

Inspection report for Cheyne Children's Centre

Local authority	The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
Inspection number	362455
Inspection dates	17–18 August 2011
Reporting inspector	Jan Lloyd HMI

Centre governance	The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
Centre leader	Sharon Craig
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	N/A
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	South locality: Chelsea Open Air Nursery and Children's Centre, St. Cuthbert with St Matthias Primary CE School and Children's Centre, Violet Melchett Children's Centre

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/childcare provision was carried out in the same week as the inspection of the centre under Section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, a parent representative on the advisory board, other centre managers from within the locality, representatives from the local authority and many partner agencies, including a wide range of health service workers and linked organisations. Inspectors met parents, carers and other users of the centre.

The inspectors observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documentation including key policies, the centre's self-evaluation documents, the local authority's self-evaluation documents for the south locality, case studies, the action plan and data about people who use the centre.

Inspection judgements

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

Information about the centre

Cheyne Children's Centre (the centre) is operated by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. It has been providing childcare provision since 1975 and in 2006 became a phase 1 children's centre. Since January 2011, the centre has worked with three other children's centres to deliver the full core offer for the south of the borough. This area of London has high areas of wealth alongside pockets of poverty. The locality includes areas that are among the 30% most deprived nationally. Around a quarter of the children in the borough are considered to be living in income-deprived households and a large percentage of families are receiving benefits. The

overall unemployment in this borough is half the national average with 2.9% of the adult population over 18 years old registered as unemployed and claiming job seekers allowance. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage in the locality with skills generally below the level expected for their age. Around 75% of the population in the borough are of White British or other White heritages with the remainder a mix of different minority ethnic groups. The children attending the children’s centre are from a variety of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. A small number of families speak English as an additional language.

The centre is located in a 1960s purpose-built, single-storey building, close to the Kings Road in Chelsea. It includes the Cheyne early years provision, inspected and reported on separately from this inspection. The premises include six play rooms, an activity area, four meeting rooms, three offices, a kitchen, a milk kitchen, a laundry room, a staff room and a refurbished outdoor play area. The centre backs onto a small park with two playgrounds for different age groups. The children’s centre provides full daycare and a crèche to support drop-in groups and out-of-school care during school holidays. The local authority employs 19 staff at the children’s centre. Additional workers include therapists, outreach workers, midwives and linked health visitors delivering services and activities for users.

The centre advisory board has five parent representatives and this meets once a term to plan the local work and services to offer over and above the services commissioned from partner agencies. The local authority retains governance of the locality model and operates a locality leadership group to oversee the four centres collectively.

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

This is an outstanding children's centre which provides exceptionally well for families and children within the local area. The centre manager’s passion and commitment to provide the highest quality care, guidance and support for all children and their families in the local community and south locality are evident in the excellent work carried out. The centre is fully committed to providing an inclusive environment and effectively removing barriers for all children. Outstanding partnership work provides a comprehensive and integrated service for all users and especially for children in need. The high priority given to the safeguarding of children and their families is central to all that the centre does. One mother commented, ‘I was concerned that I was in an unsafe place for myself and my child but the support, advice and guidance

has helped me work through that and I now feel safe.' Information and advice are available on health and safety and parents are able to buy high-quality safety equipment at cost price.

The purpose-built centre has excellent resources and sufficient rooms for a wide variety of services and activities to take place. The playrooms are bright and colourful with an excellent range of equipment to stimulate and develop children. The centre uses the outside space very effectively. This is well laid out and inviting.

Outcomes for children and their families are excellent. The strong emphasis on promoting a healthy lifestyle includes encouraging families to improve their diets. The activities to improve fitness, in both parents and children, result in an increased awareness of the significant impact this makes to health outcomes. The access to large areas of outside space allows opportunities for children to take part in energetic activities. The partnership work with health visitors and midwives is excellent. Smoking in pregnancy is very low and the percentage of mothers in the locality who are still breastfeeding after six weeks is exceptionally high. Children progress well when they transfer to school, but currently there is no formal tracking of children from the centre to their completion of the Early Years Foundation Stage in local schools. However, the centre hears about children's progress from parents and informally from the schools.

