

Inspection report for Becontree Children's Centre

Local authority	London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
Inspection number	410828
Inspection dates	11–13 December 2012
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Becontree Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY435555 Play Away Nursery EY369705 Becontree Children's Centre pre-school EY380392 Childville After School Service Ltd

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.

Report published: January 2013



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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.

The inspectors held meetings with parents, centre staff and representatives from professional partnerships, the advisory board and the local authority. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Becontree Children's Centre was designated in 2007 and is a phase one centre. It is situated in Dagenham, on the site of Becontree Primary School within the central area of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. The centre is part of a group with three other children's centres in the locality who share an advisory board made up of representatives from the local community, parents and partner professionals. The centre is governed by the local authority and has a well-established parents' forum. To meet the core purpose, the centre provides family support, child and family health services, a crèche, a pre-school, adult learning and employment support. A private day nursery is also co-located on the site which is subject to a separate inspection. In addition, 97.4% of three- and four-year-olds are accessing their early education entitlement. Some children enter early years provision with skills below the levels expected for their age.

Following a rapid increase over the last ten years, currently 1,018 children below five years of age are living in the centre reach areas. These families live in one of the 20% to 30% most deprived areas in the country, with some living in poverty. The most recent data show there are 375 lone parents living in the reach area and 37% of all children aged up to four years old are living in households dependant on workless benefits. Half of all families are of White British heritage and the rest are from minority ethnic groups, with 22% from the Asian community and 26% from the Black community. For some of these families, English is an additional language.

The centre is taking part in a national payment by results pilot.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for families

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

Becontree Children's Centre is an outstanding centre overall. The centre has worked tirelessly to improve community cohesion between the diverse groups in the area and is now truly established at the heart of the community it serves. One parent's comment summarised the views of many, 'The centre is a vital, important part of the community.' Exemplary partnerships with members of the community and other agencies ensure families have access to a wide range of services delivered by professionals who have an in-depth understanding of their changing needs. The high quality staff and services are greatly valued by users and partners due to the positive impact they have on meeting the needs of, and improving the outcomes for, families with circumstances that make them vulnerable. Families using the centre receive exemplary, tailored support and guidance particularly in times of crisis from extremely caring, approachable and dedicated staff. They achieve excellent outcomes overall. However, despite the very good provision available to improve the health outcomes for families, currently 41% of mothers sustain breastfeeding at six to eight weeks and although rising, the number remains below the national average of 47%. In addition the number of children in Reception Year at school who are obese, although steadily falling, is significantly above the national average of 9.4%, varying between local schools at 14% to 19%.

The centre regularly and meaningfully consults with users, ensuring that they are positively contributing to making decisions regarding the centre and services, resulting in extremely high user satisfaction. Consequently, recent annual data provided by the local authority show that the centre has successfully engaged with 98% of all children in the reach area. In particular, the centre has engaged approximately 95% of White British families, who are often hard to reach, with targeted services. However, fewer are accessing universal services such as stay and play sessions. The centre has engaged with almost all families from minority ethnic groups, 89% of lone parents, 84% of teenage parents, and has strong links with all families with disabled children, with 32% directly engaged in centre services. As a result, participation and attendance rates of target groups in services are

outstanding, resulting in exceptional value for money. The centre also supports many families who do not live in the centre reach area but who choose to access the centre.

The centre's excellent safeguarding policies and procedures are robust, fully understood and embedded among staff and effectively promote the safety and welfare of children and adults. This is further enhanced by the exceptional information sharing and referral processes between partners and the centre, which ensure that the right support is provided swiftly to families with circumstances that make them most vulnerable.

Performance management and governance and accountability procedures at all levels are extremely rigorous and highly effective in ensuring that all leaders, staff and partners have an in-depth understanding of strengths and weaknesses and set appropriate targets for improvement. Staff receive exceptional leadership and direction and as a result are highly motivated and dedicated to improving the outcomes for families. The centre has outstanding capacity to improve further based on what it has accomplished so far.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- In partnership with health colleagues, further improve the outcomes for more White British families by enabling more to access universal services in addition to the targeted services they are successfully engaged with.
- Improve the health outcomes for more children and families by:
 - supporting more mothers to sustain breastfeeding at six to eight weeks and beyond
 - reducing the number of children in Reception Year at school who are obese.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

The centre is supporting children to make outstanding progress in their learning and development. Centre staff rigorously assess, monitor and track the starting points of children in the reach area and the progress they make while accessing centre services. Current data show that when children leave to start school, all have made outstanding progress from their often low starting points. In addition, 64% achieve at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scales, with at least six points in each of the scales for personal, social and emotional development and communication and language development. All of these children are from the most deprived areas with circumstance that make them most vulnerable and at risk of achieving less well than the rest of their peers.

