

# Inspection report for Chapel End Early Years Centre

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Local authority	London Borough of Waltham Forest
Inspection number	366380
Inspection dates	23–24 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Alison Storey HMI

Centre governance	The governing body of Chapel End Infant School and Early Years Centre
Centre leader	Susan Hughes
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Chapel End Infant School and Early Years Centre
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Chapel End Early Years Centre

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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.

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

The inspectors held meetings with the centre's staff, a representative from the local authority, members of the advisory board and representatives from some of the centre's partners. They had informal discussions with parents and users of the services. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of documentation including case studies, a range of key policies, the centre's self-evaluation documents and its development plans, and data about people who use the centre.

## Information about the centre

Chapel End Early Years Centre in North Walthamstow is integrated with early education and childcare provision and a maintained infant school of the same name. The early education and childcare provision is on the same site and incorporates the school's nursery classes. The main school buildings are located close by. The centre was formerly an Early Excellence Centre and was designated a Sure Start Children's Centre in 2004. It serves an area which is in one of the 30% most deprived wards in the country. There is wide ethnic and cultural diversity in the community. The main groups are White British (23%) and Asian (23%).

The children's centre provides the full core offer of services designed to support families and young children: early education and childcare, health services, family support and outreach, links to Job Centre plus and a childminder network. Many children start in the Nursery with skills below those expected for their age.

The headteacher of the school is also the head of the children's centre. On a day-to-day basis the centre is run by a centre manager. The governing body of the school holds the centre accountable for its effectiveness through a sub-group which acts as an advisory board and represents users and some service partners.

The centre manager is due to retire at the end of April 2011 and the head of centre at the end of July 2011. Arrangements are currently being put in place for the centre to be federated with the Lloyd Park and Higham Hill Children's Centres to deliver children's centre services across the three children's centres.

## 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

Centre users are unanimous in their praise for, and appreciation of, the services and activities provided. The centre's good range of services makes a positive difference to the lives of many of the children and families who use them. The centre has effective systems for assessing the needs of children and families, and endeavours to meet these through a mix of universal and targeted programmes of support. As a result, outcomes are consistently good with significant strengths in the outcomes for children who attend the nursery, the impact of support for families at times of crisis, and the way that parents and carers are empowered to make decisions about their lives. The centre has an inclusive, cohesive ethos. Relationships are harmonious, all are treated with respect and parents feel very well supported. Activities are well attended, although participants do not yet fully reflect the ethnic and cultural mix of the wider community.

Good leadership and management at all levels underpin the commitment of all staff to do the best they can for the children and families in the community. There is clear governance and accountability at centre level. The local authority's pilot scheme, whereby an 'improvement partner' visits termly, provides external challenge and support for the centre in its evaluation of its work. However, the data provided by the local authority do not help the centre set itself targets or readily identify how well it is contributing to improving outcomes at a local level. Because some key information is not shared, the centre finds it difficult to plan and evaluate some aspects of its work.

The centre meets the needs of its users well. Staff know the children and families very well. They are sensitive to the different needs of families and take this into account in planning, for example repeating activities at different times to encourage

different users. The centre encourages users of the centre to evaluate the impact of individual activities or programmes for themselves and their children, and surveys the views of the parents with children in the nursery on an annual basis. It uses this information and what it knows about the community to shape services, identify priorities and plan for the future. Parents and carers confirm that they are confident that their views will be heard, taken seriously and acted upon. The centre has had some recent success in targeting particular activities at the most vulnerable families, although the centre's leaders know that there are still families who are not using the centre who might benefit from its services. The centre's evaluation systems are satisfactory. Systems for analysing data are still at an early stage. As a result, evaluation is not always incisive enough to, for example, follow up the impact of training or support in the longer term, and the targets the centre sets itself are not specific enough to measure exactly how well it is doing. Senior leaders recognise this and have good plans in place to develop the systems of monitoring, evaluation and action planning through the federation with another children's centre.

A real strength of the centre's work is the excellent quality of the care, guidance and support offered to users. Childcare in the nursery is outstanding, and the quality of childminders supported by the centre is higher than that seen across the local authority. A variety of methods are used to break down barriers and bring families into the centre, and work with them to identify the support they need. The centre knows its children and families well and can point to some striking examples of how the work of centre staff, linking with other services, has changed the lives of some its most vulnerable users. At the same time, staff achieve just the right balance between intensive support for families when they most need it, and ensuring that they stand back when families are ready so as not to encourage any sense of dependency.

The centre's policies and procedures for safeguarding children are robust. Parents and carers feel well supported in the centre and comfortable to share their problems and concerns with staff, knowing they will be dealt with sensitively.

