

# Inspection report for Cedars Children's Centre

---

<b>Local authority</b>	Harrow
<b>Inspection number</b>	383485
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 November 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	James Henry

<b>Centre leader</b>	Rachelle O'Byrne
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not Previously Inspected
<b>Centre address</b>	Whittlesea Road, Harrow, Middlesex, HA3 6LS
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8736 6222
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8736 6220
<b>Email address</b>	cedarschildrenscentre@harrow.gov.uk

<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Cedars Manor Primary School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Not Applicable

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.

---

**Report published:** November 2011



Corporate member of  
Plain English Campaign  
Committed to clearer communication

**361**

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100080](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100080).

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

No.100080

© Crown copyright 2011



## 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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager and staff, members of the management committee, parents, health professionals, project workers, the local authority officer linked to the centre and senior staff from the Early Years Foundation Stage in the co-located school.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Cedars Children's Centre opened in September 2009 and is a phase 2 centre. It is located in purpose-built premises linked to a local primary school. There is also pre-school provision on site that is independent of the children's centre and managed by a charitable trust. This provision was not part of this inspection.

The centre serves a variety of deprived areas but the majority of the reach area is amongst the third and fourth most deprived in Harrow. It provides all elements of the core offer and staff work closely with both schools on site and across another children's centre that is nearby. Most families in the area are of White British heritage. However, the demographic nature of the area has been changing, resulting in a more diverse range of ethnic and cultural heritages in the community, especially from Asian backgrounds. Within the reach of the centre there are high levels of unemployment and low levels of literacy and numeracy. The number of families receiving benefits is in line with the national average. Children in the centre's reach

area have skills that are well-below those expected upon entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The governance arrangements of the centre are in the process of change. A new management committee has just been established. However, since the centre opened, it has been overseen by the governing body of the co-located primary school in conjunction with the local authority.

## 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

The outcomes for families are good because of the good range of services and the good personal, professional support and guidance of staff. Safeguarding procedures and policies are fully in place with effective risk assessments that ensure that children and families are safe and protected. Staff are welcoming and parents appreciate the positive impact the work of the centre has had on their lives. 'It's hard to imagine how I could have overcome the hurdles I've had without assistance from the staff at the centre,' is a typical comment from parents.

Staff work effectively together to promote the full range of services to families to help support them in the different aspects of their lives. Consequently, since the centre opened in 2009, there has been a marked increase in the numbers of children and families, especially teenage parents, who consistently attend activities. The centre now engages a very large majority of families living in the reach area. Also, the centre has been effective in reaching out and responding to the needs of the changing cultural diversity of the local community, for example in offering English language classes to support parents for whom English is an additional language. There are effective activities to involve fathers in their children's early education and development. One father commented in feedback, 'My child really likes this session and I get a chance to play too!' This illustrates the centre's good commitment to equal opportunities and inclusion of all groups within its reach area.

Assessments in the Early Years Foundation Stage in the primary school show that children who attend the centre's activities make good and sometimes outstanding

progress in their learning, particularly in their communication, language and literacy skills. This is partly due to the effectiveness of the good activities in place to support parents in their parenting skills and children with their speech and language development. Centre staff support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities effectively and evidence from the Early Years Foundation Stage profiles shows they make good progress. For example, services from the local hospital are used at the centre to support hearing impaired children.

Leaders and managers understand the needs of their users well through surveys and feedback. Case studies, collated by the centre, demonstrate examples of improvements in outcomes for children and families. Evidence from the inspection and the local authority data confirm that the centre is having a positive impact on children's achievement. However, a process to track the achievement of children and parents who consistently use the centre's facilities is not sufficiently developed to ensure that the full impact of the centre's work is fully assessed.

Action plans to drive further improvements are effectively communicated and shared by staff, and relationships between staff are good, leading to high staff morale. Governance of the centre, through the primary school governing body, provides effective challenge and support. Senior leaders and members of the governing body decided to move governance to a dedicated management committee in order to increase the accountability of the centre. This transition is at an early stage of development and does not yet provide sufficient opportunities for parents to be involved. While the centre consults with parents consistently and effectively through informal conversations and questionnaires, there is no formal procedure for parents to voice their views.

