

Inspection report for Paradise Park Children's Centre

Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	383710
Inspection dates	15–16 December 2011
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY321188 Paradise Park 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.

Report published: January 2012



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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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, senior representatives from the local authority, representatives from Islington Play Association and representatives of partner agencies including health services, social care, community organisations and parents.

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

Information about the centre

Paradise Park Children's Centre is a phase one centre set up in 2005 and managed by Islington Play Association charity on behalf of the local authority. The centre operates from a purpose-built centre located in a park in Islington. It has a café that is open to the community and also has extensive outdoor play areas and a garden. Services offered at the centre include early years education and childcare provision, adult learning, access to health services, parenting courses and family support, outreach services and support for childminder networks.

The centre serves an area of concentrated low rise social housing. The area is ethnically diverse and around 42% of children using the centre are described as White British/Other White and 39% come from a range of Black and ethnic minority communities. Throughout the borough about half of households with dependent children claim housing benefits. Over 75% of these are also claiming income support. About 40% of children live in workless households and 36% of children live in lone

parent households. Children enter early years education with skills below what is expected for their age.

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

Paradise Park is a vibrant and welcoming centre which exploits its unique location in a park to place itself at the heart of its community. The centre’s community café and its outdoor play areas are highly valued by families. The centre is well managed by a team of highly competent leaders and managers from the centre, the local authority and the management committee for Islington Play Association. Communication is good at all levels and a regular reporting cycle ensures that all stakeholders are well informed about the centre’s performance. The centre is part of a newly-formed cluster of three centres which share a joint advisory board. However, both the role of the board and representation of parents from the centre on the board are areas for development.

The personal testimonies from parents confirm the centre’s outstanding quality of care and support. ‘I always walk out feeling ten times better than when I walked in,’ was the view from one parent which reflects the views of many. Support for families is a well managed service within the centre and excellent links with health services and other professionals ensure that a whole spectrum of needs can be met.

Participation rates are good and outcomes for families are good as a result of the effective assessment of their individual needs. Provision is well matched to those needs, particularly those of the centre’s key target groups of minority ethnic families, lone parents, families from workless households and fathers. Data show that health outcomes are good and improving. There is good participation in the range of health services offered directly at the centre or via joint home visits from centre staff and health professionals.

Case study evidence and the personal accounts from parents demonstrate the significant improvements they have made as a result of their engagement with the

centre. After developing good personal and employability skills, some parents have progressed into employment; others have progressed from using a service at the centre to enrolling on an adult learning course or into volunteering. Although volunteers are well supported and trained at the centre, a formal volunteer policy is not in place.

The centre has established good relationships with a range of partners who work in a fully integrated way with the centre to provide a coherent service to families. Partners have high levels of confidence in the centre and speak highly of its staff and services.

One of the key strengths of the centre is the way it promotes equality for all families. Staff understand well the barriers faced by families who have to overcome language and cultural barriers to succeed. Centre staffing and other resources have been used exceptionally well to monitor participation rates by ethnic group and to increase those rates. Further evidence of the centre's success in promoting equality is the fact that the gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children across the Early Years Foundation Stage and the rest has narrowed significantly in recent years.

The overall effectiveness of the centre is good. It very effectively evaluates provision and then takes action to improve areas of improvement that emerge from evaluation. This, along with the centre's good leadership and management, confirms that it has good capacity to improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work with the local authority to strengthen the role of the cluster advisory board and increase the representation of parents.
- Build on existing good practice and implement a formal volunteer policy.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The centre uses its effective links with health professionals to offer good-quality health provision for families. Health promotion is good and helps promote parents' understanding of what action can be taken to improve the health of families. For example, after attending a healthy eating session one parent wrote, 'I didn't know that steaming vegetables kept nutrients in. I'm going to start doing that from now on.' The range of health activities offered at the centre, which includes antenatal and postnatal clinics and breastfeeding peer support, has a positive impact on the health of the community. Breastfeeding rates are high and obesity rates in the area have reduced from 12.0% in 2008/09 to 9.4% in 2009/10. Visits to the dentist of birth to four year olds are higher (19%) in the reach area than the rest of Islington.

Children and parents enjoy attending activities at the centre and make good progress

with their learning. Data show that the achievement of children across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile is good and has improved from 53.1% in 2009 to 61.2% in 2011. Data show that the gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and the rest is narrowing at a faster rate in the reach area than in the rest of the borough. Parents make good progress in their learning and personal development.

Parents feel very safe at the centre and this is as a result of the high priority given to safeguarding. Managers and staff have achieved a good balance in promoting the centre as an accessible community venue, whilst at the same time ensuring accommodation and outdoor areas are effectively risk managed and safe for children. Parenting programmes are used well to equip parents with the knowledge and skills they need to ensure their children make good progress. Staff have good links with local social care teams, such as the 'children in need team'. They use review meetings, referrals, signposting and support to ensure families with children on child protection plans, children in need and looked after children receive good support. All children in the reach area who are on child protection plans are engaged with the centre.

The centre's behaviour policy promotes the good behaviour in children that is evident at the centre. The policy includes a designated person for behaviour management. Case study evidence from families shows that effective parenting guidance helps parents understand what actions they can take to effectively manage their children's behaviour. A significant number of parents make a positive contribution to the centre by volunteering to support activities or through their membership of the centre's sub-committee which acts as a parents' forum. One member of the sub-committee said, 'Our ideas are taken on board and staff make you feel very important.' Although volunteers are well supported and have good opportunities for training, this is not informed by a formal volunteer policy or strategy.

