

Inspection report for Pound Park Children's Centre

Local authority	Greenwich Council
Inspection number	383534
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Date of previous inspection	No previous inspection
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Linked school if applicable	Pound Park Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Pound Park Early Years 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 maintained nursery 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 with the children's centre manager, the centre coordinator, senior leadership team and the Chair of Governors. They met with a number of representatives of services who work through the children's centre, including the leader of health promotion, health visitors and the outreach workers. Inspectors spoke to groups of parents and carers. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Pound Park is a phase one children's centre that provides full core offer provision. This includes early education integrated with childcare, family support and outreach to parents, child and family health services and adult education. It operates in two areas with two sites: Pound Park Nursery in Charlton and Cardwell Children's Centre in Woolwich. Pound Park Children's Centre took over the management of Cardwell Children's Centre in March 2011.

The Head of Centre is responsible for the day-to-day running of the centre and has a full role in strategic planning. The local authority funds the centre. The governing body consists of staff, local authority and community members. Within the governing body the parent and partnership committee is made up of governing body members and strategic and local partners.

The majority of the families who use the centre at Pound Park are of White British heritage. The Cardwell families are mainly of Black African and White British

heritage. Deprivations for the reach areas place the user base in Charlton at the bottom 20% nationally and in the Cardwell area in the bottom 10% nationally. The centres have 959 children under five in their reach area. About 45% of children and adults who use the centre at Cardwell and 34% at Pound Park come from homes that are dependent on benefits and where no one is in work. In both areas a high percentage of children enter the nursery with low skill levels in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development.

The range of activities offered by the centres includes local community baby clinics, child development checks, breastfeeding support and special needs support groups. The centre has links with health visitors and speech therapists. It provides a range of adult education and courses, including activities designed to support parents and carers back into employment. The centres open 48 weeks each year on weekdays from 8am until 6pm.

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

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Pound Park and Cardwell Children’s Centres are welcoming places to visit and serve the families that live in their reach area well. A typical view expressed by a user is, ‘Excellent play area. Thank you for all your work.’

Staff are very welcoming and are always there to help. The centre manager and the coordinator of the centres provide effective leadership. Together they exhibit good organisational and communication skills and value the work of everyone. As a result, the centres run effectively on a day-to-day basis. Staff morale is high. Relationships with parents and carers are excellent. Many parents and carers were keen to speak to inspectors about how the centres helped them. They mentioned developing parenting skills, assisting them in moments of crisis and accessing support they may need through partner agencies, such as the Early Intervention Family Support Services, in particular.

The centres’ staff have a clear sense of drive and passion and a good understanding of the difficulties they face in the reach area they serve. As a result, users are

supported well. Partnerships with the local community and other agencies are generally effective. Regular partnership meetings are arranged which ensure services are sufficiently integrated to deliver cohesive provision for users that impacts positively on their lives. The centres' partnership with Jobcentre Plus is not yet developed to deliver a fully integrated service for users.

The centres offer a broad range of services and activities that meet the needs of the majority of users throughout the reach. However, they have not sufficiently expanded their services to help users develop their basic skills. The centres work particularly well with speech and language therapists. A parent explained, 'When my son first came to the centre he was only miming. But now he's preparing to go to Reception and he is beginning to communicate much better.'

Governors provide appropriate supervision and support for leaders and managers to improve provision. Rigorous self-evaluation takes account of the views of centre users and partners. This leads to an accurate identification of priorities for improvement. Good prioritisation of safeguarding ensures all users are safe. The number of users accessing the centres' good quality provision has increased during the past two years. However, targeted outreach work, particularly with African and Asian families, is required to encourage these and more hard-to-reach families to use the centres' facilities. The strong teamwork of staff and high levels of commitment by all stakeholders contribute effectively to improved outcomes for users. This demonstrates the centres' good capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Extend the range of services to provide opportunities for adults to develop their language, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills by developing links with training providers.
- Create a stronger partnership with Jobcentre Plus by working more closely with it to increase opportunities for adults to return to work.
- Increase the centres' outreach work to engage more effectively with African and Asian families, in order to encourage them to use the centres' services.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Families with young children show that they are developing a good understanding of how to keep themselves and their children healthy. Increasing numbers of mothers attend postnatal health clinics where they gain valuable information about how to keep their children healthy. One parent said, 'Keep doing what you are doing, it's a great service.' A large majority of mothers attending the centres are continuing to breastfeed. Children are developing good awareness of hygiene, with regular reminders about putting toys in mouths and washing hands before meals. Immunisation rates are increasing as a result of effective promotion of immunisations and vaccinations. Smoking cessation sessions have been particularly successful in encouraging mothers to quit. Emotional well-being is an important aspect of the centres' work. They work well with the health service to provided effective support

for users' feelings of isolation. A parent said that the 'the centre has helped me keep my life in balance. I feel a lot better about myself.'