A key strength of the centre is the extensive range of services, activities and courses it offers, both within the centre and at other centres in the locality. None of the three other centres is more than 20 minutes walk away. Outreach workers encourage and support families to make use of the centre. One parent said that she had been too scared to come into the centre and that her outreach worker came and collected her and her child for the first few visits. She has now made several friends who she meets outside the centre and she is encouraging other mothers in her area to visit. 'This centre is like a second home to me now and the staff are like family. They are so kind and helpful and sometimes I can't believe how lucky I am to have found this place.' The centre uses the local authority's new database to track any services and activities the parents access across the locality. There has been a delay in the borough's ability to fully use the database to produce useful reports because of the slow installation of the reporting systems and the lack of training for the Early Years Service staff to cascade the skills to the centres. This means that centre staff do not currently have immediate access to the reports.

The leadership and management of the centre are outstanding. In the past three years, a number of improvements have had a major impact on the development of services for users, resulting in increased numbers of families using the centre. The new sensory room and sensory resources add an extra facility for children, especially those with special needs. The renovation of the meeting room has created a bright and large room with kitchen facilities and this is well used especially by the midwives for meeting parents and running group sessions. The centre regularly runs community events, such as festivals and carnivals, and successfully uses these to gather information on local needs and reach disadvantaged families. Staff training

and development have improved and currently there are four staff undertaking the Early Years Foundation Degree. The new under-fives fitness programme, run by an external trainer, supports the being healthy programme. This record of improvements, plus a thorough evaluation of services leading to a clear understanding of the needs of users, ensures an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Further develop the systems to track the progress in school of all children from the centre up to the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage to be better able to assess the impact of the centre on their ongoing achievement.
- Together with the local authority, ensure that sufficient staff in the centre are trained to use the online database so that reports can be produced whenever required rather than waiting for support from a member of the central team.

How good are outcomes for users?

1

The centre, in partnership with the three other centres in the locality and other key partners, is making a significant contribution to improving the outcomes for its users, especially vulnerable children and families. The centre has achieved the gold award for healthy eating, and meals and snacks at the centre are well balanced, colourful and take account of any dietary requirements that children might have. Health and fitness are actively promoted and obesity in children is low. The partnership work with health visitors and midwives is excellent. Several mothers said that the support they had had from pre-natal services right through early childhood to starting school was beyond anything they could ever have dreamed of. The percentage of mothers in the locality who are still breastfeeding after six weeks is exceptionally high. The 12-week breastfeeding programme both supports parents and successfully trains mothers who then support other mothers. One mother said, 'I have learnt so much more than I expected and what I hadn't expected is to use this experience to start a new career.' Some mothers have gone into employment following this programme and others are volunteering at a local hospital. Smoking in pregnancy is very low at 3.5% of pregnant mothers identified as needing to stop smoking through their pregnancy.

Children and families feel safe when accessing services at the centre and the centre's safeguarding procedures ensure they are protected very well. Looked-after children, those known to social services are looked after very well. First-aid courses give parents the confidence and skills to deal with sick children and to know when to seek additional medical help. The excellent and very practical parenting classes show parents how to keep their children safe. The outreach workers help families make their home safe for their children and recommend suitable safety equipment. As one mother commented, 'Our worker showed us how to make my babysitter safe for our baby.' Very effective partnership working ensures that those users at risk of harm or

experiencing crisis can access appropriate support. The excellent relationships with staff enable users to discuss any issues that are happening in their lives. The very effective support for families whose circumstances make them vulnerable includes working very closely with a charity which provides one-to-one counselling, support and group work for domestic violence. The local road safety team recently ran a very enjoyable session on using scooters, which raised the awareness of safety issues for parents and children.

