

Inspection report for Colham Manor Primary School Children's Centre

Local authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	383488
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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 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 one additional inspector and an Early Years Inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, the headteacher of the primary school, representatives from the advisory board, parents' forum, professional partnerships and the local authority, and spoke with parents and family members using the centre during the inspection.

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

Information about the centre

The centre is a phase two centre serving an area with broadly average socio-economic indicators, but this includes pockets of disadvantage with above-average levels of debt, overcrowding and families in receipt of benefits. While most families are of White British heritage, the area is ethnically diverse. Over a quarter of families in the area are in receipt of workless benefits and approximately two in five receive incapacity benefits; about a fifth are lone parents. Children's levels on entry to early years education are below those expected for their age, particularly in their communication, language and literacy skills.

The local authority has delegated responsibility for the governance of the children's centre to the governing body of Colham Manor Primary School. The governing body is informed by an advisory board with parent, community and local authority representation. The centre was designated in March 2008 and began with a limited range of services from a hired room in a local school and a community room on the school site. Since that time, another area in the school adjacent to the Early Years

Foundation Stage has been refurbished and extended to provide a stand-alone facility. The centre shares an entrance with the school Nursery. During the inspection, the centre was undergoing additional enhancement of facilities to support energy conservation and improve reception arrangements. The centre has been providing the full core offer since March 2010 and moved services into its current building in September 2010.

In September 2011, as part of a reorganisation within the local authority, the centre was identified as one of three service hubs for developing services for families with children with additional needs, with an emphasis on Downs Syndrome and autism. It has recently entered into an informal cluster arrangement with two other children's centres locally, mainly to share expertise and professional development. The centre manager joined the centre in March 2010.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Colham Manor Children's Centre is friendly and welcoming. In the initial stages of its development, several changes in staffing, including at leadership level, and temporary accommodation reduced its capacity for rapid development. The centre has now turned a corner and has come a long way in a short time. Through the dedicated work of leaders and the staff team in place for the last 18 months, the centre has developed well. This means that the centre now has a firm foundation to enable it to move forward quickly to meet the wider needs of families in its area. However, while the centre broadens its range of services, its overall effectiveness is satisfactory. The centre manager and headteacher have rightly concentrated on ensuring that the services already on offer are of good quality and designed to meet the needs of the most vulnerable families before extending provision further. The centre's self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate, showing a thorough understanding of the impact of the centre's work and where there is room for further development. There is a trend of improvement in its overall performance. The challenge staff set for themselves in raising aspirations within the locality, alongside its achievements to date, indicate the centre's good capacity to sustain its current rate of growth and positive impact.

Parents and family members spoken with are full of praise for the support they receive from centre staff. The welcoming rooms, with displays of children's drawings, and friendliness of staff create a calm and harmonious atmosphere which enables families to feel secure. Parents feel listened to and comment on the prompt and 'non-judgemental' support they are given by staff, which is helping to develop confidence in personal and parenting skills. They refer to individual staff as being 'worth their weight in gold'. The centre has collected useful data on the success of its activities and is satisfactorily developing its data collection to provide more in-depth information about family needs. The vast majority of parents using the centre are satisfied with the service provided.

Data provided by the local authority show a high level of involvement for the most vulnerable families either at the Colham Manor centre or other centres in the cluster. Provision to promote the health and educational achievement of children and their parents is satisfactory. However, the range of activities does not include sufficient opportunities to enable more adults to develop skills to improve their economic well-being. Staff have rightly identified the need to increase their skills in analysing data further to make better use of the new management information systems introduced by the local authority; for example, to analyse the needs within the centre's reach area, where until now the data have related to wider areas covering a number of centres. Similarly, the centre has still to develop information linked to health services, such as live birth data, which currently do not align with the area served by the centre.

The centre's procedures for safeguarding, safe recruitment and child protection are robust. Parents feel very safe and secure within it, and the good care and guidance provided help families to develop the confidence to seek help when needed. Good relationships mean that there is a cohesive and inclusive ethos within the centre, for example enabling parents and children with disabilities to feel fully included in activities. Parents comment on how staff involve everyone without any favouritism or discrimination. Some activities, such as 'Play in the Park', usefully promote the centre locally. Because of its secluded location and limited signage, the centre is only readily visible to families already using other school facilities. Further work is necessary to raise its profile and involve more members of the community.

