

# Inspection report for Crayford Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Bexley
<b>Inspection number</b>	383418
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 October 2012
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Haberdashers' Aske's Crayford Academy
<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 senior managers, outreach workers, health and education professionals, representatives of the local authority and parents including members of the parents' forum. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation and spoke with users of the centre.

## Information about the centre

Crayford Children's Centre is a phase two centre that was designated in 2007. It is attached to Haberdashers' Aske's Crayford Academy, a through school for 3 to 18 year olds. The children's centre is located in a purpose-built building. One of the school's two assistant principals is the named link between the school and the centre. The centre employs a manager, whose time is divided between administration and managing the centre, a family and play worker, a part-time administrator and two crèche assistants. Although the academy is primarily responsible for the governance of the centre, challenges and targets for the governance of the centre are also set and reviewed by the local authority and the centre's advisory board.

The centre offers a range of health, education and family support services, including support for families who may be vulnerable due to their individual circumstances. The primary school has a nursery class which forms part of the centre's core offer. Services in the centre are delivered by Haberdashers' staff either on site or through outreach, working in partnership with health visitors and other external providers such as health trainers and childminders. There are also outreach activities at local pre-schools and classes at the local leisure centre, which is located in the town centre.

The reach area is predominantly made up of White British families but as London expands this situation is changing, resulting in an increasing representation of families with Asian, African, Caribbean and Eastern European heritages. There are also some Traveller families in the locality.

The number of lone parents and teenage parents registered at the centre is average and the number of children in the area that are subject to child protection plans is low. Across the reach area, the proportion of children who live in workless households is around 20%. There are pockets of significant economic deprivation. The majority of children enter the Nursery in the co-located academy with skills that are below those expected for their age, but most children enter the other primary schools in the reach area with skills that are closer to age-related expectations. At the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage children's skills are generally above the level 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

Crayford Children's Centre provides a good service for the families who live within its reach area. It provides outstanding care, guidance and support because its excellent outreach work is carefully directed at those families in the most need of assistance. Families find the high quality support provided in times of crisis invaluable. One parent described the centre worker as 'My Angel' when praising the help that had been provided for her. Support for lone parents, including young parents, is of especially high quality. Many parents say that attending the centre helped them and their children to make new friends, preventing social isolation and helping them to address depression.

The needs of families who are registered are assessed sensitively and appropriately through a local system which is very similar to the common assessment framework. The way that the centre works in partnership with health visitors and social workers is particularly effective at ensuring that families receive outstanding care and

guidance and that children are kept safe. The centre is able to reach the vast majority of families in the area because it makes early contact with parents who have new babies. It also makes families aware of its services by getting out and about into the local community. The local authority provides the centre with very detailed information about local families that helps to identify and contact target groups. The range of services that is offered is good and results in good outcomes as families expand their understanding of how to live healthy lifestyles, keep their children safe and develop skills that enable them to gain employment.

The centre has worked hard at reducing obesity rates by providing lots of sessions which encourage children to be active. Although breast feeding rates at six to eight weeks are slightly higher than the national average, currently there are no breast-feeding support group or peer supporters. The centre is, however, able to provide some one-to-one support through health visitors and outreach workers. The centre is effective in raising levels of attainment for young children because the activities provided, such as the Tots to Toddlers group, are of a high quality and are well attended. Children's learning and development are carefully checked. Consequently, there has been a reduction in the number of children in the locality whose attainment is particularly low at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Work with the co-located primary school has ensured that children are ready for Nursery but efforts to engage other local primary schools have been less successful.

Those who attend the centre come from a very diverse range of backgrounds, including grandparents, child minders, families of Eastern European heritage and parents with African heritage. The centre promotes equality and diversity well. For example, Traveller families speak enthusiastically about the 'T time' activities. They say that the sessions have made a huge difference to their children adding that the centre has helped to build trust between different communities. . The centre meets safeguarding requirements and although records are not well organised, ensures that all adults working with children have their backgrounds carefully checked. A parents' forum has just been established and is developing well. However, parents and the local partners are currently under-represented on the advisory board. Dedicated and skilled staff, combined with good leadership, have secured good and improving outcomes for families. This illustrates the centre's good capacity for further improvement.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Address the remaining inconsistencies in partnership work by:
  - extending partnerships with local primary schools in order to promote school readiness
  - working with midwives and other health professionals to re-establish practical breast-feeding support, including developing peer support.
- Improve the clarity of management arrangements and accountability by:
  - improving the organisation of records relating to safeguarding

- developing the role of the advisory board so that it involves a greater numbers of parents and representatives of local partners and provides more effective challenge.

