

Inspection report for St Mary and St Pancras Children's Centre

Local authority	Camden
Inspection number	383561
Inspection dates	17–18 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Sharona Semlali

Centre leader	Jane O'Brien/ Sylvia Gilbert
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	St Mary and St Pancras Church of England VA School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	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.

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents and carers, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents and carers, 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/partner primary school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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

The inspectors held meetings with the head of the children's centre, the children centre's locality manager, the family support manager, health visitors, employability and housing staff, the health worker, local authority representatives, parents and carers, governors and members of the partnership advisory board and front-line staff.

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

Information about the centre

St Mary and St Pancras Children's Centre is one of four children's centres based in the Euston locality. The Euston locality covers the three wards of Regents Park, St Pancras and Somers Town, and Camden Town with Primrose Hill. The centre works closely with Regents Park, Hampden and Edith Neville children's centres to deliver the core offer across the locality.

St Mary and St Pancras is a school-based children's centre situated in Somers Town ward, which has very high levels of deprivation and is one of the top 10% most deprived in the country. It is located within St Mary and St Pancras Church of England VA School. The centre has 56 places for children aged three to five years. It offers integrated care and education on site, language classes for adults and drop-in sessions. Other services include family support, home visiting, outreach, health and employability provision. Leadership arrangements for each children's centre are overseen jointly by a children's centre head, who manages the integrated care and education element. A children's centre locality manager and children's centre family

support manager oversee family support, home visiting, health, employability and parent/carer and partner engagement services. They are responsible for delivering all the non-childcare integrated education services directly or through partnership or commissioning arrangements with statutory and voluntary sector providers. Governance and management arrangements have been reviewed and now reflect the locality model. Overall governance lies with the local authority and one advisory board serves all four centres in the locality. Members of the school's governing body oversee the management of the centre.

The proportion of children living in poverty and living in households dependant on workless benefits is 49%. The main ethnic groups are Bangladeshi and Somalian but other groups attend from the Kosovan, Eritrean and Afghan communities. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skill levels well below their age expectations.

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

St Mary and St Pancras is a good children's centre with outstanding elements. It works in a highly effectively way with three other children's centres and a wide range of professional services, including family support, health, housing and employment, to deliver the full core offer of services. Families benefit from exceptional support, care and guidance, particularly in times of crisis. One of the parents or carers summarised it by saying, 'They have saved and changed my life.'

Services are effectively delivered by the centre as part of an integrated approach, known as the locality model, which is led and managed by the local authority. A range of excellent partnerships ensures that services offered are of high quality and tailored to meet the diverse and changing needs of the children and families that live in the area. This approach has enabled the large majority of families to be fully engaged with the appropriate health services. Safeguarding arrangements are exceptionally thorough, both in the centre and through its efforts to promote greater awareness of safety for children and families in the home. Children using the services consistently behave in ways that are safe for themselves and others.

The centre provides a good variety of activities which are well located and within easy access for families, especially those in the target groups. As a result, the vast majority of families within the area are using and benefiting from them. The inclusion of all children and families is at the forefront of the delivery of services for all professionals. Consequently, there is a strong focus on engaging families from key target groups, such as teenage mothers, families with disabilities and those from minority ethnic groups. Positive and improving outcomes for these groups and all who use the centre show that the centre is becoming increasingly effective in assessing and meeting the needs of its locality.

The centre's self-evaluation is accurate and leaders throughout the centre, the locality and in the local authority are clearly focused on making improvements, as is evident in the challenging targets set for the centre. However, the contribution from families to the governance of the centre, and to the locality model in particular, is still in its infancy and parents are not yet fully involved in evaluating the quality of services or determining the centre's future direction. Leaders and managers at all levels of the organisation are effectively overcoming weaknesses and gaps in the provision, demonstrating good capacity to sustain further improvements. They have a good understanding of the centre's strengths and weaknesses. Governance and accountability arrangements are rigorous and clearly understood by all partners. The link members of the school's governing body are not yet fully involved in the self-evaluation process of the locality model.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Strengthen governance and accountability arrangements by involving the governing body more fully in evaluating the effectiveness of the wider locality provision and contributing to its further development.
- Improve the extent to which families using the centre contribute to its governance by helping to shape and evaluate services more effectively.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