The centres ensure that all children and their families are safe and protected through their own good safeguarding procedures. Children behave in ways that are safe for themselves and others. For example, they help tidy away toys in the play areas. They show an increasing awareness of the importance of risk assessing situations and use of equipment themselves. Staff supervise children well throughout the day. They ensure that parents develop good observation skills in this respect. A parent said, 'I feel my child is safer at home because of the increased awareness the centre has given me.' Case studies show very effective impact and improved well-being and welfare for children on child protection plans. Robust assessments and systems are in place to support and ensure the safety of vulnerable children and any adult in need. Early intervention ensures families are effectively supported and where necessary gain access to vital services.

Users express verbally and through the written evaluations that they enjoy the activities offered. Children make good progress from their starting points in developing the skills that will help them in the future. The centres are taking effective action to identify and narrow the achievement gap between the lowest-achieving 20% in the Early years Foundation Stage and the rest. Services offered by the centres are popular and groups have high levels of attendance. Weekly 'Stay and Play' sessions, offered at both centres, have story and song times that provide structured opportunities for parents and children to play together. A parent said, 'I am so happy with the play sessions. Most of all, my son's happy and loves going.' Volunteer assistants are well qualified and they know their key group of children well. They identify gaps in children's learning and achievement and take appropriate steps to narrow these. Children are well prepared for transition into Nursery.

Families make positive contributions to the community. Parents and carers are well represented on the management committee. They actively participate in the governance and centres' decision-making process. Children and parents were consulted about the development of the outside play area in Pound Park. Children's behaviour is good and as a result they form positive relationships within the centres. The centres' role in the life of the community is good. Families donate and plant flowers and shrubs in Greenwich Park. The Pound Park centre's summer fair is very much supported and appreciated by the local community with over 400 attending the event. Parents and children actively participate in a broad range of fund raising events for charities.

Children make good progress in developing skills for the future. Outcomes for children, parents and other users are consistently good. Parents and carers are very appreciative of the skills they develop on the 'Discover ME' programme. A parent said of the employment course, 'It's like a job market, where I went to find out my hidden talents.' She has now set up her own business translating books and teaching children. Centre managers have been successful in securing funds to providing a few families with computers to use at home. The Cardwell Centre has started to develop

an English for speakers of other languages course, for the increasing number of parents whose first language is not English. The Pound Park Centre runs a successful National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 2 in Childcare for parents and volunteers. A growing number have progressed on to paid work.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

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 and social development	2
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	2

How good is the provision?

2

The centres work effectively with other agencies to ensure assessments, such as those carried out for children with special education needs and/or disabilities, are robust and well informed. For example, an assessment for a child with aggressive behaviour recommended a coordinated programme of behaviour management by staff. The strategies employed have resulted in a marked improvement in the child's behaviour and well-being. It also is helping him make good progress in his language and social skills. The centres offer an adequate variety of services and activities. The 'Dads' Brunches' events are well received, with increasing numbers of fathers attending. A father said, 'The events are always fun, really well organised and a great way to share a space with my son in his daily environment.' However, the centres' provision does not provide enough opportunities for adults to develop their language, numeracy and ICT skills.

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage at the centres and linked nurseries are good. Children behave well and follow staff instructions. They are provided with a good range of activities and learning opportunities from birth that effectively support their development. Staff make effective use of children's achievements to plan the next steps in learning. High quality resources that are age-appropriate and interesting encourage children's engagement well. The centres promote purposeful learning well. For example, a parent said that 'the pizza-making session was great fun and something we continue to do together back at home'. Both centres are particularly good at recognising users' personal development and achievements through celebrations of work produced by children and families.