Direct input from Jobcentre Plus is limited at the centre. However, through good partnership work with Islington Work for Parents, parents receive good-quality guidance about employment and benefits. Parents who have guaranteed job interviews receive additional practical help through the centre's link to a charity, called Dress for Success, which provides parents with clothes and accessories to wear at interviews. Data show that over a third of parents are involved in some of learning or training which equips them with the knowledge and skills to progress into employment, education, training or volunteering.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2

The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment	2

How good is the provision?

2

Quality of provision is good. Services are well matched to the needs of families, particularly those from the centre's key target groups. Views from parents and children are used to improve the quality of activities and to ensure a match between interests, needs and provision. Staff use the Common Assessment Framework and other initial assessment tools well to identify individual needs of families. In addition to good use of data, staff have a good knowledge of their local community. They understand the challenge they face in reaching families who live in a reach area that is characterised by pockets of high deprivation and pockets of affluence.

Activities for parents and children are strongly focused on outcomes and, as a result, learning is purposeful. Activities are well planned for children. For example, in the crèche, staff use regular observations and feedback to parents to ensure children have enjoyment at the centre and make good progress in their learning and development. The centre has used its good links with the local adult learning service to provide courses and guidance to adults about education opportunities. An innovative link between the centre, a local housing association and the adult learning service provides funding for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses, which help adults from minority ethnic groups develop their English language skills.

'The centre turned my life around,' was the comment from one parent which demonstrates the positive impact of the centre on the lives of families. The quality of care for families is outstanding. The staff work in a highly integrated way with a range of other professionals from the health services, social care and charity organisations to ensure families receive the best quality care the centre can offer. Some families in the area face significant barriers and live with very complex problems. However, the response from the centre is sensitive, yet professional, and increases the life chances of families.

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

Paradise Park is a well managed centre. Leaders and managers at all levels are united in their commitment and purpose to improve the lives of families. The centre manager has been in post for about a year but in a short space of time has made significant improvements to the management of the centre. Governance and accountability arrangements are well understood and clear. However, a new advisory board, which was set up in April 2011 for the centre and two others within the cluster, is still developing its role. At present, there is no representation from parents from the centre on the board. As a result of good leadership and management, outcomes for families are good and value for money is good, especially as the centre engages well with its key target groups and constantly seeks ways to make efficient use of resources.

Self-evaluation is a robust and reliable process that leads to improvement. It is well informed by data and used as a working tool that is regularly updated. Leaders and managers are vigorous in their efforts to promote improvement. In addition to the self-evaluation report, a management schedule for planning, monitoring and evaluation is used effectively as a key part of the centre's quality improvement strategy. The local authority has also commissioned external audits of the centre and assigned a Children's Centre Improvement Partner (CCIP) to work with the manager to develop the quality of provision. Improvements as a result of an accurate and rigorous self-evaluation process are visible from data which show the improving outcomes for families. User engagement is good and the views of users are taken into account through evaluations, informal discussions and also through the formal role of parents on the centre sub committee. Views from parents are gathered through the annual parents' survey which shows that satisfaction rates are very high.

Safeguarding is a high priority at the centre and safeguarding practice is continually monitored by the centre manager, the management committee and the local authority. Vetting and checking of staff, volunteers and others who come into contact with children at the centre are a rigorous process. Multi-agency work and early intervention to safeguard families are effective. Staff are well trained in safeguarding that is relevant to their roles and attend courses recommended by the local safeguarding children board. Through their partnership work with other organisations, staff respond well to specific safeguarding issues, such as those linked to domestic violence. The centre is highly valued by its partners who work in a

productive way with staff at the centre. The centre works with a wide range of partners from the statutory and voluntary sectors who contribute well to the development of provision and, in some cases, to the professional development of staff.

The promotion of equality at the centre is exemplary. Inclusive practice for all families, such as those with children who have additional needs, is strongly promoted and leads to improved outcomes for them. Staff have actively pursued opportunities to engage key target groups, such as fathers, lone parents and families from minority ethnic groups. Where low participation rates of particular groups have been identified corrective action is taken. For example, as a result of low registration rates of Somalian families, a bi-lingual Somalian support worker now targets those families and has been successful in increasing both the registration and participation rates of families from that community. The engagement of families from minority ethnic groups has been instrumental in narrowing the gap between those families who benefit from the centre's services and those who do not.

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	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	2
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

The inspection report for Paradise Park Centre Nursery.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Paradise Park Centre on 15 and 16 December 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

Many thanks to those of you who took time out from your busy lives to speak to us during the inspection. You contributed very well to the inspection process. We enjoyed talking to you and finding out how much the centre has helped you and your families. We found that the support and care available at the centre for families are outstanding. The way the centre supports families, sometimes when life is particularly tough, is exemplary. You gave us examples of how centre staff have helped some of you through some of the most difficult times in your life. We also looked at evaluations and case studies which confirmed for us that the centre really excels when it comes to caring for families.

We were also impressed with the way the centre reaches out to families from all backgrounds and is committed to improving the quality of the lives of families from different backgrounds or who have children that have particular needs. When we looked at the statistics for the centre, we could see how successful the centre has been in attracting more and more families from different backgrounds to the centre.

We liked your café and know you like it too. In fact we found not just the café but the whole centre to be a very warm and welcoming place. The range of activities for children and parents is good. We could see that the health clinics, sessions for children and for parents are well attended. Again, from our look at statistics, we can see that children are making good progress in their development.

Some of you are also doing really well on courses at the centre and also in your voluntary work at the centre whether that is by supporting activities or by being involved with the sub-committee. We know that the centre is committed to supporting volunteers which is why we have asked managers to develop a policy for volunteers. We have also asked the local authority to strengthen the advisory board that is now in place for your centre and two other local centres within the same cluster. We would like to see more parents involved with the advisory board and have asked the local authority to explore ways of making this happen.

Once again, many thanks for your input into the inspection process and we wish you all the best for the future.

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