A large majority of mothers in the reach area breastfeed their babies. This is helped by all of the children's centres in the Euston locality having adopted a baby-friendly breastfeeding policy with training given to staff. Breastfeeding rates are higher than the comparator targets for London and England as a result of well-attended breastfeeding workshops and easy access to mid-wifery services. The variety of health services contribute very well to families' excellent understanding of how to keep themselves healthy. The number of women who smoke during pregnancy is significantly lower than the London and England comparators. The percentage of teenage pregnancies in Camden has rapidly decreased over the last three years. Immunisation rates are steadily improving due to the efforts of the family support team in conjunction with health professionals. Family support workers also provide

families with information that helps them to buy fresh vegetables and fruits from the market that are cheap and healthy.

Children are exceptionally well protected and their welfare needs are rigorously assessed and met. Those aged three to five years took part in the road safety scheme where they were taught to keep themselves safe through fun activities and games. As one child said, 'I won't speak to people on the street because I don't know them.' The centre has an annual 'Keep yourself safe week' for the families. All of these initiatives help to significantly raise the children's awareness of how to keep themselves safe. Health visitors and the family support team often assess the safety in the homes and point out any dangers. A case study shows how a crèche worker helped a family who had a disabled child to understand their rights and responsibilities by helping them to get the specific services that met their particular needs.

The Nursery in the centre has set up a star chart for encouraging children to get ready in the mornings sensibly by themselves, which is helping to improve their behaviour. Parents' and carers' skills have been greatly enhanced through training in therapeutic play. A large majority of parents and carers who took part in a parenting course found the content very helpful. The locality family support team is a multi-disciplinary team working with families with additional needs by doing individual assessments and interventions. The impact of this is that children at the centre with a child protection plan make good progress.

Local authority data show that the attainment of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in the reach area is rising at a good rate and that the achievement gap between the lowest 20% and their peers is steadily narrowing. Parents and carers whose children attend the drop-in sessions report that the centre prepares them well for school. Parents and carers and children helped to develop the anti-bullying policy. Families are actively involved in contributing to community events such as social evenings. A few of the centre's parents and carers have attended the advisory board meeting. This is still very new as meetings have only happened recently as a way to get parents and carers involved in the decision making process.

Effective systems are in place to support parents and carers in improving their economic stability and independence, particularly those in the target groups. There are good opportunities for parents and carers to undertake training. One parent or carer commented, 'They really helped me to gain my childcare course at Level 2'. There is a high demand for English as an additional language classes and these have a good take-up by parents and carers from different ethnic backgrounds, including the Somalian and Bangladeshi communities. Low income families are well supported to apply for the benefits that they are entitled to. Families that have children with disabilities are supported in claiming their entitled benefits and in taking up childcare places so that they can participate in volunteering and finding employment.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are	1
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physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	
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	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

A large majority of the families in the reach area use the services available, particularly the fathers. Families' needs are assessed and met effectively as assessment begins right from the initial contact with the family. If families need extra support they are quickly signposted to the relevant service. Provision to promote learning is good. Activities are well located to engage families. Personal developments and achievements are celebrated well. The centre uses its newsletter and celebration assemblies to share parental achievements as it did when parents and carers took part in the sport relief mile.

The quality of care, guidance and support provided by the centre and in the locality is outstanding. In times of crisis families get exceptional support very quickly. The electronic Common Assessment Framework is an important aspect in aiding this process to move quickly. It is a rigorous and robust tool which is used in assessing and analysing the families' needs. This is helped by having effective communication between the family support and social work teams whose role is to assess every family that has a child protection plan. Often referrals are made to the housing team who support families in the locality that are living in overcrowded homes. Excellent partnerships with a range of agencies, including Jobcentre Plus and NHS Job Shop, support an increasing number of parents and carers to gain employment. Consequently families have successfully been helped with their housing needs, furniture space, debt management and in getting employment training and apprenticeships. All this has a positive impact on outcomes for the families.