Care, guidance and support arrangements are effective. Good tailored support develops families' well-being. Families express high levels of satisfaction with the level of care, guidance and support offered by centres. The open-door policy provides a listening ear to support children and families all year round. The counselling service has impacted positively on families' lives. A parent who was feeling down and depressed has benefitted greatly from the counselling at the centres and said: 'I am now feeling more confident and willing to take action. It's now possible for me to enjoy every single moment with my family.' Centres work well with the speech and language therapy team. It has been effective in consistently moving referrals off support. The centres are very good at supporting and integrating children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. For example, the parent of a child with hearing impairment was encouraged to attend 'Stay and Play' sessions early. This helped the child take the first steps towards mixing with other children.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	3
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?

2

Governance and accountability arrangements are clear. They provide appropriate supervision of the centres' activities. Links between strategic planning and service provision are effective. Morale is high and belief in the centres' success is evident at all levels. The senior leadership team and managers consistently communicate high expectations to staff about securing improvement. Self-evaluation is accurate and supported by evidence of the impact on outcomes for users. The evaluation has resulted in changes to the provision, which is increasingly successful in meeting the needs of all users. The inclusion of all children and their families is central to the centres' vision. Its actions to promote greater equality for different groups are effective in removing barriers, especially for children and families with special educational needs and/or disabilities. It has identified where further improvements can be made to overcome any variations in outcomes and has good strategies to overcome them.

Good safeguarding arrangements are in place and there is a system to maintain and update them. Training of all staff, particularly in relation to child protection, domestic violence and for those working with children or adults with disabilities, is of good quality. The centre is proactive and collaborates effectively with other key agencies to reduce the risk of harm to children. Agencies working in the centre understand the implications of the wider safeguarding agenda. Robust vetting procedures safeguard children and adults and ensure that only suitable people are able to work with

children and families. Criminal Record Bureau checks are accurately recorded and maintained. The premises and environment are safe and security is good. The risk assessments of the environment are effective in minimising risks and are monitored to ensure that this remains the case. They are acted upon to make effective improvements to the safeguarding systems.

Services generally deliver cohesive provision for users, which has a positive impact on their lives. Volunteers work effectively in different aspects of the centres' provision, such as the family rooms and outside play areas. Relationships between statutory partners are increasingly clear and understood and are being more effectively managed. Although the links with Jobcentre Plus are adequate, the centres need to work closer with them to ensure a fully integrated delivery of services. Users have regular opportunities to be involved in shaping services and evaluating the effectiveness of provision. Outreach services are improving and targeting identified needs in the wider community. The centres' engagement with ethnic minority groups is not fully developed to sufficiently involve them in the centres' activities. The improvement in the centres' impact on the community in consistently increasing outcomes and good quality provision engages the majority of families. This means that the centres' resources are managed effectively. They represent good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The 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	3
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	3

Any other information used to inform the judgements made

during this inspection

None.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Pound Park and Cardwell Children's Centres on 20 and 21 September 2011. We judged the centres as good overall.

We are very grateful to all the parents, carers and representatives from the centres' professional partners who took the trouble to come and tell us about the work they do. You gave us a very positive picture of the centres, and what you said was very useful in making our final judgments.

At the core of the centres' success is the strong leadership provided by the centre manager and centre coordinator, the very good teamwork of the centres' staff and its effective relationship with professional partners. This means that the workers at the centres communicate well with each other and their feedback provides a good knowledge and understanding of the community's needs.

Those of you who use the centres are much better now at staying safe and healthy and looking after your families. We know this because many of you told us of what you had learnt. We agree that the centres are very welcoming places to come to. Staff have worked hard to make them very safe for you and your children. The centres work effectively with other agencies, such as the health service and social services in particular to help vulnerable children and families.

Parents, carers and children are benefiting from the good provision provided by the children's centres. Some of you are keen to attend classes to improve your skills. These must be enjoyable because we noticed that attendance on these courses is high. Good quality sessions are prepared for you to improve your parenting skills and for your children to develop basic skills. This means that you gain more confidence and expertise and your children are well prepared when they start nursery school.

We have found a few areas that require improvement and the centre managers are already aware of these. We are recommending that managers extend the range of adult courses to develop life skills and that the centres work more closely with Jobcentre Plus, to further help those of you who are ready to enter employment find suitable jobs. We are also asking managers to increase the number of users using the centres' services from ethnic minority groups.

We wish you every success for the future.

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