

Inspection report for Collier Row Children's Centre

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| Local authority | Havering |
| Inspection number | 367784 |
| Inspection dates | 19–20 April 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | Michael Kubiak HMI |

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| Centre governance | The local authority |
| Centre leader | Glynda Davison |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |
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| Linked school if applicable | Not applicable |
| Linked early years and childcare, if applicable | EY346133 Abbs Cross Day Nursery 3 |

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.

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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.

Registered childcare provision is located on the same site and is run by a private provider. An inspection of this provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, representatives from the parents' forum and children's centre local advisory group, health staff and data analyst. They spoke to parents formally and informally around the centre.

They observed the centre's work, including a music and movement session and the 'Easter Extravaganza'. They looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the centre's self-evaluation, business plan, user evaluations and case study information.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate

Information about the centre

Collier Row Children's Centre was designated in 2007 and is governed by the local authority. It works closely with other children's centres within the locality, particularly Thistledene Children's Centre. Centre staff are employed directly by the local authority. There is a nursery on site which is run by a private provider.

The centre's catchment area is mixed in terms of deprivation with 18% of the population living in the most deprived areas. The local population is mostly White British, with some Asian and Eastern European families. Around 18% of children under five in the area are living in workless households, which is above the national average. Children's knowledge, skills and abilities on entry to early years provision are below expectations for their age. At the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage around 83% of children achieve at least 78 points across the Foundation Stage Profile with communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development the weaker elements.

The centre is open all year round, from 9.00am to 6.00pm weekdays, and on some Saturdays. Services such as health clinics and groups are run within the centre. Outreach services based at the centre are offered within the community.

The centre's facilities include a reception office, a number of multi-purpose rooms, two meeting rooms, a 'hotdesk' room where staff can come and work, a family room and a health room. The centre has recently modernised the kitchen and plans to use this for family cooking activities once the refit is complete. There is access to two separate outdoor areas and a sensory room. The building is fully wheelchair accessible.

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 overall effectiveness of the centre is good and improving. Centre staff know the local area very well and use this knowledge when planning services. The staff team is well established and committed to improving outcomes for families through the work of the centre.

Parents and users value the support offered to them in the safe and welcoming environment of the centre. Many parents choose this particular centre as they feel that staff are very approachable. Furthermore, they feel that their children benefit from the safe outdoor play space that is available.

Recruitment procedures are rigorous and robust and follow local authority guidelines. Safeguarding policies and procedures are based on local authority information and are clearly understood by all staff. Central electronic files and effective communication ensure that work is well targeted and users are effectively safeguarded. Safeguarding training is given a high priority.

Leaders at all levels have a clear understanding of the centre's strengths and areas where further improvement is needed. The self-evaluation and business plan are not always reflective of the centre's work. Data systems have been developed and are beginning to be used meaningfully at the centre, although not yet routinely. The children's centre local advisory group meets regularly and understands the work of the centre.

Outcomes for users of the centre are good. Parents report that they enjoy their time at the centre. They value the positive relationships that staff build with them and feel that staff relate well to them. The centre is effective in ensuring that activities are targeted where they will have the most impact. Parent and child evaluations are completed for a wide range of activities. These evaluations are reviewed and used to shape and inform future services. Evaluations show that there are high satisfaction rates among users. Parents have the opportunity to sit on the advisory board and the parents' forum. However, it is not always clear how their ideas are taken forward. Parents are also encouraged and supported to run some of the groups themselves.

The outreach work by the family support workers is a particular strength of the centre and is making a significant difference in improving the lives of families who use the service. Thorough assessment procedures include a screening process for all referrals for outreach work and this ensures that services are effectively targeted to those families most in need. The centre provides a secure environment for families undertaking contact visits.

The centre is seen as an integral part of the community. Equality and diversity are promoted throughout the work of the centre and activities such as the 'diversity day' celebrate the rich mix of the community. The centre reviews the work it undertakes in relation to equality and diversity and is aware where it needs to strengthen it further.

