being Arabic, Somali, French and Portuguese. In the nursery school, 72% of the current cohort speak English as an additional language.

The local authority commissions some services across the Borough, for example Citizens Advice, and the children's centre commissions some additional services locally, including counselling.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

Granville Plus Children's Centre provides a high level of care, guidance and support for children and families. Parents and carers speak positively about the services that they access, including counselling, which is commissioned by the centre. As one parent said during the inspection, 'The centre is welcoming and friendly.'

Children are well supervised and appropriate procedures safeguard the children's welfare while they are at the centre. However, the centre's own system to maintain and update key policies, for example health and safety, has not been followed in a timely manner and some policies are in need of review. Despite this staff receive regular safeguarding training, work effectively together, and share information to protect children, for example, through regular meetings and reviews.

The centre has increased the number of families accessing services through, for example, commissioning of the Salvation Army to provide a community café at which parents and carers meet each other and 'Stay and Play' with their children. The appointment of effective family support workers has improved the centre's reach to more vulnerable families. Engagement of fathers has improved through the development of planned and targeted activities, although teenage parents and expectant mothers are still under-represented at the centre.

Staff assess the individual needs of children and families well and share information early with appropriate agencies to ensure that they receive the support they need. However, some key partners, including the Primary Care Trust and Job Centre Plus, do not adequately share data with the centre or engage in strategic planning. Without suitable processes, and data from these partners and the local authority, the centre is unable to adequately evaluate, plan and demonstrate the impact of its services. The use of data to accurately monitor variations in outcomes for groups of children and families is therefore limited. However case studies provided by the centre clearly demonstrate that the centre makes a positive difference to vulnerable children and families.

The centre has an inclusive ethos and approach to children and families from a wide range of backgrounds, which sustains equality and diversity well. For example, the

centre coordinates a well-attended local picnic in Queen's Park to promote community cohesion and family fun. Parents and carers are involved in the governance of the centre, as members of the governing body or the parents and carers forum. There are too few opportunities for adults to volunteer and limited activities for them to engage in learning to support their transition to further education, employment or training. Adults are however encouraged to attend programmes delivered by Brent Adult and Community Education, which shares the same building. The maintained Nursery school, which is an integral part of Granville Plus Children's Centre, was judged to be good at its previous inspection in 2010.

Recent budget reductions of some of the centre's partners have started to have a negative impact on the delivery of activities for children, parents and carers. For example, a healthy eating session was cut during the inspection, and parents and carers who turned up to take part were disappointed.

Governors and staff alike recognise that the recent part-time secondment of the centre manager has slowed the progress of improvements at Granville Plus Children's Centre and some key recommendations from the previous pilot Children's Centre inspection in 2009 have not yet been fully implemented. Limited progress has been made on the recommendation to improve attendance from the maintained Nursery school inspection in 2010. The centre has however made progress in some key areas, notably increasing the number of families, and in particular fathers, who are reached.

The local authority has set out to improve the overall governance of the centre and introduce a service level agreement and performance management cycle. However, these are not yet in place. The governing body and the newly appointed local authority strategic officer are ambitious and are clear about what the centre needs to do to improve further. The secondment of the centre manager has finished and overall capacity to improve is therefore satisfactory.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Strengthen the leadership and management of the centre by:
 - implementing effective systems to identify priorities and evaluate the impact of services delivered through the effective use of data
 - working with partners to improve access to high quality adult learning and training to support parents and carers into further education or employment.
- The local authority should:
 - strengthen governance through the establishment of a service level agreement that sets out exactly what is expected of the centre and what the centre can expect from the local authority
 - ensure that all key partners, particularly the Primary Care Trust and Jobcentre Plus share appropriate data and contribute fully to strategic planning.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Parents and carers receive targeted help to develop their emotional health, including counselling and tailored creative support sessions. New mothers attending 'Stay and Play' sessions receive early advice on baby weaning from the nutritionist, and parents and carers are encouraged to attend 'Cook and Eat' sessions and access one-to-one advice on healthy eating. These activities are making a difference, as exemplified by a parent who said: 'I now try more different vegetables.' The number of sessions attended over the last 12 months has increased, but these services are now at risk due to budget cuts. The centre holds limited data on breastfeeding and does not hold any information about obesity rates or teenage conceptions, as partners do not provide this. Advice to parents on dental services, sexual health, and drug and alcohol abuse is provided on a one-to-one basis. Good speech and language therapy is helping children to develop their language skills.

