

Inspection report for Henry Fawcett and Kennington Park Children's Centre

Local authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	365793
Inspection dates	13–14 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Patricia Davies

Centre governance	Interim Executive Board
Centre leaders	Claire Nutall and Ann Munday
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Henry Fawcett Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Childcare at Henry Fawcett

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.

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with centre leaders and staff members, senior staff from Henry Fawcett Primary School, representatives from the local authority and locality support teams, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and a group of users. Inspectors also spoke with users during centre activities.

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

Information about the centre

Henry Fawcett and Kennington Park Children's Centre is one of 27 Sure Start centres in Lambeth. It is part of a cluster of four centres and predominantly serves the Oval ward. The centre is located within the building housing Henry Fawcett Primary School. It moved to this site on 6 June 2011, having been located previously at another site nearby.

The centre serves an area of considerable deprivation. Housing and environmental rankings are within the lowest 10% nationally and those related to financial and material well-being and children in need are in the lowest 20%. Infant mortality is higher than is found nationally. The proportion of children in the centre's area coming from families where there is no paid employment, or where households receive benefits, is 40%. Social housing is located close to owner-occupied property and many children come from homes in high-rise accommodation. The area contains a wide range of minority ethnic groups. At 19%, a very small minority are from White British backgrounds. Most children enter early years provision with a much narrower range of skills and abilities than those typically expected for their age. Ward data for the immediate area identify 15% of four to five year olds who are obese and 23% who are overweight.

The centre offers a range of drop-in facilities for parents, carers and children, including for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. It also holds parenting courses, hosts pre- and post-natal sessions, facilitates outreach work and links to other agencies, employment services and to health professionals. There is a designated health room and a sensory area is being set up. Childcare provision is available for up to 54 children aged two to five years from 8.00am to 6.00pm each day for 48 weeks of the year. This provision was not part of this inspection. It has been re-registered and will be inspected separately.

The governance of the centre has changed in the last few years, having originally been with the governing body of Henry Fawcett Primary School. This position changed in November 2009, when it was placed directly under the control of the local authority. Following its recent change of location, the centre's governance now lies with the primary school's interim executive board. A shadow governing body is working alongside the interim executive board in preparation for taking over as the substantive governing body for the school and the centre from February 2012. The centre is led and managed by the headteacher of the primary school, together with an interim manager who has overseen the move to the new site. There have been changes to centre staff since changing sites and some teaching professionals have moved across to the centre from the school or extended their role to include both facilities. Preparations are in place to appoint a substantive centre manager.

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

Henry Fawcett Children’s Centre provides the local community with a good service. Leaders and managers are ambitious for its development and have an accurate view of both its current effectiveness and of how to move it on. The change to a new site has been managed with much consideration and sensitivity, whilst getting activities and services up and running as quickly as possible in a different location. The centre’s leadership and governance recognise the strengths and loyalties established already at the previous site and are using these as crucial building blocks in their current work. Children are settling in to the new surroundings happily and parents and carers are already expressing positive views about the centre’s activities, its welcoming environment and new accommodation and facilities. In particular, users are enjoying and benefiting from the space and opportunities for physical activity indoors and outside. The centre is also making good use of the primary school’s professional expertise to promote children’s learning.

The friendly, personal contact of staff members with users is a particularly effective feature of the centre’s work. This approach enables staff to identify needs early on and is successful in encouraging parents and carers into new groups or activities suited to their particular circumstances. Such support is fostered also by strong liaison between the different agencies and professionals working from and with the centre. The conspicuously good relationships among its users illustrate the impact of the centre’s strong care for its community, including groups and individuals in vulnerable circumstances. Within this positive climate, trust and confidence grow so that users feel safe to reflect on personal experiences and firm friendships are forged in the sharing of activities and new experiences. All these positive factors contribute to the centre’s good capacity for sustained improvement and are reflected in the large number of new users registering at the centre.

Data from the local authority are used well to target priorities and adapt provision, in relation to good health and diet, for example, and ensuring safe sleeping habits for young children. There is good use of national, independent and charitable organisations to give additional services, including those to support family members in particularly difficult circumstances. Tailored provision is also promoted well in the

