

Inspection report for Cranford Children's Centre

Local authority	Hounslow
Inspection number	365772
Inspection dates	25–26 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Lynda Welham

Centre governance	London Borough of Hounslow
Centre leader	Judy Matthews
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Berkeley Avenue Cranford Middlesex TW4 6LB
Telephone number	0208 759 7994
Fax number	
Email address	cranfordcc@hounslow.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Cranford Infant School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Cranford Nursery School

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.

Published: June 2011



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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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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 additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre lead and centre manager, outreach workers, representatives from the range of services offered, parents and carers who access the centre's services and who are on the parents' forum and members of the centre's advisory board.

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

Information about the centre

Cranford Children's Centre is situated in the borough of Hounslow and is located on the same site as Cranford Infant School site. The children's centre was originally designated as a Phase 2 centre in the 30% most deprived area, but was re-designated in February 2010 as a Phase 2 centre in the 70% least disadvantaged areas. Arrangements for the governance of the centre include the local authority, the governing body of Cranford Infant School and an advisory board consisting of representatives from the voluntary and statutory sectors.

The centre has continued to operate to the standards of a 30% centre by commissioning a full daycare nursery on site that can accommodate up to 25, from 0 to 5 years. A private daycare provider operates the nursery. Before-school care is delivered on site from a private provider.

The centre serves a socially diverse community, with 515 children aged under 5. Of this number, 41% fall into the 30% most deprived area. The large majority of families come from diverse minority ethnic groups, with over half being of Asian heritage. There is a high obesity rate both among adults and children in the local community. Housing accommodation across the area is overcrowded. Unemployment rates and the number of families on benefits are lower than the national average. Numbers of lone parents in the centre's reach area are low. Incidents of domestic

violence are high within the reach area. Initial assessments indicate that children's development when the children first start in the nursery is well below age-related expectations, particularly in the areas of communication, literacy and language.

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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

Cranford Children's Centre offers outstanding support to families and young children. The centre offers a calm and relaxed atmosphere, where each parent and carer feels valued and welcomed. Among many comments praising its work was, 'There is always something new to learn in the centre and by coming here I no longer feel isolated.' The centre offers a bright, attractive and accessible environment. Although accommodation is small, the centre plays a central role in its community with almost 90% of families in its reach area having registered and actively engaged with its activities. Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding and families, especially in times of difficulty, receive extremely good support from a wide range of services within, or coordinated by, the centre. These factors illustrate the centre's outstanding care, guidance and support.

A key strength of the centre is the way in which centre staff and partner agencies know their community well and work together to deliver a highly cohesive set of services. For example, as a result of a joint initiative between the centre, the nursery and infant school and the local authority's speech and language team, the proportion of children who reach the national average in communication, language and literacy by the age of five has increased significantly. Staff are very effective in 'signposting' parents and carers to additional services, such as English language courses at the nearby adult education centre. Courses to promote healthy eating and weight reduction have proved successful, as the proportion of children and adults in the area known to be obese has reduced. There is a high uptake of adult courses, such as first aid and English language classes delivered, or commissioned, by the centre.

Staff at the centre are passionate about empowering centre users in their day-to-day lives and encouraging them to have high aspirations for themselves and their children. One parent who has now gained a university place to study for a nursing

degree said, 'It all started at the children's centre.' Equality and diversity are promoted fervently and community cohesion within the centre is extremely strong. Self-evaluation is robust. Leaders and managers of the centre routinely seek the views of partner agencies, parents and carers and their children, for example through surveys about users' satisfaction with the centre's services. These views subsequently shape future services, for instance providing activities and trips for families in school holidays. Close liaison with partnership agencies and services also provides invaluable feedback for planning ahead and maintaining high-quality services. These factors, taken together with the centre's excellent outcomes, demonstrate its outstanding capacity for future improvement. Among its priorities are plans to strengthen further its already good links with health and adult education professionals so that they can contribute fully to the centre's planning. In addition, the centre is seeking to draw more parents and carers onto its advisory board. The centre has already used its parents' forum as a highly effective way to build the confidence of its adult users, especially among those who do not speak English as their first language.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Build the confidence of parents and carers to increase their number on the centre's advisory board.
- Sharpen the links between the centre and its partner professionals in health and adult education services so that they can contribute fully to the centre's future planning.

How good are outcomes for users?

1

The centre provides many excellent opportunities to promote healthy lifestyles and support the mental, physical and emotional well-being of its users. The health team delivers a well-attended ante-natal clinic at the centre. In addition, excellent breastfeeding and weaning support and health training are supporting families in helping young children make a healthy start in life. Families are engaging well with the 'Healthy Ways' course, sharing recipes from different cultures and cooking more nutritious and less costly meals. Following this course one parent wrote of its success, 'I know now how to read food labels and I have lost weight because I eat more healthy food.'

