

Inspection report for Sybourn Children's Centre

Local authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	367274
Inspection dates	8–9 June 2011
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Sybourn Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Sybourn Children's Centre Nursery

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.

An inspection of the registered early years 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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with senior managers from the centre, frontline staff, parents and representatives of the local authority linked to the centre. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

The centre was established in September 2006 as part of a local Sure Start programme and is managed by Sybourn Primary School on behalf of Waltham Forest local authority. The centre's advisory board functions as a sub-committee of the school's governing body and includes parents, partners and the local authority, as well as members of the school's governing body. The centre provides the full core offer, including childcare, family support, child and family health services and Jobcentre Plus.

The centre is situated in the Lea Bridge Ward, in the south of the borough of Waltham Forest. It serves an ethnically mixed community with Eastern Europeans and those of Pakistani heritage comprising the highest ethnicities, and has the largest population in the borough. The ward is within the 10% most deprived in the country and also has the highest birth rate in the borough. A large number of children are from refugee and asylum-seeking families, as well as migrant communities who have no access to public funding. Many families live in temporary accommodation, which results in the Lea Bridge ward having a very mobile population. Unemployment rates and the number of families on benefits are higher than the national average. The Early Years Foundation Stage admits children from the age of six months to five years. This provision is overseen by the Early Years Foundation Stage leader of Sybourn Primary School. Children in the centre's reach

area demonstrate skills below those normally expected on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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

Sybourn Children's Centre provides good-quality services for its users. Centre leaders have established a strong culture of continuous improvement, resulting in life-transforming impact on many users. The centre works hard to build up trust and respect among local families. The support, dedication and commitment of all centre staff and partner services ensure that outcomes for people living within this locality are good and improving. The centre is held in very high regard by its users. A view strongly held by many was typified by one user who commented, 'This children's centre is my best friend. It has stood by me in times of trouble and helped me with a package of care. It supported me with training which has really helped my self esteem.'

Provision is good, both in relation to the good quality activities delivered within the centre and the impressive outreach work carried out by the centre staff. The importance the centre gives to reaching out into the community and developing positive relationships with all users is the foundation stone of its success. Particularly impressive is the hands-on, door-to-door approach that the centre has adopted to keep track of the changing demographics in the reach area and respond by adjusting provision accordingly. This demonstrates that equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination are central to the work of the centre. As a result of the highly effective partnerships established by the centre, well-targeted actions are taken to support vulnerable families and children and those who need support in times of acute need or crisis. Users particularly value the personal attention they receive, and many now have the confidence to ask for help and support before they reach a point of crisis.

The health and safety of children and users are a high priority for the centre. The emphasis on nurturing and welcome by staff adds to a sense of security for parents, which they say enables them to enjoy learning with their children in a relaxed environment. Good operational management and teamwork among the staff ensure that a richly varied programme of individual and group, play and learning activities is

planned and takes place. As a result, the centre's reach has been rising steadily over the past two years. However, the rich variety of data available in the centre is not yet used to demonstrate the impact of its services on different groups of users.

Leadership and management and the use of resources are good and represent good value for money. Safeguarding arrangements are thorough and effectively promote the safety of all users. Although leaders have a clear vision and regularly monitor and evaluate the quality of provision, development planning is insufficiently robust because it does not identify measurable outcomes and stipulate clear timescales for their achievement. Nevertheless, the advisory board has the skills to hold the centre to account and does this effectively. Morale is high as leaders are moving the centre forward with a clear sense of purpose. Given the very strong partnerships and achievements of the centre in contributing to community cohesion in the area, coupled with better health and safeguarding for users, the centre has good capacity to build on its good provision and further improve outcomes.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure that development planning is more robust by identifying clear targets to achieve, agreed timescales, and measurable success criteria.
- Develop the use of data to demonstrate the impact of the centre's services on different groups of users.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Partnership work, in relation to the promotion of children's and families' emotional well-being, is particularly effective. The commitment of all professionals, including health visitors, outreach workers and family support agencies, ensures that families receive the support they need. The centre promotes healthy lifestyles well. For example, the weekly breastfeeding clinic has been very successful in encouraging new mums to sustain breastfeeding several weeks after birth. The 'healthy eating' programme, delivered at the local church hall by a Primary Care Trust dietician, has been very popular with users. Cultural dishes were prepared and shared, informed by good healthy eating advice and guidance.