Governance arrangements have been formalised through clear terms of reference for the advisory group. Expertise within the governing body and recent recruitment onto the advisory board and parent forum mean that the systems are now firmly in place for effective governance. However, these groups have not yet had a significant role in systematically contributing to strategic decision making.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve outcomes for families by:
 - using the available data to review and develop a broader range of services and activities to meet the needs of families, particularly to enable more adults to progress to further employment, education or training
 - liaising with health services to analyse data to identify more precisely those families in the reach area in need of the greatest levels of support.
- Raise the profile of the centre to engage more parents from all parts of the community in centre activities.
- Strengthen parental input into decision making by developing links between the governing body, advisory board and parents' forum.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Outcomes for families are satisfactory overall and case studies show that services are effectively improving the lives of those families using the centre. To date, outcomes for children and for adult's emotional well-being are stronger than outcomes relating to parental economic well-being. Through a range of activities, including 'Messy Play' and 'Stay and Play', adults are developing their understanding of children's development through purposeful play and activities. Encouragement for play in the stimulating outdoor area encourages children to be active and inquisitive. Parents and their children are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles, shown in the availability of fruit during some sessions. Activities such as 'Tiny and Teeny Ballers' have been extended to meet the growing demand for involvement in physical activity. The impact of links with health services, and the midwifery service in particular, mean that the majority of families are benefiting from their engagement with health services. For example, the levels of breastfeeding after six to eight weeks from birth are improving. The centre's rigorous systems for health and safety and prominent publicity materials support families in developing their skills to reduce risk. Children attending centre activities develop their social skills, play alongside one another and learn to share and take turns. Some parents spoke of how attendance at sessions had built their own confidence and social skills. The toy library enables children to play with a wide and varied range of quality toys which parents could not otherwise provide.

Good links with school staff are seen in the initiative to develop a common system to assess children's progress as they move through the centre and the Early Years Foundation Stage. The first group of children using the services on site only joined the Reception class in September, so that statistical evidence on the impact is limited. However, data relating to those who joined the Nursery class indicate a slight improvement in communication and numeracy skills. Children's involvement in centre services was limited until last year; however, the school's data show a closing of the gap for the lowest-attaining children by the end of Reception. Those children participating in the transition project during the summer made a positive, calm start to their school career. Children now in the school thoroughly enjoy returning to the centre for 'Storytime', supporting their literacy development.

The provision of crèche facilities supports growing participation in sessions run for adults, and the newly formed parent forum provides opportunities for parents and

other adults to contribute ideas for further development. There are individual examples of how the centre's support has enabled them to move on to training and employment, but more formal opportunities for parents to improve their economic well-being are limited. The centre works with Jobcentre Plus to publicise employment opportunities but the take-up of sessions has been low so that activities have been cancelled, which was disappointing for those expressing an interest.

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	3
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	3
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	3
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?

3

The centre offers an adequate range of services to meet the needs of families, as shown in good participation rates. As staff develop their understanding of the needs of families in its area, the centre is progressively broadening its range of services. The care and support for families in times of crisis is a particular strength, shown in the timely interventions which help parents to identify and deal with issues affecting them. Staff have good relationships with social services and other partners supporting families experiencing difficulties, which helps to ensure a coordinated and coherent approach. For example, the Citizens Advice Bureau holds regular sessions which have been of particular value to adults experiencing financial hardship. Centre staff complement this work well with direct practical support such as helping to complete forms.

Support to address children's speech and language development, the area identified as requiring the most immediate support, is well coordinated. The joint training being undertaken by school and centre staff helps to ensure a smooth transition for children as they move into the school setting and provides mutual support for staff in developing skills. Other provision effectively promotes children's creative development and to support adults' understanding, through activities such as 'Music Makers' and 'Debutots'. Parents and children thoroughly enjoy and benefit from the well-resourced learning environment and activities provided, and securing a good foundation for later learning. Another example of the way in which the centre is

carefully extending provision is through the recent development of a sensory room, of particular value in addressing its new responsibility for children and families with additional needs. While the centre develops its range of services, it provides families with information about how to access additional services, for example in other children’s centres. Although the range of activities has increased over the last year and has had particular success in working with families in workless households and strengthening family relationships, the centre does not yet have enough impact on working with wider groups such as young parents and parents of young children. A useful start has been made in opening the centre for some weekend sessions to meet the needs of wider groups, for example for a ‘Dads Drop-In’.

