

Inspection report for Brookhill Children's Centre

Local authority	Royal Borough of Greenwich
Inspection number	383641
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Reporting inspector	Jan Lloyd HMI

Centre leader	Netsai Idehen
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Places for Children Nursery, Brookhill Children's Centre, Barnfield Project Crèche

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

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

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

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

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

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, advisory board members, parents' forum members, the nursery manager and representatives of the local authority, health services, partners and other local organisations as well as parents and carers.

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

Information about the centre

Brookhill Children's Centre serves a large proportion of the Woolwich Common ward in the Royal Borough of Greenwich and the Connaught housing estate, which is shortly due for demolition and rebuilding. The centre opened in 2007, is a phase one centre and is managed by the local authority. There is an advisory board and parents' forum. It serves five super output areas with deprivation levels ranging between 5% and 15% of the most deprived areas of the country and has higher levels of deprivation than for the borough overall. There are 840 children under five in the reach area. Of the children registered, 83% are from minority ethnic groups. There are 184 lone parents of children aged 0 to 4 years in the area and 43% of children under five live in a workless household. A very large majority of children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge below those expected for their age.

The centre is open 50 weeks of the year and provides child and family health services, family support, training courses, information, advice and guidance and outreach work. The building is purpose-built and also operates as a community centre. The centre shares the building with a privately run nursery. The building has five main rooms, offices, a community cafe, outside space and an environmental roof garden plus the nursery. There is a full-time centre manager, a business manager, a

premises manager, a service development manager, a children's centre teacher, five additional staff and an administrator/receptionist.

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

This is a good children's centre with strong leadership and a highly motivated team. The centre delivers a very wide range of activities and services that meet the needs of the children and families within both its local area and the wider borough. A high priority is given to safeguarding and keeping children and families safe and protected and, as a consequence, outcomes are good.

Users of the centre include parents, members of the extended family and carers from all target groups. Contact with families from within the reach area varies but overall is 50%. In addition, a very large number of families attend from outside the reach area due to the central location of the centre and the wide variety of activities on offer. The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. Parents, carers and children enjoy coming to the centre. Typical comments include: 'The staff do not label you or your children and they make you feel welcome and encourage you to attend courses', 'The great thing is the centre is always open and there's always something for the children to do' and 'I do not have the words to describe what this centre has done for me. It has given me back my life, my confidence and a purpose to live'.

The outstanding work with partners underpins all the activities and support that the centre offers. The co-location of the health visitor team at the centre enables both staff and parents to have regular contact and support. Breastfeeding support is excellent and results in 61% of mothers still breastfeeding at six to eight weeks. Parents and carers who attend the wide range of parenting courses report improvement in their parenting skills, confidence and self-esteem. Children play well together and develop good relationships with other children.

The centre works closely with local organisations to provide good information, advice

and training on developing economic stability and independence. Staff refer parents and carers to a wide range of other organisations as appropriate. Jobcentre Plus sends regular updates on employment opportunities and these are displayed on the noticeboard.

The centre manages its resources very effectively. The building is bright, welcoming, and working at full capacity for much of the week as well as delivering a monthly Saturday club. Community groups use the centre at other times. The centre manager deploys the staffing resources very effectively and the outstanding work with partner organisations ensures a wide range of activities and services to meet the needs of families in the area.

The large majority of users of the centre are from a wide range of minority ethnic groups and the centre works effectively to promote equality and celebrate diversity. The centre works tirelessly to build the trust and respect of users both for the staff and for each other and actively works towards community cohesion and is successful in this respect.

The very detailed service delivery plan clearly identifies the outcomes and activities to meet the needs of most families in the area. The action plan accurately identifies the key areas for development and sets targets and success criteria but does not set short- and medium-term targets. Formal short-term evaluation of activities takes place but longer-term tracking of the outcomes for individuals on training courses is often informal. However, it does show successful outcomes. The ongoing improvements and good self-evaluation across all areas show that the centre has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the percentage of those families most in need of support in the reach area accessing activities and services.
- Implement a formal system to record and track the longer-term outcomes for adults undertaking training.
- Set short- and medium-term targets for improvement activities and monitor these throughout the year to see what impact the centre's actions are having on the outcomes for all target groups.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The partnership work with health services is very good. Follow-up after birth is excellent and offers a wide range of support services and activities for parents.