The family support team has trained staff at the centre to recognise when parents or carers are in a vulnerable situation and need extra support. The centre offers specific workshops to help parents to support their children. For example, parents and carers requested more guidance on how to teach mathematics to their children and as a result a successful mathematics workshop and mathematics open week were offered for them. Families overwhelmingly say that without the services they would be lost.

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	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The visionary centre manager and all other leaders and managers continuously strive to make improvements. The centre has ambitious targets relating to Camden's Children and Young People's Plan, which are effectively filtered through the line management systems linking to the priority needs of the families in the locality. Professional supervision and management systems are consistently good. For example, the family support team rigorously and regularly monitors its caseload, ensuring that a timeline is strictly adhered to. Robust systems of monitoring and evaluation of all types of referrals are in place. All of the Common Assessment Framework information used by staff with parents and carers goes through a strict quality assurance process which includes the parents' and carers' views. This is then monitored further by the local authority through the annual conversation. These rigorous processes result in accurate self-evaluation which demonstrates that the centre is producing good outcomes for the families in its reach area with good value for money. Parents and carers contribute to the process through the active parent and carer council. Also the locality has formed an advisory board which has just appointed parents and carers who are new in their role and have not yet had time to contribute fully to the governance of the centre.

Children and vulnerable adults using the centre and the services in the locality are exceptionally well safeguarded. The centre has established a parent/carer contract with the adults who attend any form of training. They undertake a thorough induction about safeguarding and they know what to do in an emergency situation. Robust safeguarding systems show that the number of 'team around the child meetings' is increasing. A stringent agreement is in place for exchanging information between the different agencies. All staff receive high quality safeguarding training. Complaint processes are firmly in place and quickly acted on. For example, parents' and carers' concerns about using the complex forms in the Common Assessment Framework process led to the introduction of a 'parent-friendly' form which is used in an exemplary way with parents and carers to enable them to assess their own needs.

The inclusion of families and children in the centre and locality is outstanding. The centre has achieved the Inclusion award in recognition of this. The different ethnic make-up of staff reflects those in the community. Families have plenty of opportunities to learn about each other's cultures, for example by sharing different types of foods and exchanging information at the annual international events and

cultural events. Organisations such as the KIDs are well established and support children and families with disabilities well.

Resources are well managed and have good impact on outcomes. The environment in the centre is very welcoming, stimulating, safe and secure. The local authority has reduced the number of managers and increased the number of frontline staff and the staffing structure is reviewed regularly to avoid duplication of services.

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	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	2

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

Inspectors took into consideration the outcome of the concurrent inspection of the co-located primary school.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the St Marys and St Pancras Children's Centre on 17 and 18 November 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you for taking time out to speak to us. We spoke to children and a wide range of staff who work in the centre and in the locality. We observed the centre's work and visited other parts of the locality which are providing services to you.

When you spoke to us you told us how attending the centre and other services in the locality were very important to you. You explained to us how your life has changed because of this. You told us that you found all of the staff to be very welcoming and helpful and that they always have a smile. You particularly appreciate the way they quickly provide you with information and support. We very much enjoyed observing the drop-ins and seeing how well your children behaved and were excited during those sessions.

We found that the centre works exceptionally well with the other centres in the locality and with a large number of other agencies to provide you with a wide range of services close to your home in response to what you need and request. Centre staff are skilled at making sure that you are in contact with the right person who can help you. The centre is extremely successful in helping you and your families to keep safe and healthy. Many of you have benefited from help with breastfeeding and giving up smoking. The excellent safeguarding arrangements help you and your children to feel very safe and understand what to do in an emergency. All of the staff receive high quality training in this area. You and your children receive excellent personalised support and you can confide in staff at all times, especially when you are facing any challenging circumstances. You enjoy sharing and exchanging information with each other about your cultures, for example during the international day that was organised by staff.

The centre manager, other leaders and the local authority do a good job to make sure that the services they provide are always improving. They set ambitious targets for the centre to achieve and keep a close eye on how well it is doing. In order to make further improvements, we have asked the leaders and managers to make sure that the link governors from the primary school play a bigger role in evaluating the effectiveness of the wider services within the locality. Also we have asked the centre to help you to play a larger part in the decision making and helping to determine and shape some of the services provided for you at a local level. Please try to get involved by making your views heard through the advisory board.

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