

Inspection report for Chingford Hall Children's Centre

Local authority	London Borough of Waltham Forest
Inspection number	365664
Inspection dates	19–20 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Paul Edwards

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Centre leader	Pat Davies
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Chingford Hall Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Chingford Hall Pre-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.

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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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre leader, the senior leadership team, staff, representatives from the local authority, members of the advisory board and many partner agencies, including a wide range of health service workers. Inspectors met with parents and other users of the centre. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documentation, including evaluations of services, safeguarding policies and procedures, case studies, other records, development plans and the centre's annual review report. In addition, the inspectors visited activities taking place at satellite sites.

Inspection judgements

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

Information about the centre

Chingford Hall is a phase two children's centre which was designated in 2007, opened in October 2008, and began delivering the full core offer in February 2009. The governance of the centre is undertaken by the London Borough of Waltham Forest, supported by an advisory board made up of users of services, local authority personnel and health and social care professionals. The centre is managed by the headteacher of the attached primary school. The accommodation comprises a large reception area, consultation, meeting and training rooms, a kitchen, office accommodation, a playroom and an outside play area. After-school care for pupils from the attached primary school is provided at the children's centre. The centre now has an additional four satellite sites which deliver a range of services on behalf of the centre. The last of these opened at the beginning of April 2011. In addition, the children's centre has just taken on responsibility on behalf of the borough for developing and supporting inclusive practice for 13 early years providers.

The centre provides all elements of its core offer including family support, child and family health services and social services. The centre works closely with a number of agencies to bring linked services to the local community. This includes early learning, health services, training and work opportunities, outreach and family support. The centre is open Monday to Friday for 48 weeks of the year and the first Saturday each month during term time, and provides family activities during half terms and the summer holiday period.

The centre serves a culturally and economically diverse community. The large majority of users are from White British backgrounds and other users are from diverse minority ethnic groups. An above-average proportion of the users speak English as an additional language. Four of the centre's reach areas are categorised as being amongst the more deprived areas in the borough where a significant number of children live in workless households who claim out-of-work benefits. Most children enter early years provision with skills and abilities that are well below those expected for their age.

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

Chingford Hall is an outstanding children's centre. This is because it is exceptionally well run, so that the outcomes for users are improving very well. It is a welcoming centre that supports a growing number of families, enabling them to really enjoy childhood experiences.

The children's centre is part of a highly cohesive and integrated provision that provides wide-ranging services for its users. Excellent links between the centre, primary school and pre-school setting ensure the needs of the immediate community are very well met. Through the development of its satellite centres, the centre is enabling an increasing number of vulnerable families to benefit from its facilities. Clear, forward thinking by the leadership has enabled the centre to develop its services at a very good pace, taking account of its changing population. The leadership, advisory board and centre staff take on board users' views exceptionally well, encouraging and empowering them to become involved in the centre's work. The leadership makes excellent use of the advisory board to consider its plans for development. This has resulted in the centre increasing and making greater use of satellite facilities. All of these features demonstrate the centre's outstanding capacity for continued improvement. Leaders make very effective use of funding to target resources most effectively. Through good analysis of its own data and that provided by the local authority the centre has a clear picture of which groups need further engagement. For example, it has rightly recognised that more work could still be done in reaching out to the Black African and Black Caribbean groups in the community.

Many users comment how the centre is making a difference to their lives, enabling them to feel a part of the community. This makes an excellent contribution to the emotional, social and educational well-being of the families it serves. Centre staff have been very effective in encouraging users from minority ethnic groups to access its facilities. Many were keen to explain how it had changed their lives, enabling them to gain confidence in learning English and then to move on to learning skills in activities such as floristry and sewing. The centre's success in engaging users from a wide range of backgrounds and celebrating the many different cultures is a great strength.

There is excellent outreach to families that continues to develop and improve as a result of effective evaluation of services by the leadership, centre staff and users. The extension of the centre's toy library into a mobile toy library has enabled the centre to reach families who, for a number of reasons, were not accessing the centre's facilities. Users, including parents, carers and child minders, rightly perceive the centre as a place where children receive high quality care and where they can take part in a wide range of enjoyable activities that enhance their learning. Parents whose children have special educational needs and/or disabilities are full of praise for how the centre helps their children. One commented, 'I have been given so much help. I don't know how I would have coped without the staff. They have been

wonderful.’ The centre is contributing extremely well to families becoming more health conscious through dietary advice. Excellent attention is paid to all aspects of safeguarding, ensuring all users are secure and well cared for.