Children and parents enjoy the activities at the centre and benefit from the wide range of activities available to them. The majority make excellent progress. However, as identified in the inspection of the registered early years/childcare provision, not all of the children's profiles in daycare are up to date so it is difficult to identify accurately the progress of a small number of children. Parents particularly like the sessions where they play with their children as staff have helped them to see how to make the best use of playtime. The easy access to the safe outside area encourages children to play outside and use the larger equipment. Parents commented on how calming the sensory room is and how that benefits their children. The children's good progress is reflected in the Early Years Foundation Stage records. Excellent support is available for transition into school. Data were only available for children transferring to three of the local schools but the borough's statistics show that 62% of the children achieved the target points of level 6 and above in all areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage, this is better than the national average. Parents are involved in the development of activities at the centre through the parents' forum with five representatives involved in the governance of the centre on the centre advisory board. Parents initiate, and take part in, fundraising activities for specific events at the centre.

The wide range of educational courses for adults across the locality is very good, with increasing success rates in improving the levels of literacy, numeracy, spoken English and routes into further education and employment. The excellent back to work programme is targeted at areas with employment possibilities and leads to qualifications. The programme exceeded its target for employment outcomes last year and has set a new target of 40 employment outcomes across all children's centres in the borough by March 2012. Following discussions with staff, outreach workers and information, advice and guidance sessions at the centre, parents and carers are signposted to the most appropriate course. The centre works closely with the library service and has a small library facility where users can join the library and borrow books. Parents find this facility really useful and say that it is unlikely that they would go to the main library to borrow books. One mother commented, 'My child really looks forward to coming to this library and enjoys choosing his own books.'

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

<p>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</p>	<p>1</p>
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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	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	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

The integration of services across the locality and the excellent partnership working ensure that the provision for users of the centre is outstanding. The centre works in partnership with other agencies to assess the needs of the most vulnerable children and families. The detailed assessments lead to an individual plan, which is regularly reviewed and updated for the majority of children. One mother, who had suffered from postnatal depression, said that her plan had brought a purposeful structure back into her life.

The wide range of services and activities very effectively meets the identified needs of both parents and children. The innovative initiatives for fitness and promoting a healthy lifestyle include the 'Yummy Mummy Buggy Boot Camp' and fitness activity sessions for mothers and children. As one mother said, 'This wonderful and lovely place looks after me as well as it looks after my children.' The excellent relationships with the health service professionals enable the delivery of a wide range of effective services including work with speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and music therapists. The specialist staff train the staff at the centre to enable early intervention and ongoing assessment. Support services include confidential guidance for those who have suffered domestic violence, help with housing needs, information about benefits and guidance for parents to get back into work. The number of teenage pregnancies in the locality is very low and has been falling significantly. This follows both the excellent work being carried out in schools by the local youth service and also the outreach work and group work support offered in the centre. The Family Outreach service, managed by the local authority, effectively supports teenage mothers to access the centre, which then carries on supporting them with many other services. The centre effectively uses the new local authority database to track its users so that it can see all of the services and activities they access within the locality. Currently, centre staff have to request a member of the central local authority team to produce these reports.

Parents who receive home visits speak very highly of the difference these have made to their children and to the whole family. Midwives, health visitors and the family outreach workers work as a team. Comments from parents include, 'She is not like

an outside visitor but is now really part of our family.’ ‘She has become a real friend who I can talk to about anything that is concerning me,’ and, ‘What an amazing service, without it I would still be sitting in my flat not knowing what to do, where to go or who to talk to.’ The majority of these parents are also using the other services and activities at the centre and across the locality and talk very positively about the number of friends they have made and how they now meet them at other times as well. Several parents mentioned that it would be really useful to have a room in the centre that they could go to, either to sit quietly or to meet with other friends especially when it is too cold to use the park outside.

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	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

The centre manager’s passion and commitment underpin the development and continuous growth of the centre. Work roles within the centre are clear and the effective shift system ensures adequate cover throughout opening times. Staff work exceptionally well as a team, both within the centre and with other workers from partner organisations. Communication is very good and everyone works towards providing an outstanding service for the users.

The centre manager works closely with the parents’ forum and centre advisory board as well as the locality leadership team to ensure that provision includes the core offer and fully meets the needs of users of the centre. The centre has its own self-evaluation form, but this is largely based on the self-evaluation form that the local authority has provided for all the children’s centres in the south locality. It does not yet give a full picture of the individuality of the centre and its users. However, the centre does evaluate its services and activities rigorously and make improvements as required. The centre's 2011/12 action plan key indicators for the centre. The action plan is comprehensive and contains clear targets but, at present, there are no timescales for actions to be completed and therefore it is difficult for leaders to assess if the improvements are on target.