Self-evaluation is accurate and leaders and managers are committed to providing a high quality service. Improvements in the achievement of children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the centre's work to effectively increase the number of children accessing the centre shows good capacity to improve.

## **What does the centre need to do to improve further?**

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Fully embed systems and processes to track the impact of services so that support can be even more effectively targeted to improve achievement and well-being of children and families.
- Increase the involvement of parents in decision making and governance so that the views of all groups are taken into account by:
  - ensuring the new management committee is quickly embedded with an increased representation from parents' groups
  - ensuring there is a formal procedure for parents to express their views about the centre.

## How good are outcomes for families?

2

Good quality activities have a positive impact on children's learning and development. The work of the centre is significantly improving the skills and abilities of children as they enter the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is having a particular impact on those children who speak English as an additional language and those who have less well-developed communication, language and literacy skills. Consequently, children who use the activities in the children's centre are making good progress.

The centre is effectively narrowing the achievement gap between the lowest-achieving 20% of children and their peers at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. A key reason for this is that activities are well linked to the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum so that children are well prepared for school. For example, in the 'Parents As First Teachers' programme, activities promote learning through play and exploration with ideas for parents to try at home with their children. This is helping parents to develop their confidence and skills. The speech and language programme supports children to develop their communication skills and is effectively improving their speaking and listening skills. Parents, carers and children enjoy the activities provided. 'My child loves the centre and it's really important to him,' was a comment that reflected many parents' views.

The impact of these activities is reflected in the good and sometimes outstanding progress made by children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, especially in their communication, language and literacy skills.

The centre places a strong emphasis on keeping users safe. Good relationships and the friendly and professional approach by staff help to identify any safety concerns within families and staff intervene appropriately. Case studies show that children with child protection plans and those who are subject to Common Assessment Framework processes are particularly well supported through effective links with other appropriate agencies. There are examples of children being removed from the child protection register because of intervention strategies by the centre.

The integration of health services within the centre has been a particular success. The midwifery team effectively supports mothers to breastfeed their babies. Services such as baby weighing and prenatal and postnatal clinics enable centre staff to form relationships with families and promote other services. Parents are signposted to other activities or support if necessary, such as the 'Cook and Munch' sessions which promote healthy eating. Feedback from parents about the 'Stay and Play' activities shows that these are effectively helping parents understand the importance of physical exercise in improving their children's health and well-being.

Children develop good relationships with staff and behave well. Parents say that they are encouraged to evaluate the activities they take part in and to suggest ideas and improvements in the centre's provision, which they do informally. They feel part of the centre and that their views are respected. However, there is no formal process for parents to influence decision making.

Parents are effectively signposted to information and guidance about gaining training or employment, which is readily available in the centre. Social welfare workers effectively advise parents on different routes back into training or work. There are good links with agencies that provide back-to-work support, such as Jobcentre Plus. Case studies show that the social welfare workers network within the centre to effectively support and advise parents on the different routes back into training or work. There are examples of the success of these links. For example, some parents gain paid employment in organisations where they originally undertook volunteer work.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for families*

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>

## How good is the provision?

**2**

Activities and services are of good quality, enabling the centre to effectively meet the core offer. There is a good range of activities that meets the needs of users. For example, the 'Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities' programme helps parents establish stable relationships within their families. A comment from one user, 'This course has made my life easier,' shows the impact of the programme. Also, there is an effective counselling service that is accessed by users. Health clinics are well attended by families including those from a range of diverse cultural backgrounds. Users enjoy other sessions such as 'Movers and Shakers' and the 'Stay and Play' activities specifically provided for different age groups of children.