All services in the centre ensure children stay safe. Sharing of information between staff and parents and carers is excellent. Both outreach workers speak several languages prevalent in the reach area of the centre and the one-to-one weekly drop-in sessions are well attended. As one parent said, 'I can share my concerns and I have had invaluable support and guidance.' Consequently, staff can quickly identify concerns and bring about early intervention by health and social care partners. Parents have access to good-quality parenting courses and support with behaviour management issues, helping to improve relationships substantially within the family.

For instance, following attendance at 'Peeps' parenting course, mothers reported to inspectors that they felt empowered in dealing more appropriately with their children's behaviour and had greater understanding of their children's demands. A father who completed the 'Men Behaving Dadly' course felt closer to his son as a result and reported that he could deal with challenging behaviour more effectively. Families involved with the Common Assessment Framework are supported well and attendance at the centre is included as part of planning for child protection. Parents and carers state they feel entirely safe and secure within the centre and children's behaviour while they play and learn is exemplary. The local authority highlights domestic violence as a concern within the borough, and the centre has responded robustly by hosting a support group, empowering those who attended to keep themselves and their families safe.

Children are well prepared for nursery and school as they benefit from a wide range of stimulating play experiences and courses such as 'Transition Class' and 'Stay and Play.' Here, children experience a wide variety of activities to promote their learning and development through play. The centre has been successful not only in involving parents in participating in engaging and purposeful play but grandparents also. Staff support parents and grandparents in understanding what children are learning from play and are excellent role models in relation to modelling good speaking and listening skills with their children. Data, which track the progress of children who have attended the centre, show they make exceptionally good progress socially and in communication, language and literacy. The early years teacher from the on-site infant school works closely with the centre and has delivered a six-week 'Forest Schools' programme, introducing the children imaginatively to the outdoors. From this exploratory play, children learn to respect the environment and enjoy activities such as den building and music and sounds outdoors. As a result of this opportunity, children's language and physical development have been considerably enhanced.

As space is limited, adult community learning is not offered directly by the centre, but families are 'signposted' on to adult education facilities at a nearby college. Here they have successfully engaged with English courses for those speaking other languages and gained access to further education. For some parents and carers, these opportunities have been significant. For example, one parent is now training to be a teaching assistant, whilst another has started up her own catering business. They commented that the centre gave them the confidence and the courage to plan ahead. The centre works closely with individual users to develop plans to help them into employment. Jobcentre Plus displays weekly vacancies in the centre and advice from the local tax and benefits offices enables many families to gain access to all the benefits to which they are entitled. A six-week programme of training to become a volunteer in the centre is now fully developed and adult users will be starting this in the autumn term. Parents, carers and children are invited to contribute ideas and to evaluate the impact of services they access. For example, a walking group is about to start soon and timetables have been re-arranged to more suitable times.

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	1
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	1
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	1

How good is the provision?

1

Robust assessment procedures enable the centre to make high-quality provision for the welfare, health and social needs of children and their families. The centre has targeted resources towards the key challenges facing the community it serves, and particularly to improving obesity rates, tackling social isolation due to language difficulties and improving educational outcomes for its users. Through its own evaluation, the centre has focused successfully on families who are harder to reach within the non-Asian community, such as those from White Other and White British communities, so that the numbers using the centre from these groups are increasing. Determined action to encourage more fathers to use the centre has resulted in enhanced parenting skills. One father wrote in his evaluation, 'I was finding it really difficult to deal with my son's behaviour. Coming to the sessions has taught me to play differently with my children and I don't get frustrated anymore.'

Staff have initiated the Common Assessment Framework and work closely with the daycare provider, school and partner agencies to ensure that children's support and that of the family is personalised to meet each family's individual needs. A parent commented, 'Workers in the centre really know and care and really understand what's going on in people's homes and lives through home visiting.' Prompt referral to the local authority teams responsible for social care and early intervention has enabled effective support to be given to families in times of crisis.

The centre celebrates achievement through award ceremonies for those completing courses and children's art work is displayed prominently throughout the centre. Photographic records show how much families enjoy outings to the seaside and to local parks for picnics. Adults particularly praised 'Singing Hands' sessions where action songs improve children's listening and expressive and reception language skills. Parents and carers commented on their children gaining greater independence, having enormous fun and gaining confidence as a result of them taking part in soft play sessions. 'Busy Babies' sessions, delivered in response to adult requests, affords

parents and carers peer support and greater understanding of what to expect at babies' developmental milestones. Appreciation was summed up by one parent who said, 'Coming here makes me more confident and my child can be more active and safe – there is nothing to beat it in the area.'

Although not required to do so, the centre has appointed a qualified Early Years Foundation Stage teacher to promote high standards within the centre. This work also ensures considerable liaison with the adjacent nursery and infant school. Free nursery education and crèche facilities have opened up training and development opportunities for users. Successes include users who have registered as childminders following input from meetings at the centre run by national associations.

Effective outreach and intervention ensure programmes are equally available to children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The centre has successfully gained specialised respite care and a statement of special educational needs for children where required. Programmes and services are coordinated across a number of centres so that parents and carers can access them at a time and place that suits them best. Case studies, reviews of courses, casual conversations, user satisfaction surveys and the centre's thorough analysis of data give a clear picture of the improving services for families and children.

