

Inspection report for John Perry Children's Centre

Local authority	Barking and Dagenham
Inspection number	383689
Inspection dates	18–19 October 2011
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	John Perry Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	John Perry Children's Centre Nursery

The inspection of this Sure Start children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

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

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

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager and frontline staff, senior representatives from the local authority and a number of partner agencies. Inspectors met parents and other users of the centre, including representatives on the Children's Centre Community Forum.

Inspectors observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including data, development and service plans, self-evaluation documents, including analysis of user views and a range of policies and case studies.

Information about the centre

John Perry Children's Centre (the centre) is a phase one centre that was opened in March 2006. It is managed and run by the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (the borough). Located on the site of the John Perry Primary School, the centre is one of three in the East locality that work in close partnership. It provides the full core offer, including family support, child and family health services, and training. There is an on-site nursery and a crèche, both managed by the local authority and subject to separate inspections

The centre is located on the border of Eastbrook Ward in East locality and Village Ward in South East locality. The reach area of the centre is diverse, a proportion of it being remote. As a result, outreach activities in various venues have been developed. The population of the co-located primary school (in Village Ward) has 97.5% of its pupils in the 30% most deprived areas; this rises to 99.6% in the heart of the Ward and declines to 75.3% for Rush Green Infant School to the north of Eastbrook ward. A Traveller site is also located in this ward. In March 2011 the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham was identified as the ninth most deprived borough in the country, with 17.8% of the working population in the borough receiving key out of

work benefits compared with an average of 12.4% in London. Thirty per cent of children aged nought to four years living in Eastbrook Ward and 56% of children in this age group in Village Ward are living in households dependent on workless benefits.

The demographics of the locality have changed significantly over recent years, with a marked increase in numbers of young people in the borough arising from immigration to the borough and the migration of families into Barking and Dagenham from local London boroughs. In 2009 approximately 10% of the population in the borough were under five years of age compared to 6% nationally. The ethnic profile of children aged nought to five has also changed rapidly, with an approximately 30% drop in the White population. The area is now ethnically diverse. On entry to school, children’s skills and abilities are greater for those who have attended the centre, particularly for those children who have attended since infancy.

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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

John Perry Children’s Centre is an outstanding setting, providing sensitive and high quality support most effectively tailored to meet the varying needs of families. Family ambitions and aspirations are raised and, as a result, outcomes for children improve rapidly. A sense of emotional and physical safety pervades the centre. Safeguarding is given the highest priority, with all staff aware of their individual responsibilities. All parents spoken to agree that they feel safe when at the centre and that they are confident to leave their babies or children in the care of staff or in the crèche while they attend training or meetings.

While all staff are clear about their specific roles, flexible approaches and high levels of professional and peer support result in the spectrum of families’ needs being addressed in a timely manner. Outstanding provision arises from accurate assessment processes, tailored support and skilled delivery. Established systems for escalating and reducing interventions are well used and there is no sudden removal of support. Case files are meticulously monitored, revealing all cases to be well

managed and recorded.

The centre and local authority are highly self evaluative and make constant use of the comprehensive range of data systems to drive target setting and to assess the centre's contribution to local and national priorities. Leaders are ambitious for their community and continually seek improvement, recorded in development plans to focus work and mark progress towards goals. However, leaders do not currently have an over-arching centre development plan so that progress across all plans can be more effectively monitored. The centre has identified a need to develop a joint mission statement to further link the parents who use the nursery with those who use the children's centre provision.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the children's centre. Comments made to inspectors such as, 'I don't know what I would have done without the centre' are commonplace. Parents are continuously involved in evaluations of services and participate fully in governance arrangements. An active parent forum provides informal opportunities for parents to participate in and expand the work and reach of the centre. The Children's Centre Community Forum enables more formal participation in governance arrangements. While the centre acts as a hub for the local community, outreach activities have successfully engaged hard-to-reach groups as well as those at risk from isolation. The centre is fully inclusive and effectively removes barriers to learning and participation for children and families.

Many centre users engage in training or volunteering. A wide array of courses is made available, from basic skills to degree-level qualifications. Opportunities to develop work-related skills are exceptional, as is the partnership with Jobcentre Plus. Comprehensive health services are delivered within the locality, and midwifery and health visiting services operate from both the centre and within the community as outreach. There is an extensive range of opportunities for babies and young children to take part in activities that promote their learning and development, particularly those that promote language and communication skills such as 'Toddler talk' and 'Little Rhyme Makers', and, in the nursery, the Every Child a Talker project. Additionally, families are able to attend individualised speech and language advice sessions. The significant increase in attainment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is testament to the success of these activities. Excellent partnership working, the integration of services and sharp monitoring guarantee high quality provision, no duplication in service and effective targeting of resources to areas of greatest need, securing improvements for families in all outcomes areas. Consequently, the centre demonstrates an outstanding capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Draw up an overarching centre development plan so that senior managers can more effectively monitor progress across all areas of improvement.
- Develop a joint mission statement to link parents and carers who use the

nursery with those who use the children's centre provision.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

