

Inspection report for Hangleton Park Children's Centre

Local authority	Brighton and Hove
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with parents, staff, leaders, volunteers, representatives from a number of partner agencies and the local authority. They observed the centre's work and visited a number of groups. They also looked at a range of relevant documentation including case files and case studies, the centre's self-evaluation, service improvement plan and minutes of meetings.

Information about the centre

Hangleton Park Children's Centre is located adjacent to Hangleton Community Centre on the outskirts of Brighton. It is a phase two centre which was designated in 2008. The centre offers an integrated approach to providing services for families and children under five years. Health services are integrated in the local authority through a section 75 agreement. The local authority manages and delivers centre services through this agreement, including overseeing the governance arrangements, and delegates responsibility to the centre's advisory group.

Services operate from the centre and the local midwifery team is also based in the building. The centre provides a full range of services and is open weekdays from 9am to 5pm. It serves an area that is socially and economically diverse. The area immediately surrounding the centre is within the 10% most deprived areas nationally. There are 1,513 children aged under five years in the reach area with around 17% living in households dependent on workless benefits. Around 8% of children live in families where adults are on a low income and in receipt of Working Tax Credit. The majority of families in the reach area are of White British heritage. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are at expected levels 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

Hangleton Park Children’s Centre makes a good overall contribution to improving outcomes for families who live in the local area. Effective communication systems and clarity about roles mean staff work seamlessly to improve outcomes for families. Health outcomes are outstanding as staff understand the importance of meeting families’ physical and emotional needs and provide them with excellent packages of support.

The centre has effective safeguarding procedures and policies in place and staff follow their own organisations’ reporting procedures. Recruitment procedures for volunteers and staff are good and families report feeling safe at the centre.

All families receive an initial assessment which effectively identifies those most in need of intervention and support and, as a result, additional services are put in place. Case files and case studies demonstrate that the additional support families receive has a positive impact on improving outcomes for them.

The centre provides a warm and welcoming environment. Families value the attractive environment and the resources available. One parent echoed the views of many when she said that one of the reasons she attends the centre is because of the ‘brand new toys and environment; it’s just brilliant’. Targeted groups, such as the bilingual families group (BFG), encourage specific groups to attend the centre.

The centre’s self-evaluation and service improvement plan are linked well. However, targets in some areas of the service improvement plan are not specific or measurable. The centre has access to a range of data which it uses effectively to assess its performance. The local authority provides much of the data, although recent changes in staffing have meant that a full range of data are not currently available and this affects the centre’s ability to effectively monitor and set targets in some other areas. The centre uses the available data effectively to assess the impact of its work on improving outcomes and set targets to bring about further improvements.

Parents actively contribute to the work of the centre through a range of informal and formal routes. The centre uses regular evaluations of group activities to shape future provision. However, all parents are not always informed about how their feedback influences future services as currently representation from parents and partner agencies on the centre’s advisory group is still in its early stages. Some parents contribute their views through the volunteer programme, but these numbers are still quite low.

The children’s centre management team is newly established. Nevertheless, they have been quick to develop an effective, motivated team. Leaders have quickly identified the centre’s strengths and areas where they need to develop services further. Plans are in place to bring about improvements in the priority areas. The accurate analysis of the centre and subsequent planning demonstrate the centre has good capacity to improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the data supplied by the local authority to enable the centre to assess the effectiveness of its work, set specific measurable targets and demonstrate improving outcomes.
- Strengthen parental involvement by providing more opportunities for parents to contribute to the running of centre, including as members of the advisory group and through the volunteering programme.
- Strengthen service improvement planning by setting challenging and ambitious targets in all areas which will bring about improved outcomes for all families.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The security of the building is good and reception staff are vigilant and, as a result, families report feeling safe at the centre. Risk assessments reduce any potential hazards to families using the centre while still allowing children to explore safely. Initial assessments following a new birth, or for families new to the area, are highly effective in identifying families who will benefit from additional input. A tiered approach to intervention means that parents benefit greatly from the support. Intervention packages are tailored to individual needs and focused where they will bring the most positive change for families. Outreach work is effective in supporting those most in need to develop strategies to work with their children and improve family relationships. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used effectively to identify the specific needs of children and families and implement a

comprehensive package of tailored support, with input from a range of different agencies.