Children say that they feel safe and are encouraged to learn how to manage risk during well-supervised play activities. For example, inspectors observed children having great fun racing tricycles around the outdoor play area and playing on the slide. The centre's evaluation of its parenting programmes clearly demonstrates that parents and carers feel that their parenting skills are improving, and this is a strength of the centre. Emergency hospital admissions in the Borough are high, as identified by the Primary Care Trust, and a targeted programme to reduce these is due to be launched by the health visitor. The use of the Common Assessment Framework, particularly by family support workers, is enabling children and their parents and carers to be provided with a range of support early to ensure their safety and well-being. Children who are subject to child protection orders and those who are looked after are well supported through effective relationships between front line workers. For example, a case study demonstrated how a pregnant mother of a child on a child protection plan was supported to attend 'Baby Play' and the 'Carers and Toddlers' sessions.

Families enjoy a range of trips to London Zoo and Kew Gardens for example, and the picnic in Queen's Park is well attended. These activities support parents, carers and children to learn and have fun together. The range of 'Stay and Play' sessions on offer enables parents and carers to understand the importance of play and helps them to develop positive relationships with their children. The 'Shared Beginnings' programme effectively encourages children to read, make books and visit libraries. Parents and carers, whose reading skills are limited, are supported to tell stories to their children through picture books. The recent inspection of the nursery school judged that: 'Children achieve well so that, by the end of their time in the centre, the attainment of the majority of children is in line with what is expected for their age. Children who are new to learning English and those identified with specific learning difficulties make equally good progress.'

Staff, children and their parents and carers from a wide range of backgrounds get on well together. Children behave well. Parents and carers participate in the fundraising forum, which supports their development of enterprising behaviour.

The wide range of outdoor play activities available enable children across the centre's age range to develop interpersonal skills which prepares them well for the next stage

of their education. The advice that parents and carers receive from the Citizens Advice Bureau is well received and supports families to access benefits and tax credits for example. However, the support offered by Jobcentre Plus is limited and access to further education, training or employment is therefore restricted.

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	3

How good is the provision?

2

Good assessment ensures that staff intervene to support children and families at the earliest possible opportunity. They effectively use the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to assess need, and meet regularly with other agencies to coordinate services for vulnerable children and their families.

Children are well supported to make the transition to local primary schools and some choose to return to the centre to access the extended day activities on offer. Children of all ages are developing good interpersonal skills at the centre, as they are encouraged to play together in excellent outdoor facilities. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive specialist support on site, and are fully included in the centre. Children with autism, for example, are provided with additional help from Brent Outreach Autism Team whose staff work closely with the centre. The achievements of children and families are celebrated through an annual event and art exhibitions, for example.

Case studies and discussions with parents and carers clearly show that some of the most vulnerable families in the reach area are effectively supported. One parent, who asked to speak to the inspection team, said that the centre had helped with a wide range of issues from depression to debt management. She reported that staff had helped her to develop coping strategies and that she felt more able to look forward to the future of work. She went on to say that she knew her child was being well cared for in the crèche and that the 'Strengthening Families' programme had helped her to develop parenting skills. However, some parents who spoke to inspectors said that there was not always clarity about what services were running and when. Others said that they wanted to see new courses on money management, for

example.

Parents and carers speak highly of outreach services including the family support workers and community development workers who help them to access a range of support including advice on debt. Outreach services have successfully encouraged children to attend the centre to play and learn, and many of these children and their families have been identified as requiring additional support, which the centre delivers or coordinates on their behalf. All families receive a home visit before their child starts at the centre to effectively support their transition.