Outcomes for the vast majority of parents and their children, including those from target groups, are outstanding. This is confirmed by the wealth of data that the centre rigorously gathers and uses to understand how well it is improving the lives of the families it serves. Feedback from parental surveys show families appreciate having somewhere to come where they feel safe and neither judged nor mistrusted. Children who are subject to child protection plans, looked after children and vulnerable families that face struggles every day are particularly well supported. Risk is minimised through swift, well-rehearsed systems that draw on the range of partnerships and expertise. The use of the Common Assessment Framework ensures every appropriate service and agency is galvanised and communication between teams is effectively ongoing. Provision is monitored and demonstrates significant and sustained improvement in outcomes. Support and protection are secure for these most vulnerable children and adults.

Through the centre's extensive range of partners, parents are able to secure practical help and advice on a range of matters, including welfare benefits, job-seeking support, health advice, housing and safety. Pivotal to improving the health and well-being of parents and families, especially the most vulnerable, is the centre's close partnership with health visitors, midwives and other health professionals. Case studies and interviews with parents endorse the popularity of the antenatal and postnatal support systems, including baby massage and weaning. Breastfeeding support contributes to an increasing trend in breastfeeding rates. Between October 2010 and June 2011, breastfeeding prevalence in Eastbrook Ward increased from 52.6% to 55%. Sensitive guidance exists for young parents and levels of teenage pregnancy are decreasing. The centre has Young Person Friendly (YPF) accreditation.

Child obesity figures confirm the need for a focus on physical health. Children in the centre are provided with healthy nutritional snacks and courses, including 'Made of Money' and 'Sow and Grow', help parents and carers develop the skills of providing healthy meals on a budget. Extremely popular, well-run 'Sports Fit' sessions on Saturdays as well as many opportunities to take part in outdoor activities support the drive to increase physical activity.

Parents overwhelmingly make excellent use of courses, training and adult learning, expressing pride in progressing through levels of attainment and articulating increased confidence in themselves. As one parent said, 'The centre has made a big, big difference to x, but what is unbelievable is the difference it has made to my life... I am more confident, I can talk to people more easily.' This is equally true of courses such as 'Incredible Years' and 'Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities', where parents are enabled to reflect on their key values and build parenting skills. The centre provides significant opportunities for parents to access support and to

develop their skills as volunteers offering a range of 'hands-on' experiences, vital in securing employment. From April 2010 to March 2011, the average income per family, who have received support to claim unpaid benefits or to move into work, has increased by £761.59. Courses such as 'Family Numeracy' and 'Made of Money' enable parents and children to work cooperatively to build their skills for the future.

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	1
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, 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 parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	1
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	1

How good is the provision?

1

Centre staff and partners are extremely successful at using activities such as home visits and 'Play and Communication' sessions to carefully assess users' needs. Services are then personalised to ensure improvements to the health, safety and achievement of both parents and children. Consequently, users gain trust in staff that enables them to engage successfully with the services offered. Participation rates and attendance levels are consistently very good and almost all satisfaction surveys show how beneficial and enjoyable activities are. As one parent said: 'What has been great for me has been learning about activities I can also do at home. We have a better relationship now.' Successes are celebrated, at the end of courses, through awards and certificates, through the local press, school newsletters and the borough-wide parents' conference. Partners and users comment on how the work of the centre has supported families and made a 'wonderful' difference to their lives.

Working with persistence and a solution-focused approach, the centre has successfully overcome the challenges of its location and the need to engage vulnerable and hard-to-reach families who are not close by. Outreach services are delivered at a range of locations including schools, libraries and community venues. In this way the centre ensures that those who need support most, do in fact receive it. The centre has a high level of contact with target groups and has been conspicuously successful at engaging fathers through the partnership with the Dagenham and Redbridge Football Club and with the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller

community. On entry to school assessments, in 2010, reveal a marked increase in numbers of children found to be ahead in all aspects of language development, including social skills, listening and attention and expressive language.

An increasing number of users speak English as an additional language. They feel welcome and are encouraged to share songs and rhymes in their own language. With the other children’s centres in the locality, families have recorded a CD of songs from different cultures to be used at home as well as a centre resource.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Staff are knowledgeable, sensitive and committed to meeting needs and providing the highest quality of care. Excellent communication between centre staff, partners and families ensures that advice is always coherent and appropriate and therefore well received.

