

Inspection report for Chadwell Children's Centre

Local authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	406996
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Reporting inspector	Julie Winyard HMI

Centre leader	Wendy Springham
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Claudian Way Chadwell St Mary Essex RM16 4QE
Telephone number	01375 842276
Fax number	None
Email address	wspringham@thurrock.gov.uk

Linked school, if applicable	
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Chadwell St Mary Day Nursery EY271369

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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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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 a parent representative from the parents' forum, the locality manager, the deputy centre coordinator, parent outreach workers and representatives from the local authority and adult learning services. Inspectors also met with users of services, health professionals, a social worker, the chair of the multi-agency group, the Family Conference Group Coordinator and representatives from Jobcentre Plus, MIND and the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB).

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

Information about the centre

Chadwell Children's Centre is a purpose-built, phase two centre and was designated in 2008. The children's centre works in very close partnership with Tilbury Children's Centre and has a wide range of partnerships providing both universal and targeted services available from both sites. The centre fulfils its core purpose by providing support for families, access to health services and links to integrated early education and childcare, Jobcentre Plus and adult education.

Chadwell Children's Centre serves one ward known as Chadwell St Mary. It is an area with pockets of high disadvantage, with 55% of children living in workless households in receipt of benefits and 76% of children in lone-parent families. The area has three blocks of high-rise flats and a mix of privately owned and council housing. Eighty per cent of users are of White British heritage. There are 828 children under five within the reach area and the large majority of these are engaged in children's centre activities. Children across the reach area enter early years provision with skills, knowledge and abilities below those expected for their age.

A recent local authority-wide restructure of services has brought about changes to the management structure of the centre. These include the recent appointments of a locality manager, who manages all children’s centre services across the locality, and a deputy children’s centre coordinator who has a supporting role. The locality manager is the lead professional across the local authority for the Education Welfare Service and the deputy is the manager of one of the local authority childcare provisions in Tilbury. The staffing of the centre is shared with Tilbury Children’s Centre and the team delivers services across both centres on a rota basis. Governance of the children’s centre is by Thurrock Local Authority. A multi-agency advisory board has recently been re-established.

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

Chadwell Children’s Centre makes good provision which meets the needs of families in the reach area resulting in good outcomes for all users engaged with the centre and, because of this, offers good value for money. In the words of one user, ‘We would not be as grounded and rounded as we are without the support of the centre. They have been a rock to me through some very difficult times.’ The locality manager and deputy children’s centre coordinator know the reach area exceptionally well, as does the dedicated, well-trained and established team of parent outreach workers. As a result, evaluation of local needs is good. However, written evaluation tends to focus on provision rather than outcomes and, because all partners are not yet fully involved in systematically gathering up-to-date local data, this hampers the setting of sharply focused measurable targets for further improvement.

Good leadership has enabled the team and its partners to target and challenge entrenched parenting styles, for example, through empowering new mothers to move away from traditional approaches to the early weaning of their babies. This action has increased both the initiation of breastfeeding at birth and the length of time mothers continue to breastfeed. However, interventions to encourage healthy lifestyles have not yet had sufficient time to reduce childhood obesity which remains above both local authority and national levels.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make consistently good progress from their starting points in the large majority of settings in the reach area. However, because the children's centre is not yet fully involved in supporting non-maintained nurseries and childminders, outcomes are not always as good in this type of provision. All users who have engaged with parenting and other courses, like baby massage, at the centre say they have found these very helpful and they have learnt a lot. However, because the centre is not supporting users to track their progress from their starting points or to continue to apply the skills they have gained at home, the centre cannot gauge the impact of these interventions. Those users who have taken adult learning courses at the centre or local college say they are good. The children's centre is in the early stages of developing further opportunities for adult learning with the local authority.

The governance of the children's centre is good; monitoring and evaluation of the centre's activities by the local authority are robust, and recent appointments have strengthened the leadership and management of the centre. However, the recently re-established advisory board does not hold the centre sufficiently to account or take a full part in tracking improvement targets. The good outcomes for users, good provision, and good leadership and management of the centre indicate that the centre has a good capacity to make further improvements.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve health outcomes for the reach area by ensuring that childhood obesity is reduced.
- Improve learning outcomes across the reach area by ensuring that:
 - non-maintained nurseries and childminders are fully involved with the children's centre and receive appropriate support to improve their practice
 - the centre supports all users to track progress from their starting points including how they use and apply the skills they learn on courses.
- Improve written evaluation and development planning by ensuring that:
 - all evaluation is based upon robust data for the reach area, systematically gathered and shared by all partners
 - targets for action are sharply focused, measurable, achievable and realistic
 - all partners, through the advisory board, are fully involved in tracking progress towards meeting these targets.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Overall health outcomes for users in the reach area are good because of the good partnership arrangements between the centre and health professionals. For example, antenatal groups held at the centre are attended by the large majority of expectant mothers and their partners. They say these help them to understand childbirth. The centre also provides good opportunities for them to receive support after their babies are born through courses like baby massage. There is effective portage work which