## How good are outcomes for families?

2
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The close working relationship between health visitors and centre staff and the provision of a weekly child health clinic ensure that parents are able to easily access expert advice about health matters. Excellent personal support for families makes a good contribution to the mental health of parents and children. Many families say that the staff in the centre and the friends they have made during the sessions have provided important emotional support at times when they were potentially vulnerable. The number of children who are obese when they join the Reception year is above average; consequently, the centre has focused on developing healthy lifestyles. A number of well-attended courses that encourage children and their parents to be more active have been run in conjunction with other professionals. These have included Tiny Tumblers and Toddler Football. Staff have been trained using 'PEACH', a healthy eating initiative that encourages parents to prepare healthy foods for their children, including creating healthy lunchboxes. Parents report that their understanding of a healthy diet is improving. Data show that the prevalence of breast feeding at six to eight weeks is slightly higher than the national average at 52%. The centre has provided access to midwives and more support for breast feeding in the past. Changes to the organisation of antenatal care in the area mean that currently the centre no longer has a breast feeding support group and lacks peer supporters. However, the centre staff have been trained to offer advice about breast feeding. Parents and children particularly appreciate the visits of the oral health promoters. Workers are successfully helping parents with children who have additional needs that impact on their educational or physical development to access suitable services.

There is a good emphasis on helping children and parents to be aware of how to keep themselves safe. Parents and carers say that they feel very safe and secure in the centre. For example, Traveller families commented that they and their children are free from bullying and that they are equally valued and welcomed by both staff and other parents. Systems that are similar to the common assessment framework and 'team around the child' strategies are used well to ensure that children whose circumstances make them vulnerable are able to access high quality care. This includes effectively supporting children on the child protection register and those who are in the care of the local authority. Relationships between staff and families who use the centre are warm and supportive. These good relationships enable families to accept help and support and they learn to improve routines and ultimately family life. Additionally, access to parenting courses helps parents to improve the way they manage their children's behaviour.

Children make good progress in their learning when they attend the centre. They grow quickly in confidence and make good progress in improving their speaking and listening skills. Consequently, the proportion of children reaching the levels expected

at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved year on year in most of the local schools. Close links with provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in the adjacent academy, including the provision of a school readiness programme, assist children to make an easy transition between the different stages of their education. These courses have been offered to other schools in the reach area but have not been taken up. The centre has also helped parents to develop confidence in their own abilities and to raise their aspirations. Parents describe courses as 'brilliant and affordable'. They have particularly appreciated the paediatric first aid programme because it has helped them to keep their children safe. The centre's records show that individual families have made good progress in their personal and social development and improved their economic stability. The centre has been particularly successful in helping families to access the benefits they are entitled to and to pursue housing issues. Groups such as 'Resources Plus', Bexley's local labour market scheme help ease parents back into employment. The recently established parents' forum is helping parents to develop enterprising behaviour through fund raising. One parent described how being on the committee of the parents' forum had strengthened her curriculum vitae (CV) and helped her to get a job.

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>2</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>2</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>2</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>2</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>2</b>

**How good is the provision?**

**2**

Around 85% of families with children under six are registered with the centre while 95% of families who live in the most economically disadvantaged parts of the reach area are registered. Almost 67% of local families attend regularly. The centre receives high quality information from the local authority that allows it to target its services very effectively. It works tirelessly to access and offer support to families who may be hard to reach. Nevertheless there are still a small number of families who the centre does not manage to engage. The involvement of health visitors, social workers and the outreach team in these assessments means that families can access the most appropriate package of care. Many local families attend sessions on

a regular basis. There is a wide range of high quality activities for them to choose from with the majority of sessions being free or available at a very low cost. The well-attended activities promote well-focused learning and very high levels of enjoyment. Activities are also successfully taken out into the local community. For example Sing and Sign groups at local pre-schools are used well to promote early language development. Other strategies that have been developed in association with the speech therapy service are also helping to improve children's ability to talk. However, speech therapy services are not currently available due to staff absence. The learning of the children who attend regularly is carefully tracked. Assessments are very detailed and include planning for the next steps of learning. These well kept records provide very clear evidence of children becoming more confident and developing better speech.

Families with circumstances that make them potentially vulnerable are quickly identified. They receive excellent individual support that often involves eliciting the help of other agencies and outreach services. Parents are effusive in their praise. A typical comment from one parent indicated that the staff 'are everything to me'. Well-timed expert guidance about health-related matters and access to benefits is also offered. The two year old offer has been used well to support children and their families. Carefully considered placements in good quality settings have helped children to improve their personal, social and communication skills. Additionally, parents have been able to use the time to improve their own skills in many areas, including literacy, and their levels of self-esteem have been raised through courses such as 'Confidence building training'.

