

Inspection report for Coppetts Wood Children's Centre

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| Local authority | London Borough of Barnet |
| Inspection number | 383490 |
| Inspection dates | 20–21 September 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | Nina Bee |

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| Centre leader (acting) | Wendy Tromans |
| Date of previous inspection | N/A |
| Centre address | Coppetts Road Friern Barnet N10 1JS |
| Telephone number | 0208 883 2985 |
| Email address | Centremanager@coppettswood.barnetmail.com |

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| Linked school if applicable | Coppetts Wood Primary School |
| Linked early years and childcare, if applicable | N/A |

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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

An inspection of the co-located primary school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. 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 and short discussions with the headteacher from the primary school, the head of centre who is currently on maternity leave, the acting head of centre, members of staff who work in the centre, a few partners who run services, a representative from the local authority and the chair of the advisory board. They observed the centre's work, and visited North Finchley Library and the Freehold Community Centre where additional services take place. A range of documentation was scrutinised, including the Business and Service development plan, centre development plans, data about the centre, the service level agreement, safeguarding documents and advisory board minutes.

Information about the centre

Coppetts Wood Children's Centre was designated in 2008. It is a phase 2 centre and offers a full range of family support services, including early education and child-development sessions, health services, outreach sessions, home visiting, employment and support advice and a programme of adult education and training. Arrangements for the governance of the centre include the local authority, the advisory board and ultimately the governing body of Coppetts Wood Primary School. The centre is situated in two single story demountable buildings in the playground of Coppetts Wood Primary School. It serves just over 1,900 children under five in its reach area and just under a quarter of these live in areas of deprivation. A minority comes from workless households. About half of the children are White British or from other White backgrounds. The remainder comes from a wide range of minority groups. The reach area has recently increased because of the local authority's decision to redesign the delivery of their children's centres. Apart from in the children's centre, services are now run in North Finchley Library and the Freehold Community Centre, as well as at

Summerside Primary School. Levels of entry to early years provision is below expectations for children of this age.

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 families

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| 2 |
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Capacity for sustained improvement

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

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| 2 |
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Main findings

Coppetts Wood is a good children’s centre which serves the families which live in its reach area well. It has several noteworthy features. Staff and partners work well together as a cohesive team and self-evaluation is effective. Morale is high and together they successfully improve the life chances for young children and their families, indicating good capacity to continue to improve. Parents and their children benefit from a good range of services that are carefully adapted to meet the individual needs of most families in the reach area. In addition, adults have good opportunities to take part in many childcare courses and learn more about becoming better parents, with a good focus on healthy eating, safety and taking regular exercise. There is one exception to this, very few courses focus on developing adults’ academic skills. For example, there are not enough opportunities for parents to develop literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills to assist them if they wish to gain further employment or help them to support their children more effectively when they start school.

Evaluations of all the services are overwhelmingly positive. Many users’ written comments thank staff for helping them to gain confidence and develop their self-esteem. In addition, young mothers are very appreciative of the support they receive before and after they have their babies. Evaluations give adults good opportunities to influence and shape services. For example, when someone in the ‘Toddlers Group’ said they were having difficulties accessing services in the centre, they were signposted to one of the other sites that is used, which was more convenient for them to get to. The centre has difficulty appointing parents onto the advisory board. There is no parents’ forum so, apart from comments on evaluations of services, and informal discussions, there are limited opportunities for parents to be involved in the decision-making and governance of the centre.

Safeguarding arrangements are secure. The few children with child protection plans are carefully monitored. Staff focus effectively on the importance of families being safe in the centre and at home. Safety packs are given out to improve home safety, but there is little documentation to show the number of families who have benefited from this support. There is clear documentation of the centre's increasing impact on families in the reach area and the successful targeting of hard-to-reach groups, for example young parents and those from deprived areas. Hence the centre is successful in narrowing the gap for the most disadvantaged.