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	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

There is a palpable sense of teamwork and enthusiasm across the centre, based on a shared understanding of what it does well and how to improve further. Parents comment positively on improvements over the last year. Morale is high. Efficient day-to-day management enables the centre to run smoothly. The centre manager has effectively reviewed the management structure and made the changes necessary to ensure the centre’s work is held under constant review and takes account of the views of staff, partners and families using the centre. Accountabilities are clearly understood, although some aspects including consultative arrangements have still to be more fully embedded in practice. Staff performance reviews are in place and used well to identify training needs and how the centre can develop. The current development plan is comprehensive, and the centre’s priorities are understood and shared by staff and form a good basis for the centre’s next steps. Consequently, outcomes for families are improving quickly. Links with other centres are helping to ensure efficient use of resources by avoiding duplication of activities so that the centre provides satisfactory value for money.

Safeguarding policies and practice are given high priority. All staff have been trained in child protection issues and are fully aware of how to identify and take action to ensure children’s safety. Rigorous use of the Common Assessment Framework ensures the timely involvement of relevant external agencies, particularly where children or families are at risk. The centre has other useful partners, particularly to provide services such as ‘Early Bird’ and ‘Chatter Monkeys’ to complement those provided by centre staff and with the local authority Early Support Team so that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early and

action taken. However, developing a wider range of partnerships remains an ongoing priority, including developing links with the schools breakfast club and an after-school club, run by an outside provider. Centre staff show their commitment to equality of opportunity in the support they provide for children and families whatever their cultural backgrounds or social circumstances. All are treated with respect, with adults commenting that staff are 'good role models'.

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	3
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	3
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

A brief discussion with inspectors in Colham Manor Primary School at the time of the inspection helped to inform inspectors about the impact of the centre's work on helping children to settle into the school.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Colham Manor Primary School Children's Centre on 15 and 16 November 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We would like to thank you those of you who gave time to speak to us during the inspection. You were all very positive about what the centre does for you and how the range of activities give your children good experiences and help them to develop. During our visit, we looked at and discussed the centre's plans for development and numerous other documents and records with staff. We spoke with a range of partner agencies, including school staff and the local authority, together with representatives from the advisory board and parents' forum. We also visited most of the activities taking place during the inspection.

The centre is friendly and welcoming, and the children's drawings give it a special feel. The initial development of the centre was difficult when it did not have permanent accommodation and there were several staff changes. Now that staff have settled into the new building, things have come a long way in a short time. Their dedication has ensured that the centre has developed systematically and has a firm foundation to move forward quickly and engage with a wider group of adults and children in the locality. The centre manager and headteacher have rightly concentrated on ensuring that the services already on offer are of good quality and designed to meet the needs of the most vulnerable families before extending provision further. There is good capacity to improve further because staff know exactly what has to be done next.

Currently the centre's work has had more impact on widening opportunities for children and addressing the emotional well-being of adults than on developing activities to help parents to develop skills which would enable them to undertake further training or employment. Some of you told us how you feel listened to and commented particularly on the prompt and 'non-judgemental' support you are given. You refer to individual staff as being 'worth their weight in gold'. The centre has collected useful data on the success of its activities and uses this to develop new activities. We found that they need to take even more account of the information available to them to analyse needs within the area and to encourage more parents to use the centre's services. We know that a number of families use other children's centres in the area and it is good that the centres are working together to try to make efficient use of resources by avoiding duplication of activities.

The centre holds safeguarding of children as a high priority. The centre is safe and the security arrangements are effective, so that you feel secure in the knowledge that your children are safe. The positive centre ethos gives you the confidence to seek help when it is needed.

There is a clear sense of teamwork and enthusiasm across the centre. Efficient day-to-day management enables it to run smoothly. Leaders are all committed to improving the services needed to support you and your children. A number of adults have been recruited onto the advisory board and parents' forum, which is giving families using the centre a voice. However, this work is at an early stage of development and has not yet had time to have a significant impact on strategic decision making.

Thank you once again for your time and we hope that in future more parents and carers will benefit from the services that the centre provides.

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