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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</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?**

**2**

The centre manager and the coordinator from the local authority work well with staff to provide good services that are well matched to the needs of the area and provide good value for money. Successful team work is a strong feature of the centre and there is a huge level of commitment among the staff who are dedicated to improving the quality of life for local families. Staff respond well to high expectations and to the centre's well-established routines. Mutual support and careful supervision enable staff to be resilient when they are working in the most difficult circumstances.

Management systems are used effectively to monitor the work of the centre, and



there are clear lines of accountability. The local authority is particularly good at holding the centre to account through an annual discussion of data. The centre seeks feedback from parents and uses parents' comments and the annual questionnaire that is produced by the local authority to continuously improve its provision. For example, the newly established parents' forum is currently considering the idea of a lunch club so that children are prepared for eating together when they start school. The advisory board is not always well attended and some meetings involve centre staff and a very small number of local or professional partners. Additionally, parents have not attended recent meetings. This affects the board's ability to provide an independent viewpoint and to offer high levels of challenge. However, the centre does use other opportunities such as regular questionnaires and the newly established parents' forum to ensure that parents' viewpoints are taken into account. While partnerships with health visitors, social workers and childminders are very strong, the partnerships with local schools vary in depth and impact and partnerships with midwives are not as strong as they used to be.

The centre provides a safe haven for adults and children. While staff have their backgrounds and identities carefully checked and recorded, information is currently not as well organised as it could be. Outreach staff are continually developing their knowledge of the issues that face local families such as emotional issues, domestic violence and mental illness. They are very sensitive to safeguarding issues and work hard to keep children safe. The centre successfully promotes equality and diversity. It is a very inclusive place and fulfils its statutory duties well. All parents and children are valued, irrespective of their background, and the centre makes a good contribution to improving the quality of life for everyone in the local community, including disabled children. The activities connected with Black History month have been of high quality and well considered, promoting better understanding of different cultures while being highly enjoyable.

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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>2</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>2</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>2</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>2</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>2</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>2</b>

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

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected Crayford Centre on 3 October 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank all the parents, grandparents and childminders who spoke to us when we visited the centre. We really enjoyed talking to you and found your views were very useful. It is clear that you are delighted with what the centre has to offer. This is because the children's centre provides a good range of services that are helping children and families in the area to improve their quality of life. You told us that the centre is particularly good at helping families when times are really difficult. You were full of praise for the work done by the outreach workers. We agree that the quality of care, guidance and support that they provide is outstanding. Many of you described how the centre had encouraged you and your children to make friends and had brightened your life on grey days.

The centre is good at reaching the families in its area. This is because it works closely with partners in the health service and the local authority so it can make timely contact with families and plan activities that are closely matched to local needs. If families do not register, the centre does not rest on its laurels but works hard to make sure it gets in touch with them. This includes going out into the local community to look for families who might be in urgent need of its services. We heard how the centre helps everyone in the community, including teenage parents, lone fathers, grandparents, childminders and Traveller families. No one is left out and the centre is truly inclusive. Everyone can feel comfortable and welcomed because relationships are very good indeed. Staff work hard to ensure that children are kept safe, particularly in times of crisis. Parenting and nurture courses and the high standard of care offered by outreach workers have a particularly positive effect on families' well-being.

The activities in the centre are consistently of a good quality and encourage good learning and development. The centre is working hard to encourage families to become more active and to address high obesity rates in the area. However, activities that support and encourage breast feeding have waned so we have asked the centre to improve this aspect of its work. It is good to know that you have recently established a parents' forum and that a good start has been made on fund-raising activities. You have good access to advice on welfare and benefits and good support for getting back to work. We enjoyed seeing the activities linked to Black History month, such as looking at different tones of skin and the role-play activities where boys were developing their social skills, use of language and manual dexterity by pretending to be builders. Children's skills are improving and there has been a reduction in the number of children in the area whose attainment is especially low at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Your children are helped to settle quickly when they start the adjacent primary school by a well-designed programme that helps children to settle quickly into Nursery. However, this is not available for children going to other local primary schools so we have asked the centre to work with other local schools to improve this.

The centre is managed well and there is a very hardworking team of staff who work well together. Although all adults who work with children have their backgrounds carefully checked, the record keeping associated with safeguarding is inconsistent in quality. Staff listen carefully to the feedback given by those who go to activities and use that information to improve the quality of provision when required. Although the centre staff regularly attend the advisory board meetings, the attendance of other partners who work regularly with the centre is more irregular. Although some of you contribute to the development of the centre through the advisory board, this is not consistent so we have asked the centre to improve this.

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