The centre makes exceptionally effective use of the Common Assessment Framework to identify the needs of families. Consequently, education, family support and care and health services are tailored to individuals’ needs. This results in outstanding improvements to the start children have in their health, education and personal development. There are very good opportunities for adult users to improve their education and skills, for example learning English as an additional language, improving parenting skills and improving literacy and numeracy skills. The high quality support provides children with an outstanding start to their education, successfully narrowing the gaps in achievement between different groups. The centre is extremely successful in enabling children with special educational needs and/or disabilities to progress well. The excellent partnerships with specialist services, external agencies, adult learning organisations and local schools make a significant contribution to the quality and range of support provided for families.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Make increasingly effective use of the wealth of data available to the centre to further identify and engage the hardest-to-reach groups, particularly those of Black African and Black Caribbean heritage.

How good are outcomes for users?

1

The effective partnership with health services has had a very positive impact on the number of families accessing the centre’s services. It is helping to increase the number of mothers who are continuing with breastfeeding, although the proportion is still below that seen in the borough. The centre is very effective in helping families and their children to understand how to develop healthy lifestyles. During play sessions at the centre, children are encouraged successfully to eat the healthy snacks and the dietician provides effective courses and advice on how to provide healthy meals on a limited budget. Parents and carers really enjoy activities such as ‘Zumbatonic’, some joining their children as they dance to the Latin music. Following a trip to a ‘growing centre’, a number of users have been enthused to start growing their own vegetables.

Activities such as ‘Messy Play’, ‘Tumble Tots’, ‘Rollers and Crawlers’ and ‘Baby Massage’ help to create a wonderful bond between parent and child. Issues regarding housing and domestic violence are addressed exceptionally well. Good levels of mental health are promoted through opportunities to talk to experienced counsellors so that users can manage family demands more effectively. A number of parents commented how they were now better equipped to manage the behaviour of their children through being able to observe the children’s centre staff. Consequently, children behave well, learning how to share and play with others. Childminders, too,

said how their practice had improved as a result of excellent training and support. Children thoroughly enjoy joining in with songs and rhymes during 'Stay and Play' sessions which enhance their communication skills very well. Referrals made by the children's centre have enabled a good number of children to attend the pre-school provision, ensuring they are now very well prepared for starting school. Good signposting by the centre and other services is reducing the number of people who smoke.

Families are well protected. Early identification of concerns, interventions by the centre's outreach staff and strong links with other agencies play an important role in reducing incidents of harm to children. Case studies demonstrate the effectiveness of protecting families from domestic violence and providing longer term security. Home safety is a key feature of the centre's work and its workers are quick to offer guidance and resources to ensure children are kept safe in the home.

The views of parents and carers are taken into account exceptionally well and successfully influence decision making at the centre. The number of fathers and male carers attending the Saturday morning sessions was falling and, as a result of a suggestion from one father, family sessions were introduced which has seen an increase in the number of males attending. Users say their representation on the advisory board is valued and taken into account.

The centre provides excellent tuition for users at an early stage of learning English and they are really keen to talk of their achievements. The confidence they gain encourages them to participate in other activities. During the inspection, the floristry group was busy preparing flower arrangements to decorate the room where the presentation and celebration of awards were to take place. The centre provides many opportunities for users to become volunteers. The 'School Gates Employment Initiative', organised by Jobcentre Plus at the centre, provides effective guidance for those looking to start or return to some form of employment. A good number have become competent dressmakers and others have entered into employment, enabling them to come off benefits. Training for childminders has resulted in their skills being significantly improved, which has enhanced their reputations in the community.

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, and 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	2
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How good is the provision?

1

The centre's exceptionally rigorous assessment procedures help to ensure its provision accurately reflects the needs of its users. The leadership and senior staff make very effective use of its comprehensive surveys, their knowledge of the local area, information from the schools and the local authority's priorities to plan a programme that is attractive and inviting. The effectiveness of this programme is seen in the rising aspirations of adults, both for themselves and their children. Discussions with those living in the community demonstrate the positive impact this is having. The centre's programme takes excellent account of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, fathers and the cultural diversity of its users. The centre's priorities, to increase the number of mothers breastfeeding and reduce unemployment and obesity, feature strongly in its programme. Data from the borough show the centre is very successful and there are clear targets for further improvement. The centre has been less effective to date in engaging with Black African and Black Caribbean groups which it has already identified as a priority for improvement. Data from the school and the pre-school provision show that children attending the centre are exceptionally well prepared for school, both socially and educationally. Regular assessments of young children, which are recorded in their learning journeys, provide a clear picture for staff and parents of the progress being made. Where activities cannot be provided at the centre, for example to support smoking cessation, users are signposted effectively to appropriate providers.

There are excellent partnerships with other agencies. Assessments undertaken with children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities enable early interventions to be implemented. For example, a number of parents had expressed concerns over their children's speech and language problems. They expressed their delight with the progress their children had made following referrals made by the centre to specialist agencies such as speech therapy. Other parents, whose children had a range of learning difficulties, commented on how well they had been supported, enabling their children to make excellent progress. Regular meetings between professionals from a range of services and from the centre ensure that needs identified through the Common Assessment Framework are addressed quickly and systematically. Follow-up meetings and visits ensure that the needs of families are exceptionally well met.