The provision is good and rapidly improving, particularly since the recent local authority re-organisation, when the centre inherited two other sites, North Finchley Library and the Freehold Community Centre, both of which have been quickly developed. Evidence clearly shows, for example, that there has been a significant increase in the number of families who have been referred to the outreach team since it has been working from North Finchley Library. Centre staff have developed good links with local schools. As a result, staff in schools point families to the centre or allow its staff to use their facilities to put on courses and activities for them. This really helps the centre to increase the number of families it reaches out to. Parenting courses and a range of provision to enhance family relationships and communication skills from birth have good levels of attendance. Those who attend have good opportunities to improve their individual and family circumstances and make a real difference to their lives. Detailed case studies show that families, especially those in crisis, receive very good support within, or coordinated by, the centre's outreach team.

Children who take advantage of the 'wrap around' care, which is offered to Nursery and Reception children, receive good-quality provision and make good progress from their starting points as a result. During the inspection, these children were seen to be integrated well both during lesson time and when they joined older pupils in the primary school for breakfast and after-school club. Despite this, the way their personal and academic achievements are recorded is inconsistent. Senior centre staff acknowledge that monitoring of this provision is not as effective as it should be. Much enjoyment is seen during activities which are all well resourced. Along with the consistently good behaviour, achievement is clearly good for all ages. Babies quickly learn to become part of a group and much enjoyment, from everyone, was seen when staff blew bubbles into the circle during the session.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure that parents are given more opportunities to contribute to the decision-making and ultimately the governance of the centre by introducing a parents' forum which will then feed into the advisory board meetings.
- Improve the range of academic opportunities for adults which will enable them to develop skills and knowledge to support their children more when they start

- school and enhance their chances for future employment.
- Ensure that the academic and personal achievements of the Nursery and Reception children who receive 'wrap around' care are effectively recorded and later monitored by senior staff.

How good are outcomes for families?

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The need to eat healthily and take regular exercise is well promoted and results in good outcomes for the majority of families in the reach area. Children are always encouraged to eat healthy meals and snacks. Those in the after-school club are involved in cooking activities which encourage them to try new food. These young children in the 'wrap around' care provision receive good quality support and achieve well both academically and personally. During stay and play sessions, outdoor play is promoted well. The outside area is a safe, secure and well resourced and an exciting place to play. As a result, children and their parents thoroughly enjoy all activities that are on offer and outcomes are good. Parents and children were seen exploring many messy mixtures during a creative play session. Comments such as, 'I don't know what I would do without this group,' were common. Others spoke of the brilliant support they had received from the outreach workers. All appreciate that whatever they say is in confidence. Most parents develop good knowledge and understanding of how to support their children's learning in many activities but particularly in both the baby group and the toddler group.

Personal and social outcomes are good and children and their parents grow in confidence as a result of attending activities. Outcomes for most families are good as mothers improve their parenting skills and become more confident as they cope with new babies. Adults who speak English as an additional language have good opportunities to take part in programmes which help them to improve their English skills.

Children are helped to behave safely and sensibly in a way they understand. The few children who have child protection plans or Common Assessment Framework (CAF) support have their needs carefully monitored through detailed record keeping and a number of external professionals working effectively together. The lack of a parents' forum limits the opportunities for parents to become involved in the decision making and governance of the centre.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

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| The extent to which children, including those from target 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 children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal | 2 |

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| and social development | |
| The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre | 2 |
| The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment | 3 |

How good is the provision?

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The centre plans effectively for a good range of activities which support young children's development and learning effectively. Adults have good opportunities to participate in childcare courses. Evaluations show that these allow them to gain more confidence and become better parents. The range of programmes to support adults' learning of basic skills, such as literacy, mathematics and ICT, is not as extensive. Assessment is used well to identify the needs of most families and to promote purposeful learning. Health services are well integrated into the plan of activities and information and support to help young mothers, for example, are easily accessible. Centre staff work hard to make sure families are made aware of services which are available to them and regularly signpost them to different sites or other external agencies. Good partnerships impact on learning and the courses which are offered. Participation rates are generally good and target groups, such as those who live in deprived areas, are fully involved and effectively catered for.