close everyday exchange of information among staff members and associated professional and outreach workers. Particular care has been given to winning hearts and minds in the face of some opposition to the move from some users. While a residue of concern has not wholly disappeared, for some users it has been dispelled very quickly. Increasingly, users are being asked to evaluate the overall quality of the centre's service and to give their views on the effectiveness of individual sessions, and are unafraid to do so. The gathering of this information is being gradually refined in order to provide the centre with a full and detailed picture of its impact and outcomes for guiding future development.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Refine the gathering of information about users' views in order to provide a full and detailed picture of the centre's impact and outcomes for guiding development.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Personal and social achievements are nurtured readily within the centre's friendly, safe and welcoming environment. Children and adults from a wide diversity of cultures and backgrounds mix happily and freely during activities. Such was the enjoyment of a small group of mothers who felt happier using play resources with their children as a discrete activity that they felt confident to stay on for the session afterwards in the company of others. There was also a real sense of community as parents and children shared in the Teddy Bears' picnic to mark the last 'Sing a Song' session for this term. Parents appreciate the benefits to their children's language development from sessions such as these, and the chance to learn with others and play with new toys. Those children with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar gains, delighting in singing familiar songs and doing the actions that go with the words, or just listening quietly. Such experiences over time have contributed effectively to children's progress and development in the area at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and, therefore, added valuably to children's future chances in education and life beyond.

Children behave well around each other and play safely during physical activities, like the 'Activator' sessions. The youngest children have the opportunity to develop vital early independence, confident to take small risks, such as climbing up and down little steps in safe circumstances. Good relationships with staff, especially where these are longstanding, ensure that users are confident to seek support when they are anxious and trust the guidance they receive. This confidence extends to those families receiving high levels of help from local and centre services as a result of child protection issues or assessment under the Common Assessment Framework. Parents point to greater self-knowledge in managing their children's behaviour and recognise the need to provide more praise and a consistent approach. Children's health and safety have been improved through advice on sleeping and eating habits, enabling

them to sleep through the night, for example, or eat more readily. Indeed, children enjoy the healthy foods on offer at the centre, trying out fruit they have never eaten before and keen to finish their portion. A gardening project was a huge success for adults and children, with all thoroughly enjoying the experience of growing and then eating their own produce, while a cookery course provided parents with valuable tips and recipes for providing a healthy diet on a budget.

As adult users' confidence grows, so does their motivation to improve their skills and independence. This is true of the small group of Muslim mothers who meet regularly. They are keen to gain computer skills and improve their English, and some have already taken advantage of the English language course taking place at a nearby centre in advance of the course due to start soon at Henry Fawcett. In some cases, the influence of the centre and its support have been substantial in enabling parents find paid employment, gain appropriate funding to help with financial security and attend training. The views of users are taken very seriously by centre staff and governance, and their suggestions are contributing much to changes in the new accommodation so that provision is aligned closely to need.

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 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's strong provision and wide range of services are being maintained effectively at the new site. In the first instance, key activities are continuing in the same form and at the same times to give continuity. Whilst sustaining this stability for its already established users, the centre also actively promotes its existence wider afield to gain greater use. Outreach workers, for example, are talking all the time with new and existing users to gauge need and pinpoint where they would like support. This approach allows centre staff to target delays in children's language development, for example, as soon as possible. It also ensures that the neediest families receive the right support to protect their well-being and nurture physical and emotional good health. Such work has allowed small groups of adult users from minority groups to have a voice in shaping the content of their meetings together.

Cluster arrangements and the promotion of services taking place elsewhere are effective in enabling parents and carers to benefit from services in nearby centres as well as at Henry Fawcett. Indeed, key professionals, such as those working in health or with special educational needs and/or disabilities, foster a strong 'community' approach to support because they work with several centres. Close liaison across all agencies feeds successfully into multi-agency work and assessment to protect children and families in challenging circumstances, ensuring that parents are fully involved and attend sessions at the centre regularly.

The centre has a strong understanding of its local and wider communities. Comprehensive information from the local authority is scrutinised carefully to guide priorities and plan support. The centre is also gathering information for itself relating to breastfeeding and smoking habits among its mothers. Health issues are high on the centre's agenda. The chance for all groups to use new outdoor facilities in the day-care nursery and space in the hall for regular sessions of active physical play has been very well received. They are much enjoyed by children, increasing their control and coordination, thus giving pleasure to their parents and carers looking on. Committed attention to building social and personal skills together with the constant role-modelling of expectations by staff, help establish important routines and expectations and ensure children's consistently good behaviour. The centre's success is reflected in children's polite table manners when eating together, the readiness of one parent to translate for another and the care children take to listen to adults and follow directions when playing musical instruments.

Learning is also being enhanced in other ways, including by promoting the skills and confidence of adult users. For example, drop-in sessions are fostering the professional knowledge and effectiveness of childminders and, therefore, also benefiting the children in their care. Their discussion with a teaching professional has focused on assessment and the quality of their activities and, as a result, prompted members of the group to bring in their planning for comment and support. Through contact with the centre, adult users have access to workshops on getting back to work and help with interview skills. There are powerful examples of adult users who have gained the confidence to move back into work after time with their family and gain further qualifications.