The celebration of adult achievements is highly valued by the users. There were many comments on how their confidence had been raised. Importantly, it had driven many to want to participate in further learning. The adult learning worker liaised very closely with the users to identify how the centre might benefit them, arranging courses that met their needs and placed a strong emphasis on making them more independent and self-sufficient. The staff work very closely with other organisations,

putting on crèche facilities where appropriate, to ensure adults can attend sessions. Referrals by health services to the centre to involve young mothers are very successful. One commented that this had not only given her a greater understanding of her child's needs, but had also helped her to learn from other centre users. Popular and well-attended cookery and healthy lifestyle courses are held at various venues, ensuring they reach a wider audience.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

Leadership and management at all levels are outstanding. There are excellent links between the advisory board, governing body, local authority and senior leaders. These links are strengthened through seats on the advisory board for representatives from the schools and organisations where the satellites are based. This ensures it more accurately reflects the needs of the wider community. Quality assurance procedures are rigorous and performance management arrangements are very well embedded. The deployment of staff from the local authority to the centre has provided it with additional expertise to oversee and support early years providers in the development of inclusive practice. Self-evaluation is rigorous at all levels and the centre values the support provided by the local authority in its long-term strategic planning. Service level agreements, set up by the local authority, are in place with all partners who work with the centre. The centre is proactive in seeking funds from a range of sources.

All centre staff have a very clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and day-to-day management is effective. Users value the approachability of all staff and feel they are provided with excellent advice. Managers take account of users' views through satisfaction surveys which are very positive. The centre listens to its users and activities are introduced according to their needs. Consequently, most outcomes are excellent, demonstrating outstanding value for money. Users are very active and influential in the leadership and management of the centre through their representation on the advisory board and their participation on the parents' forum. The local authority provides the centre with a good amount of data. However, the centre recognises the need to be more proactive in meeting some of the hardest to reach groups.

The centre monitors the ethnicity of those attending its services and data show that there is good representation from most groups in the reach area. The local authority provides the centre with a good amount of data. However, the centre recognises that it has not set sufficiently ambitious targets for engaging further some of its key target groups in the wider community. The centre is very good at celebrating the diversity of its users with regular events. It is exceptionally effective in engaging with adults whose children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Data from the school and discussions with school staff indicate how well prepared these children are for entry to full-time education. Users comment on how well all individuals, no matter what their social background, get on together.

Safeguarding provision and procedures are good because they are given prominence at the centre. Staff receive regular training in identifying those at risk and a high priority is given to child protection and safeguarding procedures. Rigorous checking and monitoring ensure the suitability of those who work with children and vulnerable adults. The good quality of inter-agency working provides excellent support for ensuring the safety of those in the wider community, including those who are at risk of domestic violence.

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	1
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	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

None

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Chingford Hall Children's Centre on 19 and 20 July 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

Thank you for your help and contribution to the inspection which were greatly appreciated. We would like to thank all of you who took time to meet with us and share your thoughts about the centre. The discussions helped us to understand how well you regard the centre and what you value most. The senior staff at the centre work exceptionally well together and this is why it is so successful. From talking to you and looking at the satisfaction surveys, it is very clear that you thoroughly enjoy all of the activities and that the centre is successful in meeting your needs. Many of you mentioned how the centre had made such a difference to the quality of your lives and how it is helping you in times of difficulty.

The centre provides you with high quality care, guidance and support for you and your children. If the staff at the centre are unable to help you they put you in touch with someone who can. The centre's excellent support workers and links to other groups provide you with the information and knowledge that you need to overcome the difficult challenges you face. Staff are skilful in giving you advice to ensure you receive the benefits to which you are entitled. They also help you with your training needs and with gaining skills that will help you into employment.

High quality courses are helping many of you to learn to speak English and to gain literacy and numeracy skills. You told us how much you really enjoyed acquiring the sewing and floristry skills that have made such a difference to your lives. Being healthy is a particular priority for the centre and we were delighted to see your children really enjoying the healthy snacks and taking part in some of the many physical activities, such as the 'Zumbatonic' dancing. You and your children benefit from the breastfeeding support and first-aid courses.

The senior staff at the centre, the headteacher of the school, the advisory board, the governing body and the local authority lead and manage the centre exceptionally well. Your views are listened to and the centre staff work exceptionally hard to provide you with a good range of activities that are interesting and exciting for all of you. We know that you really appreciate this because we saw how well you treat

staff and fellow users with great respect. Because the centre is working so closely with staff from the school and the pre-school provision, it enables your children to make really good progress so that they have an excellent start to their education.

The centre knows its community well. It has gathered a great deal of information to show how well it is doing and it has data to show which groups of users make the best use of the centre and which are making the least use.

We have asked the centre to make even better use of the data to identify and involve those groups who are still not benefiting from all that it has to offer.

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