Partnership working in the centre and the day-to-day sharing of information and informal communication are strong, ensuring that support can be targeted appropriately for families. More formal meetings between partners and services operating from the centre to regularly review the work of the centre and forward plan have been an important part of the centre's work. However, the current reorganisation of services within the borough and the need to prioritise resources have had an adverse impact on attendance at these meetings recently. Senior leaders have identified the potential to overcome this well. As part of the federation plans, they will hold one meeting for three centres to maximise the use of partners' time.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- The local authority should ensure that the centre has the specific data and

information it needs to target and evaluate its work more effectively and strengthen its strategic planning.

- Strengthen monitoring, analysis and evaluation to ensure that the centre can:
  - identify which groups use its services and which do not and the reasons why
  - measure the impact of its services on outcomes, in particular for adult users.
- Ensure in the transition to new structures and ways of working that all partners are fully involved in regular reviews and developing action plans that have clear outcomes and measurable targets.

## How good are outcomes for users?

2
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Outcomes for children who attend the nursery are particularly impressive. They are outstanding in all aspects. Children of all ages, whether they attend the nursery or one of the drop-in sessions with their parents, benefit from lots of fresh air and exercise in the centre's attractive and exciting outdoor environment. Nutritious meals and snacks help them to learn well about healthy eating from an early age, whilst parents engage well in activities to promote healthy living. Sessions such as 'Feeding Skills' and 'Food Club' help them to learn how to provide healthy and affordable meals for their families, and generate discussion about better eating. Mothers get good ante- and post-natal support through well-attended health clinics and sessions with the midwife.

Children are safe and secure indoors and outside at the centre, as exemplified by their confidence and independence and willingness to take risks. Drop-in sessions offer parents support to develop their parenting skills and deal with issues such as challenging behaviour. Events focusing on safety in the home help them to identify potential risks and there are opportunities to apply for equipment to make their homes safer for their families. Individual parents and carers have been supported effectively to cope with difficult periods in their lives or situations they find themselves in. A combination of support and careful monitoring improves outcomes for vulnerable children.

Children and adults alike enjoy their time at the centre. Children in the nursery make excellent progress in their learning. Many start with skills below those expected for their age. The staff's expertise and strong commitment to children's learning and development, and the careful attention they pay to individual needs ensure that children are well prepared for the next stage of their learning when they move to Reception classes. Parents' and carers' learning is actively encouraged. Staff drop in to sessions to promote the sessions and the centre provides a crèche to enable them to attend. Attendance and pass rates at courses, such as those to improve their English skills or training in computer skills, are good. Parents and carers wanting to find, or return to, work are also well supported. Sessions offering advice on making applications for jobs or practising interview techniques are well attended and much appreciated. A number of parents commented after a recent 'Ready for Work' course how much it had boosted their confidence, and that they had not realised how much help was out there to find a job.

A real strength of the centre is the way it empowers parents and carers. They are supported to make decisions about the services and support they need and encouraged to have a voice within the centre. Parents and carers are invited to evaluate the activities they attend in some depth. They are asked to reflect on what they have learnt, how it will impact on their child and family and what they might do differently in the future as a result, as well as to make suggestions for improvement. Parents and carers are full of praise for the centre, describing it as a 'lifeline' and saying they do not know how they would have coped without it. A number of users are keen to give something back by volunteering within the centre.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<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 users 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 users 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 are developing economic stability and independence including access to training</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How good is the provision?**

<b>2</b>
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Chapel End has thorough and sensitive systems for assessing the needs of children, parents and other users, which ensure that the centre has a good understanding of the needs of children and families and can tailor support accordingly. Referrals to the centre's services come from a variety of sources, including health workers and social services. Families can also self-refer. The outreach team completes initial assessments, working with parents and carers to identify the services or support that they need and to put a personalised package in place. This may include the provision of a nursery place, attendance at one or more of the sessions for parents, one-to-one support such as individual advice and guidance, or referral to other services. Parents feel exceptionally well supported, particularly in times of crisis. The cases of children and families assessed under the Common Assessment Framework identify appropriate actions and are kept under review, although the intended outcomes are not always specific enough to ensure that a close enough check can be kept on progress.

The range of activities available for children in the nursery enables them to make excellent progress in their skills and knowledge across all the areas of learning. Children with additional needs are identified early through the work of outreach team and the special educational needs coordinator in the nursery, liaising with other

professionals such as the health visitor or speech and language therapist. A range of universal and targeted activities provided directly by the centre and those from other services offers users opportunities to attend sessions with their children and/or to improve their own skills and knowledge as a foundation for further study or employment. Satisfaction rates with the services on offer are high and sessions are well attended. No opportunity is lost to support users. For example, through discussion during English classes, parents have been supported to find a pre-school or change their energy supplier to cut costs. The parent adviser or dietician may drop into toy library sessions to offer advice on benefits or courses or health matters. However, there are families in the area who do not use the centre and, as yet, the centre does not know if this may be because it does not offer the activities they need.

