

Inspection report for Cathnor Park Children's Centre

Local authority	Hammersmith and Fulham
Inspection number	366378
Inspection dates	30–31 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Wendy Ratcliff HMI

Centre governance	Local authority
Centre leader	Christine Whisker and Jane Powl
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Vanessa Nursery School and Little People Nursery

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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 is the first inspection of the centre. 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, representatives of the local delivery board, staff, local authority representatives and partner agencies, including representatives from the health service. They had informal discussions with parents and carers and with children, and visited Vanessa Nursery School.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including key policies, the centre's self-evaluation documents, its development plan, evaluations of services and data about people who use the centre.

Information about the centre

Cathnor Park Children's Centre was designated in March 2006 and is run directly by the local authority. It is a purpose-built children's centre and has developed from a Sure Start local programme. There is a local delivery board. Membership includes staff, parents and carers, childminders, stakeholders, multi-disciplinary professionals and local authority representatives.

The majority of activities run directly from the centre and they provide the full core offer. The centre is wheelchair accessible. There are a range of health services provided, from a 'baby café' to weekly antenatal and postnatal checks. There is signposting for Jobcentre Plus and a notice board for parents with information about returning to work.

The centre works in partnership with Vanessa Nursery School which provides early education for children aged three to five years. The centre also works in partnership with two phase two children's centres and Little People Nursery which provides full day care for children aged two to five years. The Cathnor Park Childminding Network provides the childcare for children under three years.

There are approximately 1,230 children under five living in the centre’s catchment area, with around 36% of children aged under four years living in poverty. The centre serves one of the 30% most deprived areas in the country. The local population reflects a variety of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. Centre data show that 36% of children aged under four years are from minority ethnic groups and a range of different languages are spoken. In 2010, the children’s centre catchment area saw an increase in the percentage of children scoring at least 78 points across the Foundation Stage Profile scores to 62%.

The centre is open on weekdays from 9am to 5pm.

At the time of the inspection, the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham was consulting about the future configuration of its 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

Cathnor Park Children’s Centre provides a varied range of cohesive services which are contributing to the good and strongly improving outcomes for a wide range of users. This is because both managers and staff show high levels of commitment to improving the lives of users. They work extremely well as a team and have exceptional relationships with key partners, particularly health professionals and Vanessa Nursery School. The centre knows the local community well. It analyses available data to identify different groups and uses assessment sensitively. As a result, it has a secure understanding of individual users’ needs.

Leaders of the centre have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas to improve. Staff, managers and partners are involved in the process of evaluation that leads to setting future targets. Feedback is sought from users and the staff employ this information to shape sessions further. However, the system of self-evaluation is not yet monitoring explicitly the effectiveness of services on improving outcomes, and targets are not always precise enough to measure the impact fully. The local authority and leaders work well together to monitor services and have worked well to

overcome previous weakness and gaps. They recognise where services need to reach more target groups, for example fathers. As a result, the centre has a good capacity to improve further.

The centre serves a diverse community and all users feel welcome. There is a range of information translated into different languages and different cultures are celebrated through planned activities during sessions. Users experience outstanding care, guidance and support. They feel highly valued and have built trusting relationships with staff. Staff are extremely sensitive to the feelings of adults living in the community and there is a strong sense of mutual respect. Users fully appreciate the support they receive, particularly when they are experiencing a crisis or feeling vulnerable and see the centre as safe place to be. Parents report, 'They are a mother, sister and everything else to me' and 'They have saved my life.' Children's safety and well-being are enhanced significantly by the effective implementation of safeguarding policies and procedures.

Users respond exceptionally well to the sessions, such as 'Play Matters' where parents gain vital skills to support their families with the 'Change for Life' programme. Parents and carers value highly the opportunities to produce healthy meals on a budget. The centre staff, together with users, have produced a helpful recipe book, which parents use to produce healthy meals for their families at home. Local retailers support this programme as they stock necessary ingredients and have moved fruit so that it is more accessible. Users are gaining a greater understanding of how to keep their families safe through events such as safety week and 'Triple P' parenting programmes. In the garden, children and adults are made aware of the 'prickly plants' and regular fire drills ensure all users know how to keep themselves safe. Those using the centre enjoy and appreciate the welcoming, safe environment and range of well-planned activities available so they can play and learn with their children. The 'Hut' parent and toddler session is very popular with members of the wider community. Parents, grandparents, childminders and nannies are actively engaged in the children's learning in the well-resourced garden. The garden project is effective in engaging users and staff to work together to grow a range of vegetables and plants, which is extending the children's understanding of the natural world.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the effectiveness of the system of evaluation and analyse data more precisely in order to:
 - monitor more explicitly the improvement in outcomes for users
 - set measureable targets.
- Continue to develop services for specific groups, particularly fathers.