supports disabled children and those with special educational needs. Thanks to the high-profile campaign conducted by the centre, immunisation levels are improving. Users say counselling services are very effective in supporting them through crises, including postnatal depression.

Users say they feel very safe at the centre because of the warm and friendly welcome they receive. All children are kept very safe within the centre and there are good safety measures in place for supervised contact. Effective use of the Common Assessment Framework process ensures that the multi-agency group provides the most appropriate approach for the family so that risk is reduced and all children are kept safe. The good collaboration between parent outreach workers and social workers has prevented cases escalating. Emergency hospital admissions in the reach area are low and reducing, and there is good take-up of home-safety courses and information packs. At home visits, it is clear that parents have acted upon the advice they have received. Road traffic accidents have reduced due to the centre's recent campaign. Parenting courses are enabling users to manage their young children's behaviour. Schools in the reach area say that these courses are also having a positive impact on improving the behaviour of older siblings.

Children's achievement by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved over the last three years and is above local authority and national levels. The achievement gap between the most disadvantaged and all other children has narrowed consistently during this time. There are good opportunities for parents to play and have fun with their children; as one user put it, 'We are learning together.' The special senses groups are improving outcomes for disabled children and those with special educational needs, especially in personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy. Targeted interventions by speech therapists who work at the centre also improve children's communication skills. There are good opportunities for users to undertake courses, including on Saturdays and in the evenings. There is a high uptake of these by fathers who are very pleased they can attend groups with their children.

All staff and families using the centre treat each other with respect, and users are very appreciative of the support they receive. At all courses and groups, children develop positive behaviour and good relationships with adults and other children. There is a very active parents' forum and all feel they can express their views and that they help to shape services through a variety of means, including the biannual consultation. Users provide evaluative written and verbal feedback at the end of every course which helps the centre to know what users like, what improvements need to be made and what additional courses are required. Volunteers are welcomed and currently provide support in the nursery. Apprentices have also supported the centre receptionist. Families from the reach area are involved in improving the local green spaces, especially the local parks. This is being driven forward by the parents' forum. Parents are also involved in recent developments to provide facilities for children and parents in the high-rise flats. The 'Make Do and Mend' course has inspired users to rehabilitate old clothes as well as make community bunting for the Olympics.

The good partnership with Jobcentre Plus ensures that all users in receipt of income support are signposted to training that enables them to have greater opportunities to work. For example, a few users are accessing modern-day apprenticeships within the nursery. Users get good advice from the centre regarding how to access childcare and targeted funding for two-year-olds. This enables them to take part in courses that raise their self-esteem and help them believe they can get back to work. There is a good uptake of services offered by the Citizen’s Advice Bureau for problems like debt and dealing with the financial implications of relationship breakdown. Users find that, when they receive this support, debt collection agencies treat them with greater respect and credibility. Users say that parent outreach workers help them sort out their bills and when to pay these. They greatly value the help they receive with budgeting and claiming benefits.

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	3
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 reaches the large majority of families within its designated area including those from target groups. Effective consultation and excellent local knowledge ensure that the centre accurately identifies families’ needs. Course evaluations indicate that participants gain new knowledge, skills and understanding. In partnership with other agencies, there is outstanding assessment of the needs of the most vulnerable users such as those subject to child protection plans. All users who start courses complete them, and the centre celebrates their achievements. Achievement is also celebrated at an individual level with the parent outreach worker. The ‘Wishes’ programme, facilitated by the local authority, is beginning to enable adult learners to reflect on their learning needs and use their prior achievements as a starting point to plan their learning pathway back into education, training and employment.

The centre provides good advice and guidance to users through its partnerships and

through signposting them to other services. Parent outreach workers give excellent care, guidance and support to the cases they manage in collaboration with other services, especially in times of crisis. The good modelling of play for learning by parent outreach workers in courses, such as 'Play to Learn', encourages parents to engage with their children in a relaxed and safe environment. The children's centre is beginning, through its careful and supportive approach, to overcome barriers created by entrenched approaches to parenting across generations within the reach area, for example, through its range of targeted 'Mellow Parenting' courses.

