

Inspection report for Beavers Children's Centre

Local authority	Hounslow
Inspection number	383629
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the strategic leader of the centre, the centre's senior management team, local authority officers and a range of frontline staff, partners and health professionals. They also held meetings with members of the board of directors and the advisory board. They met parents and other centre users, observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

The centre is situated in west London adjacent to Heathrow Airport and an army barracks. It serves an area of mainly social or army housing, with some families living in privately rented or owner-occupied homes. The majority of the community that it serves is Asian, though White British families comprise the second largest ethnic group.

All parts of the reach area covered by the centre are amongst the 40% most deprived in the country. Unemployment is above the national average and many working adults are in low-paid jobs. Seventeen per cent of children live in households which rely on benefits. The proportion of families with children known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. Children's levels of development on entry to Early Years Foundation Stage provision are below those expected for their age.

Beavers Children's Centre is managed by Sure Start Hounslow, which is a charitable organisation limited by guarantee. It is accountable to the London Borough of Hounslow and governed by a board of directors who have overall responsibility. There is a senior management team who report to the board, and an advisory board. It was designated as a phase two children's centre in June 2008. The centre provides families and children with a range of services, including family health, family support,

ante-natal and maternity care, adult education, family learning and speech and language support.

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

The overall effectiveness of Beavers Children's Centre is good. It has an accurate understanding of the diverse needs of its community and is able to meet their needs well. It demonstrates good improvement in outcomes for its families, including its target groups, and it is well focused on future development, particularly the new Armed Forces Community Covenant, which is likely to have a significant impact on its services.

The centre works closely with its partners, such as local schools and health professionals, to tailor services to the needs of families and assess the impact of its provision, but it does not always make systematic use of its own data to review this on a regular basis. In the area of healthy lifestyles, for example, the centre works extensively to promote healthy eating through courses, workshops and individual advice, but has not yet reviewed this work with families to discover what effect this has had on their approach to diet and exercise.

Families are happy with the centre and the services it offers. They appreciate the range of activities which they can enjoy with their children, and the opportunities they have to ask for advice or discuss their problems with professionals. The centre is at the heart of the community. It works in a successful partnership with the library and youth services which are located within its premises.

The Early Years Foundation Stage provision offered in the family room is of a good quality. The staff have quickly adopted the requirements of the revised statutory framework, and set out a good range of activities covering all areas of learning in the indoor area. There is spacious outdoor provision, including a wild area and a gardening area, but this is not always used to its best advantage to encourage children to learn outdoors.

The centre is well led and governed. Staffing is very stable. Staff enjoy their roles, feel well supervised and organised, and work well together for the benefit of families. Senior leaders demonstrate a good understanding of the complex nature of the reach area and of the very diverse needs of the different communities within it. They have identified two particular target groups within their community in need of specific support. One group is those who are new to learning English but have no entitlement to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses. The other group is the armed forces families, formerly stationed in the area for only two years at a time, but now due to stay indefinitely. The centre is organising informal practical English sessions for the former group, and a raft of new outreach work for the latter.

Directors have a clear grasp of the challenges facing the centre, including that of future funding, and the local authority gives good support. It is currently developing its own data provision services in order to support the centre further. The centre's checks on its work and priorities for improvement are accurate and well thought out, and reflect the inspection findings. Requirements for safeguarding are fully met. The centre is committed to inclusion and is successful in promoting equality and tackling inclusion. It has a good capacity for future improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Make more systematic use of data to evaluate the impact of provision on outcomes for families, particularly in the area of healthy lifestyles.
- Make more use of the Early Years Foundation Stage outdoor provision to promote development across all areas of learning.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The centre is successful in improving outcomes for families. Health indicators show a promising picture, with 66% of the 80 new mothers attending the baby clinic this year still breastfeeding at six weeks. Information from local schools and the health service has shown that children are more likely to be underweight than overweight by the time they start Reception, and the centre has been working with health visitors to promote a healthy balanced diet to families. The impact of this work is not yet known. Smokers receive one-to-one counselling to help them stop, and case studies show some success here.