How good are outcomes for users?

The centre is developing systems for evaluating the impact of its work, and available evidence demonstrates that the centre's work is improving, the outcomes for users. In being healthy and staying safe, outcomes are improving strongly. Adults and children who attend the centre are exceptionally well informed to make healthy choices. The weekly 'baby café' that includes baby massage provides parents with an excellent opportunity to bond with their babies. 'Boost' sessions focus on physical activity and nutrition for babies and toddlers, thereby complementing the centre's aim of reducing obesity and promoting healthy lifestyles.

Ensuring the emotional well-being of users is a high priority for the centre, particularly for those children with special educational needs and/or disabilities or subject to child protection plans. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used effectively to ensure those with specific needs are supported fully in engaging services. Family workers are skilled at building trusting relationships with users so that families feel confident to approach the centre for support in times of crisis. Children are developing an excellent understanding of dangers and how to keep themselves safe. Older children report a heightened awareness of how to keep safe around dogs and 'stranger danger'. Staff are well trained to recognise and support those who are at risk of domestic violence.

Parents enjoy the opportunities to engage in their children's play and gain an understanding of how to support their learning when attending drop-in sessions such as 'Stay and Play'. Parents confidently talk about the courses they have attended and the speakers who visit the 'Parents' Morning', such as St John Ambulance and the fire brigade. Parenting courses have helped them develop their parenting skills, particularly in managing children's behaviour. The centre works extremely well with Vanessa Nursery and evidence is building that those children who have contact with the centre have a smoother transition to nursery and achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scores. The nursery is now tackling the areas identified as lower in terms of achievement, such as communication, language and literacy, to move children from their starting points at a faster rate. Adults are provided with good information about different basic skills courses but the centre is not yet tracking their achievements.

The centre seeks the views of users on a regular basis through feedback sheets and informal discussions. This information is used to plan for future activities. One parent reports that staff skilfully notice their informal discussions, such as not knowing how to make 'couscous' and then find this the focus of the next session. Some parents are involved in the centre's governance and in shaping future services. All users feel welcome and recognise each other when out in the community as they have established friendships at the centre. Children's behaviour is very good and staff and volunteers are supporting them to develop their independence and self-help skills, for example as they make Mother's Day cards.

The childminders are helped effectively to increase their professional development as they gain qualifications and successfully become accredited childminders. They report that sessions at the centre provide opportunities to help them promote outcomes for children and complement their childminding.

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
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

Centre staff have a good understanding of the needs of their community and they make good use of the data supplied by the local authority. They also make good use of the information they gain from registration forms, along with their local knowledge, to ensure the services they provide meet the needs of the majority of the community. There is a good range of services that reach the wider community, including minority ethnic groups, lone parents and those more vulnerable. The centre has been successful in increasing the numbers of families it reaches with young children. Data that is available from 2009 show that unemployment among fathers was at the highest level for six years. The centre has made concerted attempts to increase the number of fathers engaged in services but has seen little success in this area as yet.

There are good assessment procedures in place to target required services for children and families who require specific support. Centre staff have highly effective partnerships with other professionals to provide the required levels of support and, where necessary, take the lead in completing CAF referrals. The good range of different opportunities in the centre programme for adults and children to play and learn together includes holiday programmes to cater for older siblings. Activities are well planned, of high quality and embedded in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and focused on areas that require reinforcement. For example, effective partnership working with speech and language therapists ensures that there is early intervention and a particular emphasis on increasing the language and communication skills of children.

Family support workers are very effective at engaging those users who are harder to

reach, ensuring some of the most vulnerable families access services. Centre staff are highly effective in building trusting relationships and recognise when users may need additional support as they are passionate in their aim to improve the lives of families in the community. Parents recognise this passion and appreciate the support they receive, particularly when they are experiencing a change in their circumstances. Parents talk extremely positively about the staff and the services they access as they report: 'There's an air of love in the air'; 'It's like a home to me'; and 'It's like a rescue.' Staff provide users with a wealth of information and guidance on a range of relevant topics. They are extremely sensitive to where they display some information, such as domestic violence, in order that users can access this personal information in private.

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?

2

The centre managers and senior staff are key in leading the team and very much at the heart of the centre's work. Together, they inspire everyone they work with, including staff, partners and users, to improve outcomes. Clear line management arrangements, governance by the local authority and effective supervision mean staff are well supported. The centre uses the 'Parents' Morning' group to seek the views of users rather than having a more formal parents' forum. The views of parents and other users are represented on the local delivery board where they are keen to shape services. Some parents are involved in creating services, such as 'Little Crickets', a drop-in play session for deaf babies and children. Parents appreciate this session highly as it provides a valuable resource where they receive emotional and practical support.

