

# Inspection report for Gascoigne Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
<b>Inspection number</b>	383679
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30–31 May 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Priscilla McGuire

<b>Centre leader</b>	Rahat Ismail
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Not applicable
<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.

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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 the centre manager, frontline staff, senior representatives from the local authority and staff from the West locality. They also met staff from a number of partner agencies such as health and education. They met parents and other users of the centre, including representatives from the Children's Centre Community Forum and parents' forum.

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

## Information about the centre

Gascoigne Children's Centre is a phase one centre in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. It opened in 2006. The centre operates from three single storey buildings and is located at the centre of the Gascoigne estate. The centre meets its core purpose. Services offered include family support, child and family health services, adult learning and employment support. There is an on-site nursery which is managed by an external provider and subject to a separate inspection. The centre is managed by the local authority and supported by the Children's Centre Community Forum which acts as an advisory board. The centre is one of two within the West locality that work in partnership together.

The centre is located in the south west of the borough close to Barking town centre. Gascoigne estate has the highest concentration of high rise blocks in the borough. Most families live in local authority owned accommodation. Mobility of families on the estate is high. Many families live in the area for only short periods of time.

According to the most recent available data, around 46.9% of all children live in poverty. The Gascoigne ward has the highest rate of total benefit claimants in the borough and around 28% of birth to four-year-olds live in households dependent on workless benefits. The area is ethnically diverse with the majority of children between birth and four years of age being of Black/Black British origin. On entry to early years provision, children's levels of skills and development are below those which are 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**

**1**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**1**

## Main findings

Gascoigne Children's Centre is an outstanding centre that enhances the lives of families. As a result, outcomes for the very large majority of families are outstanding. The centre offers new experiences and opportunities for the community it serves. As one parent said, 'You do things here you would never have dreamed of doing.' Centre staff are passionate about increasing the life chances of families who live in a highly deprived area.

The community is exceptional because of the transient nature of the local population. As a result, the profile of the community changes frequently. In response, managers use data outstandingly well to assess the needs of their community, to monitor changes and to measure impact. Provision is high quality and is exceptionally well matched to the needs of the community and of individual families. Because many families live in high rise tower blocks, they particularly value the opportunity the centre gives their children to 'escape' from what they describe as 'living in a concrete jungle'.

Excellent working partnerships contribute significantly to the wide range of provision that is offered. They also contribute exceptionally well to the positive outcomes for families. Centre staff have developed highly productive arrangements with local community organisations and also with partners from health, education and other statutory sectors. Partnership work is also effective in ensuring the safety of families.

The centre's multi-agency work to safeguard families is highly effective in providing early intervention and early support for families.

The centre also works exceptionally well in partnership with parents to develop services. As a result, parents make an outstanding contribution to the centre's overall mission and are actively involved in governance, decision making and volunteering at different levels.

Intensive work to promote children's attainment across the Early Years Foundation Stage is having a very positive impact. This can be seen in the significant progress children make from their starting points. They also develop excellent social skills. One parent said, 'When my child first came, he didn't mix much. He's changed now and is much more confident.' Parents also make excellent progress as a result of their participation in adult learning courses or through volunteering.

Centre staff are very sensitive to the needs of these families and offer outstanding support and guidance. This enables parents to develop skills and strategies to manage problems and explore solutions. They also benefit greatly from the excellent range of health provision which includes the services of health visitors and midwives.

The centre's strategies to promote equality and inclusion are excellent. Parents talk enthusiastically about the way the centre has brought families from different cultural and racial backgrounds together. The centre has also made good progress in increasing the participation rates of families with disabled children. However, through careful analysis of data, the centre has identified that the participation rates of families from a White British background are low.

The local authority is ambitious in its outlook for all its children's centres. This is translated into action at centre management level. Targets for staff are set which explicitly link to centre performance targets. The self-evaluation process is thorough and is used very effectively to drive improvement. It involves parents and partners. Mechanisms for holding staff at all levels to account are excellent and highly effective. This, along with the centre's outstanding leadership and management, demonstrates that the centre has an excellent capacity for sustained improvement.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Employ a range of strategies to ensure an increase in the participation rates of families of White British heritage.