Provision to support children's learning and development through play is of the

highest quality and enables all children to develop to their full potential. Staff skilfully support parents to develop their parenting skills and understand how to enhance their child's learning and development at home. In addition, in partnership with local schools and childcare providers, they are ensuring that children who may achieve less well are fully supported to develop their skills and are extremely well prepared for school. As a result, the achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the rest is narrowing and currently stands at between 19.8% and 27.6% dependent on primary schools. This is significantly better than the national figure of 30.1%.

The centre provides a wide range of activities and services to promote healthy outcomes for users and more families report they have taken up healthier lifestyles. However too many children in Reception Year at school are obese. The centre positively promotes breastfeeding and the health visitor and centre staff run a highly valued and well-attended breastfeeding support group and baby clinic. The borough-wide 'Love Mums' campaign and its work towards 'Baby Friendly Initiative' accreditation is beginning to show improvements. As a result, more mothers are sustaining breastfeeding their babies at six to eight weeks and beyond. This has increased year on year although remains below the national average. Almost all children have received their immunisations.

Those seeking suitable employment and volunteering opportunities receive excellent support due to extremely strong partnership working, including with Job Centre Plus, with many achieving outstanding outcomes. In addition, the majority of parents access the very good range of training opportunities, all with a strong focus on employability and functional skills, resulting in extremely good retention, completion and progression rates. A broad range of advice and guidance is provided to families, particularly those with circumstances that make them most vulnerable, by centre staff and partner organisations. Families receive help with budgeting, debt, credit and loan advice, and are enabled to access all the benefits they are entitled to, resulting in highly improved economic stability and independence.

Users state they feel extremely safe at the centre and their children are safeguarded. A wide range of interventions is provided by centre staff and partners, for example, home safety advice and smoke alarm installations by the fire service and drop-in sessions with the police community support officer. Excellent partnership working and the very effective systems for assessing users' needs, making referrals and intervening early are having a highly positive impact on outcomes for children in the reach area, including those subject to Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes, looked-after children and those subject to a child protection plan.

The centre routinely seeks the views of all users, including children, through a range of imaginative and meaningful consultation exercises and uses these very effectively to shape services and ensure that they are meeting their needs. As a result activities and services are what users want and all enjoy attending. The highly motivated and passionate parents' forum ensures it gathers and represents the views of the community extremely well and fully contributes to the planning and delivery of

services. This group of parents and the events they organise are highly valued by the community and centre leadership team. They make a significant impact on improving the lives of families in the area and in promoting tolerance and understanding in the community.

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	1
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	1
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	1
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	1

How good is the provision?

1

The centre provides an extremely safe, friendly and welcoming environment. Staff are highly regarded by families and partners and are extremely skilled at identifying the needs of families. They intervene early to ensure that families swiftly receive the personalised support they need to improve their outcomes and prevent situations reaching crisis point. Intensive targeted work with families with circumstances that make them most vulnerable is highly successful in improving their outcomes and caring staff provide excellent support and guidance. Staff consult with families and partners meaningfully. They accurately ascertain what services those families identified as in most need of support and intervention and from target groups need and want. Provision is matched accurately to the needs of families and enables and empowers them to achieve outstanding outcomes. As some parents stated: 'It's life changing', 'I was very involved in the decisions being made about my family' and 'Staff are very honest and respectful.'

Provision to help children learn and develop is excellent. Children have access to a well-resourced high-quality indoor and outdoor learning environment which they and their parents clearly enjoy. Groups provide a very good balance between opportunities for children to lead their own play and adults leading activities to support children's learning. A high proportion of adults are volunteering and accessing training and development opportunities, all of whom are from the most deprived areas. Completion and retention rates of adults with adult learning courses are exceptionally high and all make very good progress. Many make outstanding progress from often low starting points, for example, achieving a place at university

and successfully gaining employment. Achievements are meaningfully celebrated and the behaviour of users is exceptional.