The centre collects a wide range of data. This includes authority-wide data, which, along with its local knowledge, the centre is using to identify and target services. There is a clear system for self-evaluation which helps staff reflect on their practice, and identify strengths and areas for improvement. The centre is gathering evidence of impact through monitoring and the evaluation process, but is not yet producing a clear analysis and commentary on the data it holds currently to demonstrate impact on outcomes fully. Local data are not yet available in order for the centre to measure the impact of its services, such as in narrowing the achievement gap. Targets focus on the key priorities for improvement but are not always measurable in order for

the full impact on outcomes to be seen.

Effective use is made of the environment to create a safe, inclusive and welcoming atmosphere. Accommodation is used effectively to provide a good range of services. A crèche is provided so parents can access parenting courses and for groups such as 'Little Crickets'. Managers have recently carried out detailed work to establish the value for money of each group activity and this has highlighted the relative costing of both universal and targeted services to identify where savings can be made further. The centre has established some impressive partnership working. This includes partners and professionals in health, social care, adult education and voluntary organisations. Centre staff benefit from the excellent relationship with the local GP, who regularly attends team meetings to raise staff awareness on a variety of topics, such as head lice and contraception. Trainee doctors then visit the children's centre so they can gain a greater understanding of how effectively services are improving the lives of users. The centre provides student placements for a range of organisations and some users when completing a range of qualifications, such as level 2 or 3 qualifications in childcare.

There is a comprehensive awareness of safeguarding issues among staff and they consistently give the highest priority to enhancing children's safety and well-being. There are robust safeguarding policies, procedures and protocols in place, including risk assessments. Families receive excellent parental support and guidance to improve their parenting skills. Such support contributes to impressive results when families are no longer subject to child protection plans and, in some cases, children remain living at home.

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	1
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	1

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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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Cathnor Park Children’s Centre on 30 and 31 March 2011. We judged the centre as good overall. It has some outstanding features.

Your children’s centre provides you and your children with a varied range of good-quality services which are contributing to positive improvements and changes in your lives. This is because both managers and staff show high levels of commitment to improving outcomes for the whole community, which they know well. They use available data to identify the different groups who would benefit from services and use assessment sensitively. As a result, they have a secure understanding of individual needs. They work extremely well as a team and have developed some exceptional relationships with other professionals, such as health workers and Vanessa Nursery School.

Those in charge of the centre know what they do well and where they need to do better. Together with the staff, managers and partners, they look at how effective the services are, and this leads to them setting new targets. They ask for feedback from you about sessions to provide an even more interesting range of activities and services. We have asked them to look at the system they use to evaluate services so they can monitor and show exactly how effective these are in helping you to improve the lives of your families. We have also asked them to make sure that targets they set for the future can be measured more easily. They are looking at ways to engage more fathers in centre activities.

You told us how you and your children really enjoy and benefit from opportunities to play and learn together in a very safe environment where you all feel welcome. Sessions such as ‘Play Matters’ provide opportunities to develop vital skills to support your families with ‘Change for Life’. You told us that you value highly the opportunities to produce healthy meals on a budget and use the helpful recipe book to produce healthy meals at home. Local retailers are supporting this programme as they stock necessary ingredients and have moved fruit to be more accessible. The centre provides excellent opportunities for you to gain a greater understanding of how to keep families safe through events such as safety week and ‘Triple P’ parenting programmes. In the garden, they make you and your children aware of the ‘prickly plants’ and regular fire drills ensure you all know how to keep safe in an

evacuation. The 'Hut' parent and toddler session is very popular with the wider community. We observed parents, grandparents, childminders and nannies actively engaged in the children's learning in the well-resourced garden. The garden project is effective in engaging everyone at the centre to work together to grow a range of vegetables and plants, which is helping to extend the children's understanding of the natural world.

Adults provide a range of information and this includes some which is translated into different languages. You are celebrating different cultures through planned activities during sessions. We found that the care, guidance and support that staff offer you is outstanding. We agree with you that staff go out of their way to support you and, as a result, you feel highly valued. You told us that staff are always ready to listen to you, particularly when you may be experiencing a crisis or feeling vulnerable. Some of you told us, 'They are a mother, sister and everything else to me' and 'They have saved my life.' Centre staff do all that they can to keep you and your children safe. Children's safety and well-being are significantly enhanced by the effective implementation of safeguarding policies and procedures.

We would like to thank those of you who spared time to speak with us and for contributing to the inspection of Cathnor Park Children's Centre.

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