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

The smooth transition into its new accommodation marks out the impact of the centre's energetic and well-informed leadership, management and governance. Plans were laid well in advance and visits made to both sites in preparation for the move. Staff have been placed carefully to aid transition and to use expertise within the school to enhance educational activity and the support for users with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Parents and carers within the school's community were consulted in order to gain their views and to promote the centre as an integral part of the overall provision on the site. As a result of these factors, much has been achieved in a few short weeks and arrangements are well in advance to fill the remaining gaps in the timetable of activities. Clear evaluation gives centre managers an accurate understanding of the direction in which they must move. This crucial knowledge is strengthened by the close working partnerships and exchange of information between different agencies and across the cluster and local authority services. These features not only ensure good value for money, but also reflect the centre's dedicated promotion of diversity, equal opportunity and the elimination of discrimination.

The shift in the centre's governance has been equally even and rapid. Lines of responsibility and accountability are clear and understood by all involved. In particular, staff members appreciate the benefits they have gained from the support of teaching professionals within the school. The handover from the school's interim executive board to a governing body has been considered carefully so that the shadowing group are familiar with the demands of their role and fully aware of the work in hand when they take over next year. Links to the cluster's advisory board are also established.

Safeguarding arrangements are thorough across recruitment, the maintenance of a single central record of suitability and child protection procedures and training. The centre has the same general assessment arrangements as the school for health and safety and carries out valuable daily checks on safety for each activity. Good use is made of voluntary organisations to give help, for example where there are instances of domestic violence, in addition to using local multi-agency arrangements and direct support to families within the centre. There is prompt and appropriate action taken when users disclose any concerns about their safety.

The centre has moved swiftly to ensure that its users are represented within the centre's new arrangements for governance. Written comments from parents and carers indicate that previous anxieties about the centre's change of location have now largely been allayed. Through seeing the small daily changes that are taking place, adult users are recognising that their remarks and suggestions are being listened to. In this way, they are making important contributions to the centre's decisions. Evaluations asking for their views are now being fine-tuned to get the very best information possible to direct the centre's provision.

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	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

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

Inspectors also took into account the findings of the primary school’s inspection in June 2010. At this inspection, the school was removed from special measures. Its overall effectiveness was found to be satisfactory, and with good capacity for sustained improvement.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Henry Fawcett and Kennington Park children’s centre on 13–14 July 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you for contributing to this inspection. Some of you were kind enough to speak with us directly and we also looked at written comments you had made on evaluations and in letters about the centre’s work about its impact on you, your

children and those children some of you care for. Although some of you were not happy about the centre moving to another site, it seems that much of this anxiety has gone now that you have joined activities at Henry Fawcett. In particular, you and your children are clearly enjoying the space and opportunity for physical activity outside and in the hall. The extremely harmonious relationships among you all and your children's good behaviour contribute much to the centre. These features reflect its committed care to fostering the well-being of your community and to the safe and secure environment it has created. Many new users have registered at the centre in the few weeks since moving to new accommodation.

Your centre's good service is promoted by energetic and committed leadership and management. Centre leaders are very much aware of the many valuable and popular things that took place at the other site. They are building on these strengths and, at the same time, carefully assessing your needs and those of the wider community so that their services meet those needs as closely as possible. The friendly everyday contact you have with members of staff is important in helping them to do that. It enables them to give support quickly or point you on to other activities that might suit you. In some cases, the centre's support has been powerful in helping parents and/or carers gain the confidence to seek training and work, as well as financial advice and childcare to make that process easier. Strong partnerships across different agencies, in addition to thorough safeguarding practices, make sure that those of you in times of difficulty or in need of protection are well supported. Some of you spoke of how you were now managing your children's behaviour better than you did and clearly felt safe and comfortable enough to share personal reflections of your own childhood. There are also different healthy foods for you and your children to eat and some of your children are trying foods they have never tasted before and liking them. Other important benefits to your children's health, safety and well-being have arisen from discussions about sleeping and eating habits.

The centre is gaining much from its links with Henry Fawcett Primary School, as some key staff members there are also working in the centre to help extend learning activities. Those of you who are childminders, for example, have had the chance to share your planning with the teacher in the day-care facility so that you can make improvements to your activities and benefit the children in your care. Indeed, the centre is increasingly asking you for your views about the quality of its activities and how it could be better. These opportunities enable you to make an important contribution to the centre's work. You are already beginning to see the small changes that have been made in response to what you have said. For example, one group is able to use play equipment as a separate group and at a separate time having requested this arrangement, and training has been planned already for increasing computer skills and to learn to speak English. Some of you are so keen that you have taken advantage of the English-speaking course running in the cluster at a centre nearby. We have asked your centre to gain even more detailed information from you about the effectiveness and impact of its work to develop its services to the very best level for you and your children.

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