The centre also provides some services that are targeted to provide support for particular groups. For example, a four-week course for families on benefits or low incomes helped them to see how they can provide healthy, affordable meals; classes for those for do not speak English as their first language help them to develop their own skills and communicate with staff about their children’s development; and, the monthly dads’ club on a Saturday morning which encourages fathers and male carers to spend time with their children.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<b>The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community</b>	<b>1</b>

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

**2**

The governing body provides effective support and challenge for the centre through its long-standing committee structure. The sub-group, which acts as the advisory board, acts as a link between parents and some of the centre’s partners and the full governing body, ensuring that users are able to shape services and influence decisions that are made. Accountability is clear through well-embedded systems of supervision and performance management. All staff are highly committed to their work and the success of the centre, with a clear sense of purpose about achieving the best possible outcomes for children and their families. Day-to-day management is smooth. Senior leaders provide positive role models for staff. The role of the outreach team is developing well after a period of staff absence. The work that has already begun with Lloyd Park Children’s Centre is helping to develop their skills in evaluating the impact of their work more systematically.



The centre's systems for evaluating, analysing and action planning are effective as far as they go. Resources are of a high quality and used effectively. Senior leaders do know they do well, what works and what needs to improve, and are determined to provide high-quality services. However, because their own systems for collecting and analysing data are still developing and the data the local authority provides are not always helpful, at times they rely more on intuition and experience than incisive analysis. For the same reasons, the criteria and targets the leaders set themselves to measure their success are not precise enough or focused sufficiently on the impact actions have on improving outcomes for children and families. Nonetheless, they recognise this and have been proactive in developing the federation with Lloyd Park which will support them in developing in this area. The partnership with Lloyd Park and Higham Hill will enable Chapel End to offer the benefit of their expertise in other areas and, through rationalising the delivery of services across the centres, should ensure efficiency and sustainability at a time of reducing budgets.

Resources, including staff, reflect the diversity in the community. The different religious and cultural needs represented by users are recognised and valued. Children have a well-developed respect for themselves and others. They learn about the local community and wider world and value and celebrate differences and similarities. Children with additional needs are integrated well into the nursery and the achievement gap is narrowing

Staff, providers of services, parents and carers and users are all clear about their role in safeguarding children and all staff have received appropriate training. Systems for making referrals are very clear and procedures for vetting adults are secure. Vulnerable children are monitored carefully in the nursery, including any who have child protection plans and their welfare is secured. However, the local authority has not shared information about children in the reach area who do not attend the centre, but are subject to child protection, which means that the centre cannot target them for support. Through established links with other agencies the centre signposts adults in need of support to deal with issues relating to their own safety, such as domestic violence, to relevant organisations.

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

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

Inspectors took account of the outcomes of the February 2011 inspection of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision in the nursery, and looked at the outcomes of the most recent inspections of local childminders.

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### **Summary for centre users**

We inspected Chapel End Early Years Centre on 23 and 24 March 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

During the inspection we held meetings with many of the centre's staff and some of the other people who come to the centre to run sessions or to help you. We were also pleased to be able to speak to some of you to find out what you think of the centre and the services it provides. I would like to say a special 'thank you' to those of you who came in specially to meet us. We took your views into account when we made our judgements.

You told us how pleased you are with the services and activities the centre provides. You may know that the nursery provision was judged outstanding in its recent inspection. We judged that the centre also provides a good range of other services. Some, such as the toy library, are open to everyone and others are for specific groups, for example courses to improve your English. None of you could think of any activities that were missing, although we have suggested that the centre tries to find out why some people do not use the centre and whether it is because the activities are not the right ones for them.

Some of you told us that the centre makes a big difference to your lives. We judged that the centre has good systems for finding out what your particular needs and those of your children are. The outreach workers are good at working with parents and carers to decide the right kind of help and support for individual families. The centre's staff work well with partners from health, social services and specialist services, such as speech and language therapists or the hearing impaired service, to make sure that the help from different agencies is joined up and meets your needs. All services have to think very carefully about how much money they spend and how they can work most efficiently in the current economic climate. We have said in these circumstances that it is very important that all partners are involved in reviewing how well they are working together to meet your needs.

You told us that you feel safe and comfortable in the centre and you are confident that your children are safe and well cared for in the nursery. We agree with you. In particular, the centre's systems for ensuring children in the nursery are safe and secure are excellent. The support the centre gives families at times of crisis is very good and helps them until they can get back on their feet.

You are confident that your views are listened to, taken seriously and acted upon. The centre thinks your views are very important and regularly consults with you about the activities you attended and any suggestions for improvement. This is an important way of evaluating how successful the centre is, but we have asked them to make sure they also use data that gives them information about things like how many of you have breastfed or got jobs as a result of the centre's services to get a full picture. It is also important that Waltham Forest make sure they have all the information and data they need.

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