Individual support for families is key to the good care and guidance provided. Staff work hard to provide a secure and nurturing environment within the centre. Observations show that the positive and warm relationships between staff and families make the centre a place where adults and children feel comfortable and relaxed. Letters of thanks, to individual members of staff, show that in times of crisis, families are very well supported by the outreach team.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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| The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups | 2 |
| The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups | 2 |
| The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups | 2 |

How effective are the leadership and management?

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Accountability structures are clear and followed within the centre. The primary school

and local authority have developed good relationships with the centre and support them well. Good partnerships are firmly established, especially between members of the advisory group and the school's governing body. All are ambitious for the development of the centre. Strategic planning is thorough and day-to-day management is good. There is a strong sense of supportive teamwork between the centre and the primary school. The centre has got off to a good start in addressing the current targets set by the local authority, particularly those related to reaching families in greatest need where it is apparent that they are narrowing the gap for the most disadvantaged.

There is a strong commitment to supporting the welfare and health needs of the families who use the centre and to promote equality of opportunity and to celebrate diversity. Access to the centre's facilities is good and individual needs are catered for effectively whatever their difficulty. The range of families who use the centre reflects the community that it serves. All families are treated as individuals and their needs are effectively catered for. Consequently, everyone who uses the centre gets on well together. Safeguarding has high priority and the centre's recruitment and vetting procedures are robust. Keeping children and families safe is at the forefront of the centre's work. Staff are very conscientious about checking that visitors consistently sign in and out and ensuring that the inside and outside environment is safe and secure. The centre provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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| The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood | 2 |
| The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes | 2 |
| The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups | 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 partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose | 2 |
| The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area 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

Evidence has been used about achieving and enjoying in the Early Years Foundation Stage from the section 5 inspection of the Coppetts Wood Primary School which took place during the same week as the inspection of the children's centre.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Coppetts Wood Children's Centre on 20 and 21 September 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We found that centre staff work well together with its other partners, such as those from the health service, to successfully improve the life chances for families and young children who live in the large area it serves. As a result, many interesting and exciting activities and courses are presented to you and your children. Centre staff work very effectively together to plan support for families who are having challenging difficulties and need the most help and support. They work well with the local authority, in Barnet, to talk about the centre's work and make suggestions for the future. Recently, they have started to work from other sites, such as North Finchley Library and the Freehold Community Centre and already evidence shows that they reach out to more of you than before.

Evaluations show that you are very appreciative of all that is on offer and that you have good opportunities through your evaluations to slightly alter or add to the activities you chose. We can see that you have good opportunities to take part in childcare courses and exciting events which help you to adopt healthy lifestyles for your children as well as highlighting the importance of keeping them safe and identifying some of the potential hazards they may come across as they grow up. We think that other courses, more academic ones, which support the development of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology should be offered as well. These may make it easier for you to help your children more when they start school or even help some of you gain employment in the future if you wish.

We were pleased to talk to some of you during the inspection and were grateful for your views and comments, which helped us find out more about the work the centre does and how it links this work into supporting children's and parents' health, enjoyment and general well-being. The centre staff work very closely with the headteacher, staff and especially the governing body at Coppetts Wood Primary School who oversee the centre's work. We know that staff have difficulty at times finding parents and carers who would like to become members of the advisory board

which focuses on how the centre is developing. We think that you should have more opportunities to have your say about the governance of the centre so have asked the centre to develop a parents' forum so that your ideas can then be passed onto the advisory board meetings. If any of you would like to become a member of the advisory board they would be very pleased to hear from you.

It was lovely to see how exciting life is for those 'wrap around' care children who spend time in the Nursery and Reception classes as well as the breakfast and after-school club. The children settle in and achieve well because they are effectively supported in all they do. We have asked the centre to check that their personal and academic achievements are recorded in more detail and then monitored by senior staff.

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