Parents very much appreciate the ease of access to the ante-natal and baby clinics and speak highly of the opportunity to seek advice from health staff, including a midwife and health visitor. Families finding themselves in crisis are confident to ask for family support and referral to appropriate services. Employment agencies and outreach workers in the centre provide invaluable advice about attending interviews and writing curriculum vitae to help people return to work.

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	1
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	1
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?

1

Systems of governance, accountability and day-to-day management are very clear and effective. Very strong links between the local authority, centre leaders and the advisory board mean that ambitions for the development of the centre are high. The parents' forum increasingly enables parents and carers to challenge staff and elected

members about aspects of the centre's activities and programmes. Multi-agency sharing of expertise through the advisory board has led to some strong partnerships. These links are enhancing long-term strategic planning, especially in relation to sustainability, development plans and service provision. However, the centre recognises that its partnership between the professionals in health and adult education services could be sharpened further to ensure that they contribute fully to the centre's future planning. Morale in the centre is high. Staff are enthusiastic and reflective practitioners, determined to do their best for their community. They are held to account through performance management, which prioritises training and development needs effectively.

Integration of services and good communication between centre users and the centre staff ensure concerns relating to children and families are identified early and relevant referrals are made. Links with other agencies have led to close working with local social care and health visitor staff. As a result, children and vulnerable adults have been able to access services, such as support for domestic violence and children attending the centre as part of social care support. Safeguarding procedures are robust. The site is secure. CCTV supports staff's vigilance about who is on site. All activities and trips are risk assessed. Parents describe the centre as 'a safe and secure place to come to'. Local authority procedures and guidance for safe recruitment are followed closely. All staff have been subject to a Criminal Records Bureau check and are trained appropriately in child protection procedures.

In the past three years, the centre has extended its provision, reach and volume significantly. Despite the restraints of a small building, resources are used and managed very effectively to benefit the community. Rooms provide multi-purpose use and are easily accessible to those with disabilities. As the centre's outside space is limited, the nursery and the infant school share theirs with the centre on a daily basis. The centre fulfils all its statutory duties and provides excellent value for money.

The inclusion of all children and their families ensures that equal opportunities are promoted very effectively and discrimination is tackled rigorously. A range of religious festivals and celebrations are celebrated within the centre, where parents and children learn about different cultures and taste different foods. The centre has narrowed the gap educationally for the most disadvantaged children through working closely with the nursery and early years professionals, and also by introducing families to the outdoor world through trips and half-term activities. Parents have been empowered by these trips and now organise outings themselves, improving their quality of life and developing friendships as a result. A home visiting educational service for pre-school children with additional support needs runs from the centre. As a result, such children have successfully been integrated into mainstream activities. Outreach services in local libraries, doctors' group surgeries, schools and at community events enable the centre to successfully target new families. As a result, the centre is almost at full capacity.

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	1
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
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	1
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	1

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

Inspectors used information gained from the inspections of The Play2Learn Nursery that was inspected during January 2011 and was judged to be good.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Cranford Children's Centre on 25 and 26 May 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding.

Thank you for your help and contribution to the inspection. Those of you we spoke to told us that you could not thank the centre enough for the support you had received and that it had made a real difference to your lives. We enjoyed reading the many very positive evaluations and comments about the courses you have attended and the centre's services that you use. We agree that the Cranford centre provides

you with high-quality care, guidance and support, because the needs of each individual child and that of their family are of the highest importance. Courses, such as Every Child A Talker, Stay and Play and Healthy Eating, are really helping your child to achieve well and be healthy. Family support and the centre's links with many other agencies are giving you the knowledge to overcome difficulties you are experiencing. Courses, such as English for speakers of other languages, are enabling you to have a greater proficiency in English and have eased isolation and boosted your confidence. The centre does a good job in enabling you to improve your parenting skills or enter further education or employment. We agree with you that the centre takes great care to ensure that your children are safeguarded and that the centre is a safe place to be. The first aid training provided by the centre and information about domestic violence and safety in the home help you to recognise dangers and understand how to keep your children and yourselves safe. Many of you told us how greatly the centre has supported you when you have needed advice and guidance.

The senior staff, together with the local authority, lead and manage the centre extremely well. They know what the centre has to do to improve. Many of you are represented on the parents' forum and staff listen to your views carefully to ensure that the provision meets your needs and that everyone is fully included. Centre staff are keen to include you in the centre's governance even more and to help you become representatives on the advisory board. By becoming a member you can challenge the centre to make sure it sustains its high-quality provision.

Partners who work with the centre, such as those in adult education and the health services, have been asked to liaise even more closely with centre leaders about the uptake and outcomes of their services so that this information can contribute fully to the centre's future planning.

We noticed how much you felt the centre was part of your community and helps you develop friendships and a support network. A parent summed up what many of you told us about the centre by saying, 'It's the quality here – clean, welcoming, safe, hygienic – tip-top! A mother looks for the best for her child and finds it here.'

Thank you for sharing your experiences with us.

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