

Inspection report for Manor Park Children's Centre

Local authority	London Borough of Sutton
Inspection number	406955
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Reporting inspector	Joan Lindsay

Head of centre Centre manager	Danielle Scrase Daniel Ayeni
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Myrtle Road Sutton Surrey SM1 4BX
Telephone number	0208 4052071
Email address	dayeni@suttonlea.org

Linked school if applicable	Manor Park Primary School
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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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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, head of centre and staff, representatives from the local authority, the governing body and the advisory board. They also spoke to partner services, for example from health and adult education, parents and other users of the centre.

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

Information about the centre

This phase two centre opened in July 2008 and has fulfilled the full core purpose since January 2010. It is situated adjacent to Manor Park Primary School. The governing body of the school manages the centre on behalf of the local authority. There is also an advisory board in place. Services are available from 9.00am until 5.00pm Monday to Friday and on alternate Saturdays for 51 weeks of the year. The principal services are run from the main site, with some outreach groups taking place in the community such as the Salvation Army hall on the Benhill estate.

The reach area is very mixed in relation to social, economic and ethnic background. Two out of the 10 super output areas that the centre serves are ranked in the 20% most deprived in the UK. The area is predominantly made up of White British heritage families, with a high proportion of Asian, Asian British/Indian and Eastern European communities. Some 21% of children aged from birth to four years live in households dependent on workless benefits, which is in line with the national average. The proportion of eligible families benefiting from the childcare element of Working Tax Credit is 18%, similar to the national average.

There are 896 children aged from birth to four years living in the reach area, with 90% registered at the centre. Children’s skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years provision are typically below 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

Manor Park Children’s Centre provides a good service to families. Staff provide excellent levels of care, guidance and support to all who need it, and especially those who are most vulnerable. This results from very high levels of expertise and a focus on safeguarding that is paramount in all of the centre’s work. Excellent partnerships forged with a wide range of services also contribute much to the good and sometimes outstanding outcomes for families who use the centre. For example, the way that many families’ social and economic well-being has been enhanced is excellent, with many furthering their education, volunteering or returning to work. Consequently, families all have great confidence and trust in staff, as summed up by comments: ‘The centre is crucial to my life’ and ‘They have been there for me through bad and good.’

The centre has a strong focus on developing families’ healthy lifestyles. However, it is hampered in the way it can measure the outcomes in some aspects, such as childhood obesity and sustained breastfeeding rates, as up-to-date data are not readily available from the local authority and health services. Families feel fully involved in the centre and believe their views are listened to. However, the once-active parents’ forum has dwindled. In addition, whilst there is parent representation on the governing body and the advisory board, where the chair is a parent, there is not representation from a wide range of target groups.

Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the centre’s strengths and areas for development. However, the way this information is set out and used in the centre’s self-evaluation document and development plan is not succinct enough. Targets are not always specific or measurable and do not have clear time frames in

which they should be achieved, although this is often due to a lack of recent data. Nevertheless, there is a very clear understanding of the needs of families in the local area, especially the most vulnerable, and the numbers who use the services are increasing significantly. Action taken to address gaps in provision, such as setting up a specific group for Polish families and the highly successful way fathers' needs have been met, have led to considerable improvements in outcomes for the large majority of families. Consequently, the capacity to sustain improvement is good.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Involve families in the strategic management and governance of the centre so that their views are fully taken into account, by increasing the membership and regularity of meetings of the parents' forum.
- Work with the local authority and health services to ensure reach area data are recent and accurate; use these data to ensure development plan and self-evaluation documents set targets that are consistently measurable, have a specific time-frame and clearly evidence outcomes.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The centre encourages families to lead healthy lives, promoting physical activity via family exercise classes, fathers' Get Active football tournament and healthy cooking groups. The health visitor holds baby clinics and developmental checks in the centre four days per week, doing much to encourage families to engage with health services. Sustained breastfeeding rates are improving, although accurate recent data are not readily available. Immunisation rates, although below the national level, are also improving. Childhood obesity levels show a declining trend and are below national levels but data are only available for 2010 and therefore are not a useful tool to measure the centre's impact. Outcomes for families with emotional or mental health problems are good, due to the excellent links with relevant agencies as well as ready access to the health visitor. Baby massage classes and 'sleep and routine' workshops all help parents to bond with their children. Consequently, a large majority of families feel they have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lives.

Keeping families safe is key to the centre's work. Families have excellent support in this through first aid workshops, child safety week and structured parenting courses. Families all say that they have full confidence in the 'completely non-judgemental' staff, with whom they can share their most personal issues. Staff are very quick to spot signs of concern such as domestic abuse or child protection matters. Their excellent training, partnership work with the link school, and highly effective use of the common assessment framework (CAF) process to instigate the correct support has led to very positive outcomes for those families. Similarly, where children are looked after or subject to child protection plans, the outcomes for most children are excellent, as the work of the centre helps them to 'step down' to less intensive support.