Children enjoy attending the groups and activities at the centre where they have the opportunity to learn new skills. Displays within the centre and information available to parents educate them on how children learn and how to support their children's learning at home. Groups such as 'Chatterbox' are targeted at specific children and assessments demonstrate that children's communication and language skills improve as a result of attending. The most recent data indicate that 65% of children achieved 78 points at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage; this is a 5% increase on the 2011 figures. Parents have some opportunities to access training and develop skills to enable them to return to employment. While some parents become volunteers at the centre, the numbers are low. The centre identifies that they need to do more to support parents' education and training, and targets are already in place to address this.

Health visitors and early years workers work sensitively to build trusting relationships with families and, as a result, parents feel able to access other services and report feeling less isolated. Centre staff promote the importance of good health through information and discussions with parents. Sexual health information is displayed at the centre and signposts families to appropriate services. Breastfeeding rates are good and increasing as staff discuss the benefits of breastfeeding with new parents. The well-resourced outside play space provides opportunities for children to be physically active.

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	1
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	3

How good is the provision?

2

The centre building has been extended and refurbished over recent years and now provides a bright and attractive environment for families on the ground floor, with

office space for staff and meeting rooms on the first floor. The outside area is a particular feature of the centre and provides a stimulating play space for children. Groups are run and services adapted as a result of staff identifying the specific needs of families. Staff regularly review centre services to ensure that they are meeting the needs of families within the reach area.

High-quality resources and the attractive environment encourage children to explore and enjoy their time at the centre. Group staff are working closely with the centre teacher to provide enhanced links to children's learning and the Early Years Foundation Stage to further improve outcomes for children and close the achievement gap. Adults enjoy attending groups and benefit from advice and information provided by staff.

There is a very small group of parent volunteers, some of which lead specific groups at the centre. Volunteers receive a good package of support and the centre is committed to providing good-quality training opportunities for them to enhance their skills.

Universal health services ensure that the centre reaches every family within its reach area. Families who need additional support or have difficulty accessing the centre are given excellent support through outreach work. Tracking data ensures that the centre monitors families who are accessing other local children's centres and that they receive an appropriate level of support. Effective assessments of families identify those most in need of intervention and support. A tiered approach to intervention provides families with either an enhanced or intensive level of support, depending on the individual needs of the family. The centre staff use the CAF procedures well to identify specific areas of work with families and to provide targeted interventions. Children identified as 'in need', and those on child protection plans, also benefit from support from centre staff. As a result, the number of children on child protection plans is low.

Care, guidance and support are a particular strength of the centre. Staff act as excellent role models and sensitively and skilfully support families. One parent commented that: 'Staff get involved with activities.' Outreach work is highly effective in engaging harder-to-reach families and staff work hard to build very positive, trusting relationships with families. At times of crisis, families are given a responsive service which supports them in overcoming any immediate difficulties. Parents highly value the work of the centre and the changes that it brings about to their lives and that of their families.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Safeguarding procedures are good. Robust recruitment procedures ensure the suitability of staff and volunteers. Ongoing safeguarding training ensures staff have the knowledge and skills to deal effectively with child protection issues. Quality assurance and monitoring of CAFs are robust. Clear management structures ensure that any concerns about families can be addressed promptly. Clear procedures and effective communication ensure that services are targeted at families most in need.

Management arrangements are effective and staff have high expectations of families. Professional supervision is in place for all staff. There is good access to training and staff are encouraged to develop their expertise. The centre has put in place effective strategies to minimise the impact of staff vacancies on the services it provides.

Staff use their comprehensive knowledge of the community to ensure that the centre provides an appropriate level of service to families. For example, the BFG developed as a result of centre staff identifying the need for better provision for bilingual families. The centre provides an inclusive environment and is welcoming to all families. Parents of children with disabilities are signposted to a city-wide group which provides specific support. The centre is helping to reduce the achievement gap of the lowest 20% of children. It is aware of the specific groups of children who are currently underachieving and is working to improve these children's levels of skills, knowledge and ability.