Adults report that they feel safe at the centre, and that they know what to do if they have concerns about their own or their children's safety. Case studies and families' feedback show that those who suffer incidents of domestic violence are well supported. Centre records show that procedures for looked-after children, those subject to child protection plans and those subject to the common assessment framework are scrupulously followed. In a number of cases, the centre's input has enabled children to be removed from child protection plans. Children show in their behaviour that they feel safe and secure in the centre, and staff encourage older ones to be aware of younger children.

Relationships within the centre are good. Despite some concerns about racial harmony in the wider community, the different cultures who use the centre show respect and tolerance for one another. Nearly 150 members of the community have been volunteers at the centre since it opened, and 34 have taken part in the user forum this year. Children at the centre respond well to adults and are developing the social skills they need for school.

There is a good picture of learning and development at the centre. Figures from the schools who receive children from the centre show that the gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and the rest narrowed by up to 10% last year. The children made good progress from their starting points, though they were still generally below expectations for their age when they left Reception. The figures also show that those children who regularly attended the centre performed better in their end of Key Stage 1 assessments than others.

The centre has a high success rate in engaging adults in education and helping them move into work. Of the 122 who have attended ESOL courses at the centre over the last five years, 84% are now in employment, including fathers, lone parents and teenage parents. Of the remaining 16%, some have become self-employed or gone on to further training. The centre has identified that the proportion of lone parents and teenage parents in its reach is small, because the cultures making up the majority of its population marry and have children at a later age.

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	3
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment	2

How good is the provision?

2

The centre uses the information it gets from its families and partners wisely to plan services which they need and want, including target groups. Liaison work with the welfare officers at the local garrison, for example, has enabled the centre to organise outreach work for army families and to encourage them to attend activities at the

centre. The 'Reach for the Stars' programme for children with additional needs, meanwhile, has meant that staff have been able to establish a system of early intervention, getting additional support in place where necessary before children start school.

The centre's close links with local schools have enabled it to identify those areas of learning where children are least successful and set up sessions to help them improve. 'Ready, Steady, Go' and 'Skills for School' sessions help parents support their children in separating from them easily and settle confidently in the new school environment.

Families report that they find parenting programmes such as the 'Triple P' and the 'How to' sessions very useful. Staff make the most of all opportunities to advise parents on their children's development. For example, in a 'Baby Start' session during the inspection, staff explained to parents the purpose of repeating words and actions and how this helps babies to learn. Fathers are encouraged to be involved on a daily basis and through a specially targeted weekend session, 'Father Figures', run by a male instructor. More than 40 fathers have taken part this year.

Adult education courses, such as ESOL, are well run and organised, and help participants to learn the English they need to be able to work and to function on a daily basis in the wider community. The centre offers families the opportunity to get to know the local community through its summer programme of visits to parks and places of interest. It also gives them access to the outdoors through its garden where they can grow fruit and vegetables. This is valued by families who have no gardens of their own.

The family room is well run, with attractive resources and engaging activities to interest the children who attend. During the inspection, children enjoyed preparing for Christmas by painting decorations for the tree and helping to hang them on the branches. They were supported well by adults in construction and role-play activities, for example, developing their mathematical and their communication skills. However, the outdoor area was not set up to tempt children to play outside, and staff did not encourage them to do so by leading activities outdoors.

When services cannot be provided on site, the centre signposts them effectively. Adults seeking employment are signposted to the nearest Jobcentre Plus, where they can take advantage of a wide range of facilities.

Discussions with families, case studies and centre records show that the centre works very cooperatively with a range of agencies to offer well-tailored care, guidance and support for families. Parents speak highly of the support they receive. One commented, 'They have made me feel so positive about myself', while another said simply, 'The Hub is my life.' The 'Me-time' course has proved particularly popular with parents in helping them to gain confidence in themselves and their capabilities.