Typical of the comments of many are: 'The breastfeeding advocate is amazing and gives such great support'; 'Mothers really appreciate the support for post-natal depression'; and, 'After I had my baby, I did not know where to turn. I felt so isolated and lonely. The staff at the centre helped me and have become my friends.' The health services staff support issues around obesity and the centre provides healthy food, snacks and drinks to encourage parents and children to widen their tastes. The obesity rate for children at reception age has decreased over the past three years and is similar to the rate for the borough. Four parents have taken the food hygiene qualification and now run classes on how to eat healthily and cook on a budget.

Children and families feel very safe when accessing services at the centre. Risk assessments are thorough and entry to the centre is very secure. Families are developing a good understanding of how to keep themselves and their children safe and a large number have attended a first aid course. The number of children on child protection plans is high but appropriate and effective support is available. Excellent working relationships take place with other agencies involved and recording is good.

Children, parents and carers enjoy coming to the centre. 'The centre manager is my hero for her support and advice. She never gets tired of encouraging mums and dads. She makes it easy for families to feel free to access the great opportunities here.' Contact with fathers is improving and the centre runs a monthly Saturday club, which is largely attended by fathers. Activities at the centre help children develop their listening, communication and other skills for the future. Good planning ensures that children make good progress from their starting points and are well prepared for the transition into nursery or school. Fifty-seven per cent of children achieved a total of at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scales in 2011. The percentage gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the rest has widened but it is close to the average in the borough. Both the centre and the local authority are aware of the reasons.

The very active parents' forum is well organised with clear roles and responsibilities and parents are heavily involved in the decision-making and governance of the centre. They work closely with the users of the centre and run many of the events, including the cafe for the Saturday club. The parents' forum works very closely with the advisory board and representatives are actively involved in the meetings.

The centre encourages volunteering and parents gain in confidence and skills, which then enable them to progress to further training and/or work. Courses range from personal and social development and parenting courses to courses leading to accreditation and vocational qualifications. The centre offers, through its partners, a wide range of courses for English for speakers of other languages. Many of these lead to qualifications, have very high achievement rates and contribute to the good outcomes for families across all target groups including the most vulnerable. Feedback on courses is excellent. The informal tracking systems, which include discussion with the partner training providers and with parents and carers when they come into the centre, identify their positive impact.

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

The centre works in partnership with other providers to deliver a very wide range of services and activities, well matched to local needs. Good partnership working ensures that assessment of individuals and families is robust and effective. The centre reaches 71% of children in the area closest to the centre. The local authority has created a new outreach worker role to target families within the two areas with the lowest contact in order to increase the participation of those from the most vulnerable groups. The centre has become a place in the local community for parents and carers to come to for information, advice, support and training and to meet with other parents and make friends. The community cafe plays an important role in offering a comfortable and safe place for parents, carers and children to meet and offers healthy food. The centre celebrates the achievements of children, parents and carers by displaying work and photos and presenting certificates.

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. Partnership working ensures that families receive efficient, tailored care to support their well-being. Services and support at the centre are well integrated with well-planned support for families referred to external agencies. The centre is committed to delivering early interventions to all families that are in need of support. For example, the educational psychologist visits the centre regularly to observe the children and meet with parents to identify any specific needs prior to the children entering nursery or school. The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) works with the centre to deliver training and support on behaviour management. Parents appreciate this support. 'My child had very bad tantrums but now I know how to deal with them and can manage much better.'

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 governance and accountability arrangements are clear and well understood, with a very committed and involved advisory board. Regular meetings with the local authority monitor the performance of the centre. The local authority has recently improved the data it provides for individual centres and this is now very comprehensive and informative. The centre manager, leadership team and advisory board effectively use the data to evaluate performance and inform future planning. The action plan identifies the key areas for improvement with clear success criteria and staff are implementing these; however, not all actions have short- or medium-term targets to help the centre to judge their progress.