All staff demonstrate a commitment to the work of the centre and as a team use available resources effectively. They have strong links with partner agencies and are able to use these to offer effective advice and guidance and to signpost users to these services. Parents report that they are confident to approach the staff to discuss any issues. Individual outcomes for users of the centre are good and improving. Targets are now set for the centre and for individual staff and improved analysis of users' needs is ensuring that work is focused where it will have the most impact. As a result, the centre's capacity to improve further is good.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Further develop the centre's evaluation systems by using relevant data to evaluate and demonstrate the centre's impact on improving outcomes for users.
- Strengthen the governance arrangements to ensure that the centre is held to account and that challenging targets are set for the centre, linked to improving outcomes for children and families.
- Embed equality and diversity across all aspects of the centre to ensure that all areas of the community are represented and valued and that information is accessible.

How good are outcomes for users?

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The centre is having a positive impact on improving outcomes for families. Promoting healthy lifestyles is a high priority for the centre and this is having a positive effect on reducing obesity rates. Users value the opportunity to make healthy packed lunches for their children and to learn about healthy food choices. A breastfeeding café has recently started at the centre and peer supporters encourage mothers to breastfeed, however it is too early to accurately assess the impact of this work. Children benefit from the opportunity to play outside and exercise. Smoking cessation advice is offered in a variety of ways and a large number of users are reporting that they have been successful in ceasing smoking.

Parents report that they feel welcome at the centre and are respected. The centre is successful in bringing together people from different parts of the community. Work is undertaken in the community with groups who do not access the centre to ensure that they still benefit from support. Parents' emotional health is also a priority for the centre and staff are able to offer support and signpost parents to specific services. Those parents who need additional support are effectively identified and receive it from family support workers. A comprehensive assessment of the needs of the family is undertaken and includes information from a range of partner organisations. Parents and workers agree an action plan and targeted outreach work is then offered. This work is very effective in safeguarding children and is having a positive impact on reducing the number of children on child protection plans.

Children benefit from the wide range of stimulating play experiences. Activities such

as the Early Support Group encourage staff and parents to work together to observe their children's progress, record it and plan activities to support future learning. These observations and planning are shared when the child moves on to nursery or pre-school and this supports the child's transition. Centre staff also continue to support the children and have built up good relationships with some early years providers. This ensures that children are well prepared for school. The centre has recently introduced a planning system for group sessions, however this is not yet linked into the Early Years Foundation Stage

Activities such as the 'Easter Extravaganza' are well attended by families and the involvement of local partners, such as the police, supports community relations and builds community cohesion. One parent commented that the centre is 'family orientated'. Parents attend a range of courses at the centre including Spanish, Makaton signing and 'Storysack' workshops. Courses for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) have recently been run in response to a need being identified by the centre due to the changing population. The take-up rate of courses is good and there is some success with users going on to further, accredited courses.

Parents have the opportunity to contribute to the work of the centre by volunteering and by being part of the parents' forum. The forum members are consulted on a range of issues relating to the centre and canvass the views of other parents. One parent commented, 'It has given me more confidence as a parent.' There is evidence of users being successfully supported in obtaining paid employment.

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| The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which children are safe and protected, and 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 and employment | 2 |

How good is the provision?

2

The centre provides a good range of integrated services and activities which are well matched to the needs of the users. Effective targeting of services ensures that resources are allocated where they will have the most impact on improving outcomes for users. The initial screening process for families referred to the family outreach service ensures that resources are used effectively. Good relationships have been established with a wide range of key partners including health and children's social

care. These ensure that families receive a coordinated approach to meeting their needs. The central electronic records that are used across the local authority ensure that staff have access to up-to-date information on families. The Common Assessment Framework is used with families where appropriate and this ensures that services across a wide range of partner agencies are coordinated and effectively meet the needs of users. Staff use their knowledge of the services available to best support families and this work is having a very positive impact, for example linking in with Jobcentre Plus to obtain benefit advice.

Users are able to drop in at any time and the centre provides good-quality information and guidance. Parents who are less confident about accessing the centre are well supported by staff. Effective signposting ensures that users are aware of the range of services available. The centre staff speak a range of languages and are able to translate information when required. Written information in languages other than English is limited. The fathers' group is effective in engaging more fathers in the centre, although they are encouraged to visit at any time.

There are good links with Havering College and users are able to access accredited courses. Practical courses, such as first aid, baby massage and cooking, are popular and well attended.

Centre staff have high aspirations for users and good links with Jobcentre Plus ensure that effective support with work-related issues and benefits advice is readily available. The centre has successfully supported some users in obtaining places on accredited early years courses.