The centre is significantly narrowing the achievement gap between different groups of users and very effectively promotes equality and diversity. The centre has a high number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities and provides excellent support for them. Within any one year, the centre aims to celebrate at least one

festival from all the major religions of the world. Children participate in a variety of activities and parents are encouraged to share their knowledge about the festivals. The centre recognises that there is an increasing number of users who need additional support in literacy, numeracy and language skills. Courses at different levels are available across the locality and parents attend these and achieve qualifications. For some parents, this has been the first stage in gaining employment.

Safeguarding is given a high priority throughout the centre and in its outreach work. Staff are knowledgeable on how to implement the clear policies and procedures in the event of any concerns. The regular meetings held at the centre to support children in need place a high emphasis on a safe and secure environment for all. Recruitment and vetting procedures are rigorous. Parents see the centre as a safe environment for their children and centre staff monitor all visitors to ensure the safety of all centre users. There is excellent information available throughout the centre for users. All staff have completed child protection training and first-aid training to support the well-being of users.

Partnership work is outstanding. All key partners, particularly the health service, work collaboratively with the centre to provide the delivery of integrated services, not just in the building but also within the local area. The centre gives excellent value for money with both the services and activities it offers and its contribution to work across the locality. The number of families it works with continues to grow and the feedback from parents is a testament to the excellence of its work.

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	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	1

community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	
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Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

This inspection was aligned to the inspection of the registered early years/childcare provision inspection. The judgements made on safeguarding and children's progress contributed to the judgements in this children's centre report.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaining about inspections*, which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the Cheyne Children's Centre on 17 and 18 August 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

We would like to thank all of you whom we met for telling us about how much the centre helps you, your families and your children. You told us what a wonderful and lovely place the centre is and how the staff there feel part of your family. The centre manager and all the staff are passionate about improving the services for all of you. You said how much you appreciated the way that the staff in the centre work closely with the health visitors, midwives and outreach teams. You were able to tell us about the practical ways they have improved the lives of your family and children and how they have given you personal support. Our discussions with you helped us to make the decision that this centre is outstanding overall.

Your centre provides you with a welcoming and safe environment where you and your children feel well cared for and valued. You told us about the different activities that take place and how much your children enjoy going to the centre. They particularly enjoy the healthy meals and snacks and the staff talk with you about how you can introduce healthy eating at home. You also told us about the programmes that you found really useful. These include the parent nurturing programme and the 12-week breastfeeding course. You enjoyed meeting other parents who were experiencing similar issues to yourself. You also enjoy the activities where you can play with your children and develop confidence and parenting skills. For those of you with a child already in school, you told us about how well the centre had prepared them for school. The centre collects information on their progress at school, but we have asked the centre manager to make this more formal.

Your centre offers you a lot of services and activities, but it is not always possible to provide these in the centre itself. You told us how good the staff are at signposting you to where these take place and they will even come with you if you are nervous about going by yourself. Your centre works very closely with the three other centres in the area and they are all within close walking distance. None of you seems to mind going to the other centres.

The centre has excellent systems in place to keep you and your children protected and safe. For example, staff are trained in how to safeguard children and the senior leaders make sure that everyone working in the centre is suitable to do so. The security for visitors to the centre is very good and everyone is greeted by a member of staff when they arrive. You told us how you had made friends through coming to the centre and that many of you feel less isolated. Several of you told us how useful it would be if there was a room in the centre for you to sit quietly or meet with other parents. We have asked the centre manager to look into how she can provide this for you.

The centre asks you for your views and feedback in several different ways. We know that some of you go to the parents' forum meetings and that these run on different days and at different times to make it easy for as many of you as possible to attend. Your parent representatives attend the advisory board meetings and pass on your views and ideas. We also saw how you get involved in various fundraising and community events. We were sorry that we were unable to attend your carnival, which was on the day after the inspection. We hope the day was successful.

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