Physical development is a strong feature of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. In the nursery, children grow their own food, eat healthily and have lots of opportunities throughout the day for free-flow activities that promote good access to fresh air and physical activity.

All services offered in the centre keep users safe. The centre's good-quality relationships with families and their children allow staff to identify any safety concerns within families and intervene appropriately. Effective multi-agency support ensures that children subject to a child protection plan or Common Assessment Framework processes are well supported. Case study evidence and discussions with users provide strong evidence that access to a good-quality parenting skills course,

with strong support from sensitive centre staff, improved relationships, behaviour and home safety for users and their children. In addition, the well-attended annual Safety Day has been successful in improving users' awareness of personal safety as well as safety in the home. For example, safety professionals, including police, fire professionals and emergency service representatives, offered practical advice about potential dangers in the home and dispensed free safety equipment such as smoke detectors and socket covers.

Children are well prepared for nursery and mainstream school due to the effective delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage in the early years setting. Children are provided with good-quality learning experiences and these impact positively on their learning and development. An effective programme to improve children's knowledge and understanding of letters and sounds has been successful in developing their speech and language skills. Educational courses for adult users are of good quality with improving participation rates. As a result, adults' skills in literacy and information and communication technology are improving for those who engage in the programmes.

Behaviour of children in the early years setting is consistently good. Children in the nursery are given good opportunities to decide which activities they would like to engage in. The centre staff successfully promote a sense of belonging and respect that users appreciate. As a result, users and staff enjoy their time spent in the centre. Play sessions successfully engage parents and carers by involving them in the running of the groups. For example, parents play an active role in the activities with their children and their views are actively sought through post-activity evaluations. Two parents have been recruited onto the advisory board and participate with confidence. However, the centre recognises that there is more work to do in involving parents at a deeper level with decision making.

Externally commissioned, regular one-to-one sessions about advice on claiming rightful benefits are very popular with users. As a result, many users have accessed their entitlements and improved their individual circumstances. Many users are improving their basic skills, and therefore life chances, as a result of the good-quality educational programmes they have embarked on. In addition, users benefit from the strong partnership with Jobcentre Plus. They are effectively signposted to relevant information and guidance that is tailored to their needs and circumstances.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

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, 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	2

governance of the centre	
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

Support is well targeted for local children and families because centre staff and partners share a good understanding of the particular issues and challenges facing centre users in the reach area. Detailed case studies identify many examples where families have been supported, for example through the centre's package of care, helped to re-engage in everyday life and enjoy their families and home life again. The dedication and commitment of all involved in the centre ensure a continued focus on community development and engagement, enabling the centre to be responsive to the specific needs of this community. For example, when its own outreach work showed that there were now more residents of Eastern European heritage, in particular Romanian, centre staff introduced a weekly 'Romanian Day' to encourage the new families to access the centre's universal services.

Sessions and courses observed by inspectors in the centre and local church hall were of good quality with purposeful learning observed. For example, the 'messy play' session provides exciting and stimulating opportunities for many parents and their children to enjoy spending time together. The children explore in a safe and nurturing environment and many parents are also provided with good-quality advice about improving their skills and work opportunities from a Jobcentre Plus representative. A large number of mums of a range of ethnicities are making good progress in their English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes which are helping them develop basic speech and language skills. Many users are also improving their knowledge and understanding of the benefits system because they have learned how to access the information online.

Assessment of users' needs by the centre ensures skills are developed well and that provision is appropriately matched to improve outcomes. Good assessment and tracking in the nursery focus well on children's needs and ensure their activities are interesting and relevant to their lives. Adult users value the range and quality of services offered by the centre, in particular the good parenting sessions, ESOL classes, healthy eating and play activities where they enjoy quality time with their children. Evaluations show that the needs of users are met well and, at the same time, the centre is responsive to the emerging needs of the local community. However, the centre does not yet assess the level of user need even more sharply by evaluating the impact of its services on different groups of users and use this information to inform subsequent provision.

The quality of care for users and their children in the centre is good. Support for users' well-being is good across all outcomes and users report that their lives have improved because of the centre's tailored work. Signposting and referral to appropriate services are swift and effective. Most users reported that they were able

to access a range of services to improve the outcomes for their families. Many users report that the package of care provided by the centre enabled them and their children to improve their health and safety, and came at a time when their need was the greatest.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

Leaders and managers at all levels have a clear view of the provision and know where improvements should be made. This is reflected in their accurate self-assessment, based on clear thinking and sound analysis. Roles and responsibilities are clearly set out and understood. The Children's Centre Improvement Partner (CHIP) programme, developed by the local authority, has proved to be an effective way of holding the centre manager to account and supporting the strategic development of the centre. A strong team spirit prevails through the organisation with the centre's management team, advisory board and partners having a clear focus on improvement.

Rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures ensure that staff continually seek to improve their practice. Data are used well at a strategic level to compare the centre's performance against national indicators. This has provided a wealth of information which the centre uses to inform ongoing planning. Although the attendance of all users is routinely tracked, data systems are not yet sharp enough to monitor the impact of services on specific target groups including teenage mums, lone parents, and those from workless households. Nevertheless, good equality of opportunity is ensured by the centre staff being very proactive in reaching out to users at every opportunity, bringing them in, and providing a wide range of services that meet the needs of the local community. This also promotes good community cohesion. The views of users are also collected through evaluations of individual activities and interventions in order to check quality and usefulness and to inform the future planning of provision.

The dedication of all staff and partners within the centre is good and this is driven in part by the leadership team's determination to improve outcomes for families locally. A strong focus on staff development has resulted in well-skilled and knowledgeable staff who have the confidence to identify needs and issues facing families at the earliest opportunity. All have a detailed knowledge of policies and procedures in

relation to safeguarding children and are confident to follow these as required. This, coupled with very effective partnership working, ensures that the centre is able to swiftly provide the integrated package of support that vulnerable children and families need to move on in their lives. Robust arrangements are in place to ensure that all staff and other professionals who deliver services through the centre are suitable to do so.

A commitment to the inclusion of all children and families is at the heart of the centre's vision. Centre staff have in-depth knowledge and understanding of their locality, allowing them to respond appropriately to changes in the composition of the local population. For example, staff have worked hard to attract Roma gypsy users, whose numbers in the reach area have recently risen. Resources are used and managed effectively to meet the needs of a wide range of users in the community. For example, the centre leadership has responded very well to the need to increase the amount of outreach work so that the transient population in the reach area can be serviced more effectively. Staff throughout the centre are well deployed and utilised, ensuring good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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	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

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

The early years setting of Sybourn Children's Centre was inspected by an early years inspector a day before the centre's full inspection. Information from this inspection has been taken into account when writing about early years provision and outcomes for children in the report.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Sybourn Children's Centre on 8 and 9 June 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you for your help and contribution to the inspection. Those of you we spoke to told us how grateful you were for the support you had received from the centre and the difference it had made to your lives. We read your comments in the many evaluations about the courses you have attended and services that you use. We agree that Sybourn provides you with good-quality care, guidance and support because the needs of each individual child and family are given high priority. For example, centre staff work very hard to find out precisely who is living in the locality, as the population is constantly changing, and tailor their services accordingly.

Outreach work and the centre's links with many other agencies are giving you the knowledge and skills to overcome difficulties you are experiencing. The health service provides courses such as 'healthy eating' in the local church hall and the regular breastfeeding clinic, both of which you enjoy and gain much benefit from. English for speakers of other languages, also delivered regularly at Emanuel Church hall, is very popular with so many of you and clearly having a good impact in improving your speech and language skills. The centre has also been successful in ensuring that most of you get the benefits to which you are entitled. In addition, it takes great care to ensure that you and your children are safeguarded and that the centre is a safe place to be.

The senior staff, together with the local authority, lead and manage the centre well. They listen to your views carefully to ensure that the provision meets your needs and that everyone is fully included. They know what the centre needs to do to improve and are keen to help your representatives on the advisory board carry out their roles as well as they can. However, we have advised the centre that their annual development plan needs to be sharper, with clearer targets and timescales. In addition, the wide range of data that the centre already has should be used even more sharply to show the impact of the centre's services on different groups of users, for example lone parents, dads and teenage mums.

The centre values its partnership with you and respects your ideas. For example, centre leaders regularly review the outcomes of your evaluations of all the programmes and activities and adjust provision in the light of what the data are telling them. The inspection of the early years setting took place a day before the full children's centre inspection. The setting was judged to be good and inspectors consider that it gives children a solid start to their lives and learning. The quality of Sybourn Children's Centre is summed up by a parent who said, 'This children's centre is my best friend. It has stood by me in times of trouble and helped me with a package of care. It supported me with training which has really helped my self esteem.'

Thank you to everyone who took the time to come and speak to us, we are very grateful and we wish you every success for the future.

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