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

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

The senior leadership team and centre staff are extremely passionate about the centre's work and morale is exceptionally high. Excellent partnership working arrangements are very well established with a wide range of professionals ensuring that services are fully integrated and cohesive. Equality and diversity and inclusive practice are promoted very well. The centre is successfully breaking down barriers to access for families living in the most deprived areas with circumstances that make them most vulnerable. Users reflect the diverse community the centre serves and there is very good provision to support those for whom English is an additional language, including the much valued bilingual members of staff who ensure effective communications with families.

Safer recruitment procedures are followed and all relevant checks are made to ensure that all staff, partners and volunteers are suitable and safe to work with children. All staff receive high-quality child protection training and are exceptionally confident in their role of safeguarding children. Protocols and practices for sharing information between agencies are highly effective. Risks are thoroughly assessed and minimised, ensuring that the environment is extremely safe.

Staff work very well together as a team and feel supported, valued and listened to by leaders and managers. They demonstrate an exceptional enthusiasm towards their work and strive to be the best. Staff and partners hold the centre leader in high regard with one member of staff summarising, 'She leads the team to achieve as well as we do.' Excellent professional supervision and management arrangements are in place to thoroughly monitor and challenge the performance of staff and ensure their safety, well-being and professional development. Staff training is given high priority and as a result centre workers have exceptional professional expertise, securing an outstanding workforce. Staff, partners' and users' views contribute to the self-evaluation process and as a result priorities for improvement reflect families' most pressing needs. The well-established parents' forum, advisory board and senior managers robustly hold the centre to account.

An outstanding proportion of families are engaged in centre services overall and the

gap between families from key target groups and the rest is narrowing significantly. An excellent range of high-quality services and activities are provided in line with the needs of the community and these are extremely well attended. The inclusion of all children is prioritised well and there is increasing engagement with families with disabled children and those with special educational needs. The use of resources, including the deployment of staff and volunteers and the outstanding outcomes achieved for families, demonstrates that the centre is providing outstanding value for money.

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	1
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
The effectiveness of the centre’s policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
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	1
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	1

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

The findings from the most recent inspection of the centre’s linked early years provisions and local primary schools were used to inform the judgements made during the inspection.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Becontree Children's Centre on 11–13 December 2012. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

Thank you to those of you who contributed to the inspection. Like you, we found your centre to be very welcoming and friendly. Your children and families are extremely safe when using the centre. Staff are swift to intervene early with any safeguarding concerns to ensure that children are safe and families are fully supported in times of crisis.

You receive excellent care, guidance and support, particularly when facing times of crisis, as some of you told us: 'It's life changing', 'I was very involved in the decisions being made about my family' and 'Staff are very honest and respectful.' Caring and dedicated staff, leaders, partners and the parents' forum are highly knowledgeable about your community and the families they serve. They are extremely enthusiastic and committed to improving the outcomes for your families. They have worked exceptionally hard to establish the centre at the heart of your community. As one of you told us, 'The centre is a vital, important part of the community.'

Staff work extremely well with other professionals to ensure that your families get the right support when you need it. Your centre meaningfully gathers and listens to your views about what your families need most. As a result, services and activities are accurately matched to your needs and are successfully encouraging many more families to use them. This is particularly the case for those of you with circumstances that make you most vulnerable. Families from the Asian and Black communities are engaged in a wide range of services. However fewer White British families are accessing some of the groups such as stay and play sessions. Overall, almost all children in your area are engaged in centre services, which ensures your centre provides outstanding value for money.

Your centre activities and staff are supporting your children to make outstanding progress in their learning and development and they are being extremely well prepared for school. You also receive excellent support to help you be good parents and understand how to support your child's learning and development at home. A high proportion of you are accessing volunteering and adult learning opportunities and achieving ambitious goals. For example, some of you have achieved a place at university and gone onto employment.

Your families are achieving outstanding outcomes due to the high-quality staff, activities and services your centre provides. However, despite their best efforts not enough mothers are breastfeeding their babies at six to eight weeks and beyond. In addition too many children in Reception Year at school are obese. Your centre and partners have been asked to improve this.

Everyone involved in your centre has high expectations and they want the best for you and your families. Your centre has an outstanding capacity to improve further

the outcomes for families living in your community and to continue to narrow the gap between the most disadvantaged and the rest. It does so with great determination and dedication.

We wish you all the very best for the future.

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