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

The centre is well led and managed by leaders at all levels, and daily routines run smoothly. Staff morale is high and staff carry out their roles confidently and competently. The centre's development plan and targets for 2013 are well grounded in evaluation of the needs of the reach area, and are well understood by staff and directors. Targets to increase participation by families from certain parts of the reach area, for example, are based on information received from local schools about the achievement of children from those districts.

Discussion with the senior staff shows that the centre is good at using information from its partners to evaluate needs, and it is also good at obtaining feedback from families about the benefits of its services. The data and statistics the centre has about participation rates and outcomes for families show that it is having a good impact, but it is not yet in the routine of regularly analysing and using this information in a systematic way to assess how successful it has been.

The promotion of equality and diversity plays an important part in the life of the centre, which endeavours to help Asian, White British and other ethnic groups co-exist peacefully in the community, and to help armed forces families feel they belong. Good attention is given to the early identification of, and intervention for, special educational needs and/or disabilities in young children. This has revealed that the main condition prevalent in the reach area is autism, enabling families to begin to access suitable support before their children start school.

Safeguarding arrangements are very secure. All staff, directors and volunteers who have unsupervised contact with children undergo the required checks, and the centre follows safer recruitment practices. Tackling domestic violence has a high profile, and inter-agency work ensures that children are protected. As a result of appropriate training, staff clearly understand the role they have to play in safeguarding. This is evident from case studies of vulnerable children and adults.

Partnership working is strong, particularly with education and health professionals. Links with the armed forces are moving from strength to strength, and the shared use of the premises with the library and youth service ensures services are appropriately integrated. The centre works very closely with TW4 community development trust, a local charity which aims to promote cohesion and unity within

the local area. Joint working includes the annual community carnival, which is popular amongst members of all cultures in the local area.

The centre offers good value for money. It provides an effective range of services which meet the needs of its target groups well, and helps them to improve outcomes for themselves and their families. It seeks their views regularly and acts upon them, and welcomes their involvement in its service delivery, through the user forum and the board of directors, or as volunteers.

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 Beavers Children's Centre on 6 and 7 December 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Many thanks to all of you who talked to us during the inspection, agreed to let us sit in on your groups or met with us for discussions. We were very grateful for your help with our inspection and were very interested to hear your views.

You told us that the centre provides you with a good range of services and activities, and that the staff are friendly and supportive, and we agree. We found that the centre is particularly good at finding out what the local community wants and needs, and matching its services to fit this. The centre plays a valuable role in the local area, combining library and youth services with those for families with young children.

During the inspection, we visited several 'Stay and Play' sessions, including 'Morning Munch', 'Dancing Feet' and 'Forest School'. We also spent time in the baby clinic, 'Baby Start', 'Tumble Time' and English classes, and we could see that you and your children value all these sessions. We found that the family room has many interesting activities indoors, and have asked the centre to make similarly good use of its outside area to encourage your children to learn outdoors.

We found that you have access to good advice from family support workers and health professionals, and you told us how helpful they are when you have difficulties or need general advice about bringing up your children. Staff work well as a team, and the centre has formed good partnerships with other services which benefit all the families using its facilities.

Senior staff manage the centre well. They check the quality of their services carefully to make sure that they provide good value for money. They make sure that you and your families are kept safe in the centre, and that all legal requirements are met. We have asked senior staff to check whether their services are making a difference to the lives of the families using them, particularly in the area of healthy lifestyles. We know that the centre asks you regularly for your views, through evaluation forms or surveys, and that some of you are involved in the user forums or on the board of directors. The centre values your views and is grateful for the commitment you make. We hope that you all continue to make the most of what the centre offers you and your families, and that you will recommend it to your friends and neighbours, and to families who are new to the area.

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