In times of crisis, parents and carers say that they can turn to staff at Granville Plus Children’s Centre for high quality care, guidance and support. This support, provided by frontline staff, is highly effective and extensive. For example, two members of centre staff are trained to assist adults to stop smoking, and the centre provides advice on sexual health to new mothers. As one vulnerable parent attending art sessions said, ‘When you have a young baby, it can be a stress. I feel that I have someone to share issues with now.’

Parents and carers attending counselling are given the opportunity to plot their own progress, with success measures based on participation and managing their own mental health. Additional services commissioned by the children’s centre have effectively encouraged more families to use the centre.

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	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

The governing body and senior leaders are ambitious for the centre and the children and families that it serves. The centre actively promotes the inclusion of all children and families, as exemplified by the good progress that children with English as an additional language make in the nursery school.

However, accountability arrangements with the local authority are not consistently understood by all partners. A performance management process has recently been developed by the local authority but not yet implemented. There is no service level agreement in place to set out what the centre is commissioned to deliver and some key partners, including the Primary Care Trust, are not sufficiently engaged in strategic and operational planning or evaluation.

The centre’s operational plan, which correctly identifies areas for improvement and is monitored through a Red, Amber & Green (RAG) system, is behind schedule in some

key areas and does not always include sufficiently detailed targets or performance measures. For example, one performance measure states 'health outcomes of children improved,' but does not say which outcomes or by how much. Senior managers have not adequately defined what the centre's priorities are and some staff on the front line are therefore unclear about how they contribute. As one member of staff said, 'It would be great if targets were more formalised.'

Leaders and managers do not have a detailed understanding of the impact of the services that are delivered as appropriate monitoring and quality assurance systems are not in place. The centre's own staff strengths and weaknesses review showed that, 'We still do not do enough work on impact.' Data to evidence impact are not routinely collected by the centre or requested from the local authority. This is identified as an area for development in the centre's own operational plan, and limited progress has been made to improve this since the pilot children's centre inspection in 2009. The centre does not have a statement setting out what data it collects. However, case studies demonstrate that the centre makes a positive difference to some of the most vulnerable families in the reach area. Parents and carers say that they feel that their views are listened to and that staff do try to act upon these. Some parents are involved in the fundraising forum, which is seeking to reduce the cost to parents of activities such as the centre's family days out. The centre provides good value for money.

Promoting equality and diversity lies at the heart of the centre's work. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory and all statutory duties are met. The centre carries out all the necessary checks on staff and volunteers, including Criminal Records Bureau checks that are recorded centrally.

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	3
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	3
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	2
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Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

Inspection report of Granville Plus Children's Centre (Maintained Nursery) 1-2 March 2010.

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 Granville Plus Children's Centre on 2–3 March 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you to those of you who took the time to speak with us during the inspection. Your views helped us to understand the range of activities that are delivered and the impact that these have on you and your children.

We were delighted to hear how welcoming and friendly you thought the centre was. We also listened carefully to your concerns about cuts to services and have mentioned these in the inspection report. We understood your frustration when 'Cook and Eat' was cancelled without notice.

We thought that the range of services on offer was good, and that these services were helping you and your children to learn and develop. For example, some of you told us that the 'Strengthening Families' programme had helped you to develop your parenting skills and others spoke highly of the counselling service. We were particularly impressed by the support provided by the family support and community development workers.

We also recognised that more families were using the centre, than they were in 2009.

We have asked the centre to make a number of improvements:

- Establish systems to measure the impact that services have on you and your children.
- To work with local organisations to improve access to high quality adult learning and training to support you into further education or employment.

We have also asked the local authority to:

- strengthen the governance of the centre through the establishment of a service level agreement
- ensure that all key partners, particularly the Primary Care Trust and Jobcentre Plus share appropriate data.

Once again, many thanks for your time and support during the inspection.

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