Data from the local authority are used appropriately by leaders and managers to identify priorities for the centre, which ensures provision meets the needs of the wider community. Consequently, most outreach services are successful in meeting the needs of targeted groups, including those most in need of support. Evidence from case studies shows that there is effective inter-agency working to improve the outcomes for families and their children, particularly those who are facing challenges or barriers in their lives. While provision is targeted effectively to meet the specific needs of families in the reach area, the centre has yet to make full and rigorous use

of procedures to gauge the full impact of its services over time on different groups of users.

The centre's provision for families who speak English as an additional language is effective. There is bilingual support available from within the staff team and support with interpreter services is provided when needed. Users are signposted to English language classes if appropriate.

Staff are committed to the care of users. This is reflected in good relationships and mutual trust. As a result, parents often respond positively when signposted to other services, even when these are offered at different venues.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

**2**

The centre is managed effectively on a daily basis and staff have full confidence in leaders and managers. Self-evaluation is accurate with priorities and targets clearly identified in an appropriately structured improvement plan. Resources are well managed and staff share their knowledge and expertise through effective liaison with different agencies to ensure good outcomes for families. The accommodation is used effectively to provide integrated services, such as health provision, which are delivered from the centre. Good provision secures good outcomes for users and the centre therefore provides good value for money.

The governing body provides good strategic support and challenge. Following a review, governance and accountability arrangements are in the process of being changed to focus more specifically on improving the centre's performance. A new management committee has been established to allow more involvement from key partners. However, this is not yet fully embedded. Parents and carers who use the centre are not fully represented on the committee, although the centre has correctly identified this as an area for improvement and is working towards improving this aspect. Leaders and managers have clear plans to provide training to develop the skills of the new management committee to enable them to more effectively hold the centre's leaders and managers to account.

Good inter-agency working ensures safeguarding is given the highest priority. Staff are well trained in safeguarding and child protection. All staff are fully vetted through appropriate checks before working in the centre. Early intervention is put in place to

reduce the risk of harm to children, for example through the use of counselling to help families in crisis deal with conflict. Evidence from case studies shows that staff are also proactive in identifying and tackling personal safety and emotional well-being issues, particularly in domestic violence situations. Also, professionals are well trained to help parents keep their children safe, for example in preparing a safe home environment for the arrival of a new baby.

The centre has an inclusive ethos. It serves an increasing number of families from diverse cultural backgrounds and all are valued, welcomed and included in activities. The centre has identified the need to engage with a particular section of the Black African community and is in the process of addressing this issue.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>

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](http://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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Cedars Children's Centre on 9 and 10 November 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank all of you who took the time to talk to us and give your opinions about the service you and your children receive from the centre.

You told us that you and your children enjoyed and valued the activities on offer, particularly the 'Cook and Munch' and 'Stay and Play' sessions. We were especially pleased to hear how the centre helped you develop your skills and confidence, and the difference the work of the centre is making to your children's development.

You explained how much the positive relationships with staff helped you feel safe and secure in the centre, especially in being able to share with them any concerns or problems. As a result, the centre could show us how their work in the community had changed some families' lives. Leaders and managers have effectively increased the number of families who access services.

Centre staff make sure everyone is well cared for and supported. They work effectively together to ensure they use their expertise and knowledge to provide a good all-round service. However, the centre does not fully check on the difference activities and services make to the lives of different groups of parents. We have asked them to ensure this is put in place. Evidence from the primary school's assessments showed that children who had attended activities in the centre had benefited significantly and were making at least good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes.

The centre welcomes people from all backgrounds and treats every one fairly. Staff do their best to involve everyone from the local community in activities, although there are some groups from different cultural backgrounds they have not managed to reach, for example families from the Somali community who have recently moved into the centre's reach area.

The centre is well led and managed. At present, the process of overseeing the running and effectiveness of the centre is being changed through the setting up of a management committee. However, as yet, there are not enough parents on this committee to give you a strong enough say in the management of the centre. We have, therefore, asked that the centre gives parents more opportunities to express their views formally. Also, to make sure that the new management committee is fully in place and that more parents are involved.

The centre leader and senior staff know the strengths and weaknesses of the centre and have good plans in place to bring about improvements. They take opportunities to listen, and respond to your views by providing activities that meet your needs.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).