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	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

Leadership at all levels is outstanding. Morale is high and there is an atmosphere of engaging camaraderie and clearly established teamwork. The collaborative leadership of the centre coupled with outstanding support and challenge from the local authority manifest in high quality provision and outcomes. As a result, outstanding value for money is secured. Local authority and children’s centre structures, including governance arrangements, are streamlined, comprehensively understood and rigorously accountable. Improvement planning is fully aligned with national indicators for children and families and, equally, is reflective of local priorities. Improvement plans and professional development targets highlight a clear perception of the target pathway from national priority to local implementation. Sophisticated data systems enable data to be utilised effectively for tracking, robustly evaluating and improving performance. Self-evaluation is highly accurate and targets ambitious.

Clear policies exist to promote equality and diversity and to tackle discrimination. All user groups are represented in a range of cultural and religious celebrations including Diwali, St George’s Day and Black History Month. In common with users, staff also speak a range of languages, which contributes to the breaking down of barriers and ensuring everyone feels welcome. Use of signs and symbols around the centre further promotes communication and supports an inclusive approach. Feedback is continually sought and responded to, ensuring that provision is shaped

by the desires and needs of families and the community.

Safeguarding and child protection are accorded high priority. Statutory requirements are met and regular training, including in child protection and in Safer Recruitment, is undertaken. All staff receive professional supervision, including case reviews. The fully integrated Targeted family Support Services and Multi-Agency Locality Team respond swiftly and in a coherent manner to all concerns. Staff know their communities very well and have developed mutually supportive relationships with professionals working within health, employment, social care, and education. They provide a highly effective link between professionals, volunteers, partners and families. Case studies reveal the extent to which staff have secured the trust of parents and carers, particularly of the most vulnerable and needy, who depend a great deal on the centre for advice and guidance and for practical and emotional support. Handover between services or tiers of support is exemplary. The centre's ability to convert systems and policies into daily practice is outstanding.

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 effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	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 partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	1
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	1

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

The inspection report for the John Perry Children's Centre Nursery, which found the overall effectiveness of provision to be outstanding, was considered.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the John Perry Children's Centre on 18–19 October 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

We would like to thank you for the warm welcome you gave to us – we enjoyed meeting and talking to you. During the inspection we also met with centre staff, a wide range of partners and representatives of the local authority. We observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documents. You told us that your centre is 'fantastic' and we agree with you! We were able to see that the very strong leadership of the centre and the enthusiastic and skilled staff provide you and your children with a range of excellent services that they adapt and refine to meet your needs. We have asked the centre leaders to develop an over-arching children's centre development plan, as this will enable them to effectively keep track of progress across all areas of improvement. We have also agreed with the centre that developing a joint mission statement to better link parents of the nursery and the children's centre is a good idea.

Many of you told us how much you value and rely on the centre staff, how welcome you feel at the centre and how friendly and supportive the staff are. You told us that staff are not judgemental and can be a 'lifeline' in difficult times and that 'Nothing is too much trouble for them'. Committed centre and partner staff have a high level of expertise, work exceptionally well together and offer outstanding practical and emotional support to you, your families and vulnerable adults. This exceptional care does not only take place in the centre. Increasingly, the centre reaches out into the local community, seeking out those families who face complex difficulties and may not find it easy to get to the centre. The centre offers an inclusive welcome for all, regardless of age, ability, gender or cultural background.

You talked about the range of activities and courses that you can participate in and how you and your children have benefitted as a result. Examples you gave us included health-related issues such as easy access to the midwife and health visitor as well as courses including baby massage. The centre works to promote good emotional and physical health. Children are given healthy snacks, and activities such as 'Sow and Grow' further promote understanding of, and interest in, healthy eating. We heard a lot about the 'Sports Fit' sessions: these are clearly extremely popular!

The centre provides a wide range of well-planned activities and these activities help to prepare the children for their future days in school. The range of courses that help develop children's communication skills, including 'Little Rhyme Makers' and speech and language therapy advice sessions, are particularly impressive. The range of parenting courses help you manage behaviour boundaries with your children and

help you feel positive about your own skills as well as helping you enjoy family life more. As well as this, you are helped to keep yourselves and your children well and safe. Everyone we spoke to said that the centre was a safe place to be and that you are confident to leave your children in the crèche or nursery or in the care of centre staff. This reflects the centre's excellent work to promote your welfare and its exemplary safeguarding arrangements.

The centre makes an outstanding contribution towards improving the futures of its families. Many of you have taken advice regarding benefits or pathways towards work. You are gaining a great deal from opportunities for further training or volunteering and gaining qualifications provided in partnership with the centre and Jobcentre Plus.

More and more of you are keen to be involved in the centre's activities. Some of you belong to the Parents Forum, fund raising and sharing ideas for new events and activities. Others of you represent parents on the Children's Centre Community Forum contributing to the governance and future direction of the centre.

Once again, thank you very much for your welcome and your open, honest discussions that were shared with the inspection team. These, and your written evaluations, helped us immensely in building up a clear and accurate picture of your centre's work and the difference you feel it has made to your lives. We wish you and your families all the very best for the future.

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