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

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The centre's leaders work effectively as a team and have built purposeful links with partner agencies. Management structures are clear and centre staff work closely with, and are able to access support from, other centres. Quality services are matched to individual users' needs. Effective multi-agency working and the sharing of information about families ensure that the most appropriate services are offered. The impact of work with individual families is rigorously evaluated through individual supervision, multi-agency team meetings and case studies.

The centre is beginning to use data as a way of monitoring and evaluating its

effectiveness. Regular data reports are provided and discussed by centre staff who evaluate and review the services offered, based on the data and a number of other sources. The data do not always provide sufficiently detailed information about individual users. The centre is working with the local authority on improving the range of data available to centres. The centre undertakes a range of monitoring and analysis of its work and this provides a basis for strengths and areas for development.

The children's centre local advisory group has recently been created, having previously been a forum for professionals. Parents have the opportunity to feed into the advisory group through the parents' forum. The advisory group is supportive of the centre's work and its work is understood by the centre. There are some missed opportunities to set targets for the centre.

Equality and diversity are promoted at the centre and the centre has taken concerted action to promote equality. The centre has inclusion at the centre of its work. It works hard to engage all areas of the community. Publications at the centre are predominantly in English, however the centre can access translation services from within its staff team and externally. Displays and books available at the centre reflect the wider community. Publicity material does not always include positive images of hard to reach groups. There is limited information around the centre in community languages.

The centre is systematic in reviewing the services it offers and re-directs resources where they will have most impact, for example by having clear aims and objectives for the outreach work and ensuring that wherever possible work is time limited. The centre also encourages users to self-manage their own groups. This ensures that the centre continues to provide services which provide good value for money.

The centre's leaders and staff work well together and management arrangements are secure. Supervision and management arrangements are clear and well understood. Staff are encouraged to take on extra responsibilities and projects to develop their professional skills. Outreach workers receive professional supervision which is focused specifically on their work with families. Centre staff have good opportunities for professional development. Staff are seen as individuals and are encouraged by the centre to develop any specialist skills linked to their abilities and interests. These skills are considered when outreach work is allocated to ensure that the worker with the most appropriate skills is identified.

All required policies and procedures are in place and meet requirements in relation to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults. Induction procedures are robust and safeguarding issues are given a high priority. Parents are informed of staff's responsibility in relation to safeguarding at the beginning of any outreach work. Safeguarding employment practices for staff employed directly through the centre are rigorous and follow the local authority procedures. Thorough risk assessments and safer working practices ensure staff are safe when working in the community.

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| 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 | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |
| The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision | 2 |

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Collier Row Children's Centre on 19 and 20 April 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

The centre is based within easy reach of the local shopping area. It is fully wheelchair accessible. It provides you with a safe and welcoming environment where you feel free to visit at any time. You told us that you particularly enjoy the opportunity to play in the outside area with your children.

You feel that you are always treated as individuals and with respect and that staff build positive relationships with you and your families. They take an interest in getting to know you and your children.

The outreach service is very effective in offering you additional support when you need it. You are included in setting targets for the work and you understand what is expected of you. Staff make clear how they can support you and bring about improvements to your family life. The staff have good links with other organisations and are able to direct you to other areas of support when you need it.

Your views are obtained through evaluations of the different aspects of the centre's work and this contributes to shaping the services at the centre. The centre also obtains the views of your children. Some of you sit on the parents' forum. You also have the opportunity to sit on the local advisory group. This group does not yet set targets for the centre to improve the service it offers you and your families. We have asked them to look at how they can do this.

The centre's self-evaluation and business plan broadly cover the work of the centre. These documents do not fully reflect the good work which is achieved at the centre. The centre obtains data on its performance but this information is not used in the self-evaluation and business plan. We have asked the centre to look at making these documents more useful.

You are well supported in accessing services and activities that will help you to improve your lives and those of your families. Health services are located at the centre and a breastfeeding café is available. Activities are undertaken to support you in developing healthy lifestyles for you and your families.

The centre ensures that it works with all areas of the community and is aware of the changing needs of the community. There is good access to translation services, however we have asked the centre to look at how information is provided. We also feel that the centre could build on its good work to make sure that the wider community is more reflective through the centre. Some of you benefit from the opportunity to develop your skills, for example through volunteering at the centre or becoming breastfeeding peer supporters.

The centre staff want the best for you and work hard to ensure that you are provided with a good level of services.

Thank you to those of you who took the time to come and talk to us. We wish you and your children all the best for the future.

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