## **How good are outcomes for families?**

<b>1</b>
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Outcomes for the very large majority of families are outstanding. Data confirm that the centre is instrumental in improving the lives of families. The centre works in a highly effective manner with a wide range of health professionals such as health

visitors, midwives and speech and language therapists to promote health. Breastfeeding initiation and sustained rates have improved significantly over time. Programmes to promote healthy eating and physical exercise contribute well to the reducing obesity rates in the area. Through the provision of excellent activities, such as Baby Massage sessions, parents increase their understanding of how they can improve the health of their children.

Centre staff view all aspects of safeguarding and health and safety as a high priority. As a result, families report that they feel safe. Through the highly effective work of the family support staff, the safeguarding concerns of families are identified early. Staff use the Common Assessment Framework exceptionally well as a key mechanism for early intervention. Excellent partnership working with social care teams provides families with a swift and effective response whenever safeguarding concerns arise. Data show that the number of children subject to child protection plans across the borough has reduced over time.

Children and parents find great enjoyment in attending the centre. Children make excellent educational progress from their starting points at the centre. Data show a significant and improving trend in the percentage of children who gain 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage profile. Children who attend the centre make better educational progress than those who do not. The centre raises aspirations and enables parents to make outstanding progress in developing their personal skills and in gaining qualifications. As one parent explains, 'Before I came here, I had no confidence but now I can talk to other parents and talk to people on the phone.' Achievement rates on courses for adults, such as English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) are excellent.

'The centre is the heart of the community' was a view expressed by many parents. The centre is pivotal to the lives of families and plays a fundamental role in promoting community cohesion. Through their work on the Together4Gascoigne parents' forum, parents make an outstanding contribution to the work of the centre and to their community. They are actively involved in high level decision making, such as staff recruitment, and also contribute to the self-evaluation process. They organise activities for other parents and act as exemplary ambassadors for the centre. Parents also make a meaningful contribution to governance of the centre through their roles on the Children's Centre Community Forum.

Centre staff have developed excellent relationships with Jobcentre Plus staff. They work productively together to develop the employability skills of parents through 'work clubs' and other activities. One parent said, 'I found the work club extremely informative. It is good that there is so much support out there for people who are struggling to find employment.' Centre staff have also made excellent use of their 'host borough' status for the Olympics, to enable a significant number of parents to find employment. Through participating in a range of activities at the centre, children are developing excellent skills for the future, particularly in relation to their communication skills.

*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>1</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>1</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>1</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>1</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>1</b>

## **How good is the provision?**

<b>1</b>
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The quality of provision is outstanding. The process of assessing community and individual needs and then matching these with provision is exceptionally effective. Staff are meticulous in their analysis of quantitative and qualitative data and then using it to identify needs. The overall participation rate of 82% demonstrates the centre's success in engaging with families. The centre's engagement with key target groups such as minority ethnic groups, families living in workless households and those living with vulnerable circumstances is excellent.

The range of services offered at the centre is impressive. Centre staff have worked hard to achieve a good balance between universal and targeted provision. Attendance rates are excellent and data show that some programmes, such as Babbling Babes, have been more successful in attracting parents than anywhere else in the borough. Outreach work is used very effectively to promote services to the wider community.

Through highly effective partnership arrangements, such as those with adult learning services, the centre offers high quality learning opportunities for parents. Courses such as Play and Language workshops develop the capacity of parents to support their children's learning. In evaluations, 85% of parents report that they have learnt how to support their baby's communication skills after attending the Babbling Babes programme. Provision for children is also excellent and links very well to Early Years Foundation Stage outcomes. It also responds exceptionally well to the local priority to develop children's speech and language skills.

Case studies and personal testimonies from families demonstrate the success of the centre in accurately identifying support needs of families. 'I would have been sectioned if I did not have the support from the centre and I would have lost my

child.’ This comment reflects the views of many other parents about the impact of the high quality support offered at the centre. Another parent said, ‘Coming to the centre lifted my spirits and removed the isolation from my life.’ Families receive excellent support to deal with a wide range of challenges such as bereavement, depression, housing issues and much more. As a result of the cohesive package of guidance and support offered, parents receive the intervention that is required to prevent problems escalating. They also learn how to use coping strategies to deal with circumstances that are beyond their control.