Staff are highly committed to engaging parents in the centre's work and building links with local agencies. Some parents have previously been advisory group members, although this has dwindled recently and the centre is looking to improve representation. The centre proactively obtains the views of parents from formal evaluations and informally through suggestion books and discussions with families. Staff analyse evaluations and make appropriate changes to services as necessary. They encourage parents to comment on the effectiveness of outreach work they may have received. The centre newsletter provides opportunities to share parents' feedback and evaluations. Strategies to capture the views of children are in place and are developing.

The centre's self-evaluation is completed on an annual basis and priority areas for development form the basis of the service improvement plan. Targets in some areas of the service improvement plan are not measurable; this means that the centre's targets in some areas are not challenging and therefore are not always driving improvements. The centre has access to some data, but currently the local authority is unable to provide a full range of statistics. This has an impact on the centre's ability to assess their progress in all areas of their work. Where the centre has up-to-date data, this demonstrates that services are having a very positive impact on improving outcomes for families. Services are regularly reviewed and evaluated to ensure that they continue to improve outcomes and, as a result, the centre provides good value for money.

Partnership working arrangements are good and these are enhanced by the effective integrated approach provided by the centre. The centre has identified the benefits to families of effective partnership working and has thus established good links with a wide range of partner agencies, while seeking to establish stronger links with others.

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

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Hangleton Park Children's Centre on 17 and 18 October 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you for welcoming inspectors to your centre when we visited recently, and to those of you who came in to talk to us.

Centre staff are highly committed to working to improve outcomes for you and your families. During the inspection, many of you told us how you enjoy attending the centre and how you have seen your children develop as a result of attending different groups. For example, some of your children now understand some basic Makaton signs through learning them at the 'Chatterbox' group. Health visitors and early years staff work very well together to support you and your families, and you can see the benefits of this. Health outcomes for you and your families are outstanding. Universal visiting ensures that all of you receive an assessment and those of you identified as needing additional support receive this from either your health visitor or an early years visitor. We saw from looking at case files and case studies that the work of the health visitors and early years visitors is making a difference to you and your families.

You also told inspectors that you feel safe at the centre and that you enjoy attending. The centre has good procedures in place to ensure that staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children. Risk assessments are completed and ensure that risks to your children while at the centre are minimised. The building is bright and attractive and the space is well used. We were impressed by the outside play space and you told us how your children enjoy using this area.

You have many opportunities to contribute to the centre's work and many of you told us how you are regularly asked to contribute to evaluations of the centre and its services. You told inspectors how you have made suggestions that you feel will improve groups at the centre and how you have seen changes as a result. We have asked the centre to look at how it can involve you more in governance and contribute towards the decision-making process. The centre has begun to think about how it can involve more of you in the advisory group and you can help it by providing ideas and suggestions. Some parents volunteer at the centre and find the experience enjoyable and rewarding. We have asked the centre to look at how more of you can become involved in volunteering.

The centre's self-evaluation and service improvement plan identifies where the centre is doing well and where it needs to improve. The local authority provides some data which show how well the centre is doing, but currently it is not able to provide a full range of data. We have asked the local authority to improve this so that the centre can show how well it is doing in all areas and identify where it needs

to develop. We have also asked the centre to strengthen its service improvement plan by setting clear targets which are measurable and will bring about improved outcomes for you and your families.

The centre provides a welcoming environment where you are respected and treated with respect. Activities such as singing 'head, shoulders, knees and toes' in Bengali value families' first language and encourage other families to learn and experience different languages.

The centre management and staff work well together as a team and line management arrangements are clear. They have access to good supervision, training and support. They communicate well with each other. They have developed good partnerships with a range of agencies and these contribute to supporting you. For example, the centre teacher has been working with group staff to further improve the quality of groups at the centre and, as a result, staff have begun completing child assessments at some groups.

Staff are highly skilled at supporting you and your families. They understand the issues which you may face and build trusting and open relationships with you. They are sensitive and work with you in overcoming any difficulties. They use their knowledge of the community and partner organisations to support you in accessing other services which will improve outcomes for you and your children.

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