Evaluation activities are thorough and involve all users of the centre and partners. The 2011 parental satisfaction survey identifies the tremendous difference the centre has made to the lives and development of its users. Self-evaluation is rigorous and inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the report but graded four areas higher.

The centre delivers excellent value for money. The building is fully used, the partnership working ensures a wide range of services, and activities can be delivered to effectively meet families' needs; the staff team works very well together. The centre is committed to ensuring sustainability in both its services and in the environment. The building meets high environmental standards and the garden on the flat roof offers opportunities for families with no garden to grow plants and play outside. The centre offers 'swap' opportunities to families so that unwanted children's clothes and equipment can be recycled.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The centre is committed to providing an inclusive environment and removing barriers for children and families including those with disabilities. The new outreach strategy and outreach worker aim to improve engagement further. The wide range of centre users closely reflects the community that the centre serves. Users from a wide range of minority ethnic groups and cultures work well together and support each other. Posters, prepared by either the staff or parents, celebrate the diversity of users.

The comprehensive and easy to understand safeguarding policy fully meets statutory

requirements and works alongside the borough's policy, procedures and guidelines. The service level agreement with partners and service providers clearly outlines the safeguarding requirements. All new staff and volunteers have a safeguarding briefing and ongoing training and updating take place. The centre works collaboratively with all agencies involved to reduce the risk of harm to children. The partnership with the local women's refuge includes support for children living there.

The excellent partnership working with parents and carers, volunteers and other service providers ensures that services are fully integrated and results in a framework of provision that impacts positively on the lives of families using the centre.

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	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	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	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

None

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Brookhill Children's Centre on 2 and 3 May 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like thank those whom we met for telling us about how much your centre helps you, your families and your children. You told us how much you and your children enjoy coming here, how friendly and supportive the staff are and that you have made new friends at the centre. The staff team really enjoy working with you and your children and are passionate about ensuring that they run activities and services that meet your needs. Many of you told us how helpful the support you get from the health services staff is, especially the support for breastfeeding and for post-natal depression. You talked about the activities at the centre and we went to see some of them. It was good to see so many of you getting involved in running activities and working alongside the staff. We especially liked the cookery class and one of the inspectors went back to sample the food, which was very good. We could see how much you and your children enjoy coming here and our discussions with you and the staff helped us to make the decision that this centre is good overall. We have asked the centre manager to make sure that more families in the area know about the centre and how it can help and support them.

We like the building your centre is in with the large number of rooms and the roof garden with plants and a fountain. We especially like the large paintings on the brick walls making the areas look like they are out in the country. Of course, there is one wall showing the London skyline just to remind you of where you are. The community café is a wonderful place to meet and eat. The food we ate was really good and it is a pity we were only there for a short time and only had two lunches.

We were very impressed with how involved you are with running the centre. It was good to see some of you working as volunteers and maybe more of you will find out if that is something you can do too. The parents' forum is very busy finding out what you want in your centre and in planning and running events. The Diamond Jubilee tea party sounds as though it is going to be great fun. It is good to see the strong link between the parents' forum and the advisory board; we have asked that in going forward they strengthen their monitoring of the activities taking place to ensure they fully meet your needs.

Your centre works with many other organisations to ensure that you have all the information, advice, support and training that you need. These include training to help you prepare for work and the Jobcentre regularly sends information about job vacancies in your area. We have asked the centre manager to keep in touch with those of you who go on training courses or move into employment so that she can judge how successful the training and support you received have been.

All of you told us how safe you feel in the centre and we saw the excellent systems that are in place to keep you and your children protected and safe. The security

system at the front door ensures that the centre staff know who is on site and any people they do not know have to show some form of identity.

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your centre and giving up your time to come and meet us. We are sorry that we could not meet more of you. We wish you, your families and the centre all the very best for the future.

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