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

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

<b>1</b>
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Leadership and management at all levels are excellent. Centre staff have an excellent understanding of their roles and responsibilities and of how these relate to wider priorities. Supervision and staff appraisal are key mechanisms which drive improvement. Self-evaluation is a highly rigorous process which involves all staff and families. The self-evaluation report is constantly updated to ensure its effective use as a working tool. Leaders and managers continually use data to measure and monitor performance. This includes weekly monitoring of the volume of centre activity. Ambitious measurable targets are set which underpin key management functions. The borough participates in a payment by results trial and managers are using this as an opportunity to enhance existing measures of monitoring impact.

Through locality working and also through productive partnership arrangements, the centre’s use of shared resources and its own resources is excellent. Outcomes are outstanding for a very large majority of families; therefore, value for money is excellent. The quality and range of partnership arrangements are outstanding. Centre staff work productively with a range of partners from the private, statutory and voluntary sectors. This enables the centre to constantly adapt its services to ensure it is highly responsive to needs, interests and priorities of families. The centre also regards parents as key partners. Through their role on the parents’ forum, parents and carers are actively involved in the development of services. As a result, user engagement is excellent and provision reflects their interests. For example, in response to a parent’s suggestion, a support group, which is facilitated by a parent, was set up for parents of disabled children. Outreach work, consultation and evaluations from parents also contribute well to the centre’s outstanding user engagement.



The centre actively promotes equality and inclusion for families. Equality impact assessments are used very effectively to generate equality action plans. These ensure continuous improvement in equality practice. Data demonstrate the success of the centre in increasing the number of disabled children who access provision. The gap between children in the bottom 20% who achieve the 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage and the rest is narrowing, but at different rates within the reach area. The centre also contributes well to narrowing the gap between the achievement of girls and that of boys. From thorough analysis of data, the centre has recognised that families of White British backgrounds are an under-represented group. In response, outreach work and activities have been targeted at these families to increase their participation.

The centre far exceeds its statutory duties in relation to safeguarding and safer recruitment. Appropriate vetting and Criminal Records Bureau checks are carried out on staff and volunteers. Early intervention and early referrals are priority actions for staff. Key performance indicators are used exceptionally well to ensure a swift response and positive outcomes to safeguarding concerns. Multi-agency working is highly effective and partnerships with agencies that specialise in domestic violence are productive. In addition, staff are well trained in a range of safeguarding topics such as substance misuse, domestic violence, integrated working and case recording skills.

*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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>1</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>1</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>1</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>1</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>1</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>1</b>

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

None.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Gascoigne Centre on 30 and 31 May 2012. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

Many thanks for taking the time to speak to us during the inspection of your centre. We feel privileged to have met so many of you. We also appreciate the fact that you shared some of your very personal stories with us. You also told us how centre staff helped you get through some of the most difficult times in your life. This helped us to understand just how much staff care about you and your families. We could also see from the case studies and evaluations we read that the quality of care and support for families who use the centre is outstanding.

During our visit, we were able to observe some sessions and could see how much you and your children enjoy attending the centre. We were very impressed with the sheer range of opportunities that are offered for families. Many of you benefit from learning how you can support your children's learning. You also benefit from courses such as English for speakers of other languages.

Staff at your centre work exceptionally well with other organisations. This contributes to the excellent range of services that are available to you. For example, you make very good use of the services of health professionals who offer clinics and support to deal with health problems. Your centre's work to promote health is excellent. Statistics we looked at show that in important areas like breastfeeding, the centre is doing very well to make sure more mothers breastfeed their babies.

It was good to meet some of you who are part of the Together4Gascoigne Parents' Forum. Your contribution to the centre and the local community is outstanding. You are involved in a very meaningful way in developing services for families and this is something to be highly commended. Your work and that of other parents who support the centre's work is exemplary.

We were also impressed with the way the centre ensures families are kept safe when at the centre, but are also protected from harm in other ways. We know, for example, that staff take safeguarding and child protection very seriously and work with other organisations to reduce the risks of children being harmed.

During our visit, we could see that families from all backgrounds use the centre. You also told us about how well the centre is doing in bringing families from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds together. Although the centre is outstanding, we think it can do even better which is why we have asked staff to find ways to make sure more families from a White British background use services.

Once again, many thanks for all your contributions to the inspection. We wish you and your families all the best for the future.

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