Children and adults show high levels of enjoyment at all the activities visited during the inspection such as Messy Play and the Mums and Babes group. The centre's tracking, children's learning journeys and anecdotal evidence from parents such as how their children's confidence has 'bloomed' all confirm that children who access services make good progress. Experienced staff pick up early developmental problems with speech, for example, and support parents well so that they are able to help their children. The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile results for children in the reach area show a significant improvement over the past three years, although, at 61% in 2012, they are slightly below the national figure. The achievement gap between the lowest 20% and the rest had been on a downward trend, and widened slightly in 2012 to 35%, above the national figure. The reasons for this have been analysed by the centre and its prompt actions have already begun to reverse the trend. Excellent links with the early years school staff and the centre's play practitioner ensure that children are well prepared when they move on to school.

Most adults who use the centre have accessed services to develop their own achievements effectively through, for example, the wide choice of adult education opportunities made available through excellent links with Sutton College of Adult Learning (SCOLA). English language, literacy and numeracy classes have given a significant number of individuals confidence to progress onto higher levels of education, retrain, for example as a plumber, or return to work. A very high number of adults make use of the information available to them from the employability co-ordinator, 'Your Future' booklet, and numerous workshops such as those on financial capability and the new benefits system. Hence a large majority of families, including those most in need of support, have benefited and their social and economic well-being is outstanding.

Families feel fully involved in the centre and, because they have an excellent rapport with staff, are able to voice their opinions candidly. The many opportunities to evaluate services, as well as the 'You Said, We Did' board and weekly Coffee, Chill and Chat sessions, all ensure they have a voice. There are currently eight volunteers whose work to set up and run the popular U Play weekly group is greatly valued by the centre. These activities develop their confidence and skills, thus improving their employability. However, parents' more formal input in the centre's strategic development is currently limited as the forum meetings are irregular and currently not well attended. In addition, whilst there is some parent representation on the advisory board and governing body, the numbers who attend fluctuate and are limited at present.

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	1

concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	
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	1

How good is the provision?

2

Health services involvement means 90% of children in the reach area are registered. Approximately 60% go on to access services. To ensure that those who most need support are reached, 70% of the centre's services are for targeted families and there are always several spaces reserved for the most vulnerable families at the bookable universal groups. Services are adapted well to meet specific local needs by setting up a popular fortnightly Polish playgroup, although a similar group for the large Tamil-speaking community was less successful. Close work with the Salvation Army as well as other locality children's centres has led to outreach sessions being run regularly in the most deprived areas, thus encouraging more families and specific target groups such as teenage parents to access services. The centre's exemplary work with fathers has been particularly successful, with the fortnightly 'Men Behaving Dadly' sessions attracting large numbers.

The 'Wow' board celebrates children's achievements well; the profile of the 'Parent Volunteer Champion of the Month' in the newsletter ensures adults' achievements are also recognised. The majority of the groups and sessions are very well attended, although longer courses saw a relatively high drop-out rate. The centre responded positively by setting up shorter workshops instead, such as for paediatric first aid and sleep problems. Providing crèches also enables higher numbers to benefit from the knowledge and advice. This has led to good or better outcomes across all areas.

Typical comments such as 'The centre manager and his superb team of support staff are doing a magnificent job at this centre and I pray that this centre may long continue to benefit future generations' reflect the unanimous views that care is excellent. Highly experienced staff, including the Early Intervention and Prevention Service worker, who know families well, blend compassion and professionalism to ensure their families receive excellent bespoke levels of care, guidance and support. This is especially so in times of crisis, particularly those relating to domestic violence or mental health issues. Currently, 73 families are receiving some level of support from the centre, all of which is tracked very effectively on the Early Identified Intervention spreadsheet to ensure follow-up and changing needs are assessed and acted on effectively. As a result, outcomes for those families are excellent.

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

The link school headteacher, as head of centre, and the centre manager blend their skills together well to ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the centre. Clear lines of responsibility between the advisory board, which has good levels of participation from key partners, and the governing body are in place. Both are active in reviewing the work of the centre effectively. However, the level of challenge from those bodies does not yet match the level of support. In addition, although all levels of leadership and management are clear about the centre's strengths and areas for development, not all targets for development are consistently measurable or have a specific time frame by which they should be achieved.

The centre has a very full timetable of activities, with a good balance of those open to all and those giving specialist support, such as Chatter Matters and the family support playgroup. The building is also used well by a privately run before-and-after school club and is let at weekends for parties, providing a useful income. Although staff numbers are small, staff are used very effectively and are well trained, skilled and able to adapt to need very effectively. The provision of health visitor services four days per week also ensures the accommodation is used very effectively, with the consequent positive impact on outcomes. As a result, the centre gives good value for money.