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	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

There are robust systems in place for professional supervision and performance management. The local authority provides good challenge as well as support to the centre and has ensured effective governance. The locality manager and deputy children's centre coordinator have made a good evaluation of staff skills. This has enabled roles and responsibilities to be better defined and, where there are gaps in provision, staff have received training so that users can access the groups they need. The centre uses its resources well and offers good value for money. It makes full use of its available capacity for courses, and outreach visits result in good outcomes for users. The centre is well maintained and noticeboards contain useful information.

The centre actively promotes equality and provides an environment which is free from any racial tension. Good resources reflect the diversity of users that attend the centre. All statutory duties are fulfilled and there are good-quality equality impact assessments. A range of different festivals is celebrated, reflecting the diverse ethnic heritages within the local community. There is good support for disabled children and those with special educational needs and for families who speak English as an additional language. English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses are available through the centre. Community mothers undertake basic skills work in the home with the most vulnerable users and signpost them to other services. Good crèche facilities are provided for all courses and families are helped to access nursery places at a range of providers including childminders.

Safeguarding policies and procedures and risk assessments are robust. The centre adopts safe recruitment procedures and ensures all staff and partnership workers have had Criminal Records Bureau checks. All staff receive regular training and updates. There are good systems to identify and record any safeguarding concerns

and these are rapidly referred to social care. Notices around the centre inform parents what to do if they have a safeguarding or safety concern.

Effective service level agreements with most partners underpin the good information sharing at local level. The locality manager has worked particularly effectively with the health service. Midwives now register all families for children's centre services at the prenatal stage. This registration is followed up after birth, and families in need of targeted services are referred immediately to the centre which responds rapidly with good support. Outreach workers visit families following the 12-week health visitor check when mothers are at greatest risk of postnatal depression. This example of good partnership working has resulted in the centre reaching all children aged nought to five in the last nine months and has contributed to the prevention of mental health issues in the early days of motherhood. There is a good partnership with MIND which delivers counselling services for users.

The parents' forum is strong, and all users express their views confidently in children's centre groups and in the biannual consultation. All users say they are satisfied with services and would like more of them.

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	2
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 team took into consideration the Ofsted reports for maintained and

non-maintained early years provision in the reach area. The overall effectiveness for almost all settings at their last inspection was judged to be either good or outstanding. The team also looked at the reports for eight local childminders; most of those who had received an inspection were judged to be satisfactory and two were judged as good.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Chadwell Children's Centre on 15–16 August 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

My colleague and I very much enjoyed our visit to your children's centre and would like to thank all of you who very kindly gave your time to come and speak to us so that we could get a clear picture of how well your centre recognises and caters for your needs.

The locality manager and deputy centre coordinator provide good leadership for the centre. They both know the area really well and are determined to ensure that the services provided by the centre meet your needs. There are good systems in place to find out what you think works well and what needs to be changed. We were impressed with the work of the parents' forum and, in particular, how some of you are contributing to improving local community resources for young children, for example, in the high-rise flats. However, the centre's written evaluations and plans are not sufficiently precise and the new advisory board is not monitoring how well the plans are being put into practice.

It is wonderful to see how well professionals from all agencies work together to ensure the best outcomes for everyone. There is good collaboration between all those who work to keep you safe and healthy which ensures you receive the help you need in a timely and supportive manner in your homes and at the centre. We would like all the children's centre's partners to keep a careful record of their work so that the centre has really useful data to work with, so that they can evaluate how best to meet your needs. We are also keen for everyone in the reach area to do more to reduce childhood obesity because it is higher than in the rest of Thurrock and the United Kingdom. We have asked the centre and its partners to help you achieve this.

You told us how much you enjoy all the courses provided at the centre and, in particular, the opportunity to come in the evening and on a Saturday. Fathers say they find this provision very helpful. We have asked the centre to help you to track your progress through the courses you take so you can see how much difference they make to your everyday lives

You have good nursery and early years provision across the area. It is particularly good that, through the groups for very young children and the parenting courses, the centre is contributing successfully to closing the gap between children whose circumstances have made them vulnerable and other children. We would like to see childminders and nurseries that are not run by the local authority using the centre more; for example, getting together for courses and sharing planning and activities that help children develop and learn well.

The centre ensures that you and your children are safe and has good procedures to ensure that any concerns are dealt with effectively.

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