The building is a warm, safe environment where everyone receives a friendly welcome; equality and diversity are at the heart of all its work. All target groups are well represented in the centre or at the outreach provision and staff are working effectively to ensure that numbers from areas of highest need are increasing. The centre has made contact with all disabled children in its area and ensures they are fully included in universal sessions as well as encouraging their exclusive use of the sensory room. The building is fully accessible to the disabled. A large majority of Black and Minority Ethnic groups are reached and all are equally welcome, leading the centre to be described as being 'at the heart of the community' by several parents.

Safeguarding everyone, but especially the most vulnerable families, influences all of the centre's work. All appropriate Criminal Records Bureau checks are carried out or verified for those working with families. The excellent links with the school ensures

training is comprehensive for all staff, with specific areas, such as the increasing incidents of domestic violence, addressed fully. Robust policies and procedures, including information-sharing and multi-agency work through CAFs, lead to excellent support, particularly for the most vulnerable.

Excellent well-established partnerships across a very wide range of services ensures that even although the centre's full-time staff numbers are low, families have access to a wealth of information, meeting the widest possible range of needs. Drop-in sessions from a family solicitor, the services of the employability co-ordinator, health services and Home-Start working from the centre, as well as an excellent working partnership with adult education providers, all ensure opportunities are enhanced for families, and the most vulnerable receive highly effective support.

Surveys of families, evaluations, written testaments and letters of thanks from parents all point to very high levels of satisfaction. Views are taken into account, leading to the setting up of sessions like the U Play group. Children's views are taken into account through observing their likes and dislikes, recording them in the Children's Voice file and incorporating preferences into future plans. However, the more formal involvement of parents via an active forum has tailed off and the number of parents represented on the advisory board, whilst adequate, is relatively small.

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	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	2

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

The findings of the last inspection for Manor Park Primary School, which took place on 11–12 March 2010, were taken into account in relation to attainment on entry, safeguarding, and the leadership and management judgements.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Manor Park Children's Centre on 9–10 January 2013. We judged the centre as good overall, and there are some outstanding features.

Thank you for your participation in the inspection and for taking the time to tell us about the centre's work and how staff have helped you and your children. It was very helpful to visit the activities taking place, such as the Messy Play and baby massage sessions, and thank you for welcoming us into your groups. Here is a summary of what we found:

Outcomes are good overall because the centre makes good provision for all the families who use it. You have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lives through encouragement to keep fit and eat healthily through exercise classes and the fathers' football project. It is a great benefit that the health visitor runs clinics from the centre four days a week and is on hand to give advice on weaning and breastfeeding, for example. However, it is hard for the centre to measure its impact on some aspects such as levels of obesity in children as there is no up-to-date information available. We have asked the centre to work with the local authority and the health services to try to resolve this.

You all feel very welcome in the centre and have extremely high levels of confidence in the 'completely non-judgmental' staff to sort out sometimes very complex and personal problems. Some quotes that summed this up were: 'They have been there for me through bad and good' and 'They have been crucial to my life.' As a result of excellent safeguarding training, very experienced staff and exemplary partnerships, the levels of care, guidance and support you receive are outstanding. One father wrote: 'The centre manager and his superb team of support staff are doing a magnificent job at this centre and I pray that this centre may long continue to benefit future generations.' This statement reflects a common thread through your highly positive views overall.

'Very friendly and brilliant interaction with the children and adults' sums up how many of you feel about the centre. You have told us how pleased you are with the

progress your children make. Many of you echo the parent who said: 'My daughter's confidence has bloomed.' Children move onto school happily. This is because there are good links with the Manor Park Primary School and there is a strong focus on early years development at the centre. Tracking of children and their learning journeys show that children who access centre services generally do make good progress. Workshops such as those for first aid, sleep problems and parenting programmes give you the skills to help your children develop. A very high number of you also improve your own skills very effectively through accessing adult education programmes, retraining or returning to work. A very good range of high quality advice from the employability co-ordinator, financial capability workshops and the 'Your Future' booklet have all helped towards ensuring that the economic and social well-being for a large majority of families is outstanding.

It is clear that you feel you have a voice in the centre and you get involved well through volunteering, setting up activities such as the U Play group. However, the once-active parents' forum has few who attend now and so a more formal method of putting forward your views to the advisory board is lacking. We have asked the centre to try to involve more of you on the parents' forum and the advisory board and this is something you can help with directly.

Everyone is clear about what the centre's strengths and areas for improvement are but they are not always recorded concisely in documents such as the development plan. In addition, the targets that are set do not always use information to measure their success, although often, such as with childhood obesity levels, up-to-date figures are not available. This is also something we have asked the centre to work with the local authority and the health services to improve.

The centre manager and the headteacher of the school work well together to ensure the centre is well led and managed. There is a very strong team ethos and a desire to continue to make lives better for the families in the local community. There have already been notable successes, such as setting up the Polish playgroup and the way fathers are involved through the 'Men Behaving Dadly' sessions. The numbers using the centre are increasing, especially amongst families who need it most. Having already had a positive impact on outcomes and improved the lives of many families, the centre is well placed to continue to improve.

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