

Inspection report for Bounds Green Children's Centre

Local authority	Haringey
Inspection number	406933
Inspection dates	15–16 January 2013
Reporting inspector	Christine Field

Centre leader	Lois Johnson
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Bounds Green Infant School URN:102081 Bounds Green Junior School:102080
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 centre coordinator, front-line staff, a range of partners, governing body and cluster advisory board representatives, local authority officers, and parents. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the self-evaluation form and action plan.

Information about the centre

The centre was designated as a phase two centre in October 2008 and delivers a range of services that meet its full core purpose. It shares a site with Bounds Green Infant and Junior schools, which are subject to separate inspections, and is open term time only.

The reach area serves a very ethnically diverse community with a very high proportion speaking English as an additional language. The main ethnic groups include White British, Black African, Black Caribbean, Turkish, Kurdish, Somali and newly arriving families from Eastern Europe. There are high levels of economic and social deprivation within the reach area, alongside pockets of affluence, especially in the neighbouring ward of Alexandra Park and just across the local authority border in the London Borough of Enfield. Of the 971 children under five-years-old living in the reach area, 27.5% live in workless households. A new large housing estate (Cline Road) which includes a large number of social housing units has recently been constructed; the remaining housing comprises a mix of private rental, including some temporary accommodation in the Middleton Road area. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities when they enter early years provision are typically below the level expected for their age.

The day-to-day management of the centre is the responsibility of the centre coordinator, who is employed by the local authority and line-managed by the

headteacher of Bounds Green Federated Schools. The coordinator, together with an information officer, have worked as the centre management team for 12 months following local authority reorganisation. They were joined by a community outreach worker six months ago. Governance is provided by the governing body of the federated schools with a cluster advisory board established to oversee partnership working between four children's centres: Bounds Green, Noel Park, Woodside and Rowland Hill. All are currently subject to separate inspections. A review of early intervention services is ongoing in the local authority.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

The centre has made good progress in adapting its provision and extending services over the last 12 months to better meet local needs. Overall effectiveness is currently satisfactory and improving strongly. This is due to well-focused leadership by the coordinator and the growing partnerships with service providers that help the small staff team to reach an increasing number of vulnerable families. Additionally, the high priority given to safeguarding, together with good-quality guidance and support, ensure that families are well protected. The words of a parent sum up the general view: 'My child absolutely loves coming to stay and explore sessions and I do not know how I would have picked up my confidence and knowledge about their development without the centre's help and support.'

Outcomes are satisfactory overall with strengths in families' safety and well-being, and the contribution parents make to the life and development of the centre. The good partnership with health services and effective teamwork helps centre users to live healthier lives. For example, play activities promote the value of physical exercise and sessions about nutrition assist families in cooking healthy low-cost meals. Nevertheless, at 15.3%, the proportion of young children living in the reach area that are obese is much higher than the local average of 11.5% or national average of 9.4%.

Some parents who attend the centre develop economic stability and independence due to the centre's effective provision. Children build confidence to 'have a go' during play experiences and through the close working partnership with the co-located infant school, and are helped to move on to the next stage of education positively. For example, data show that the proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is improving over time. Case studies provide compelling evidence that shows how some adults have benefited from parenting programmes, family learning courses or as participants on the volunteering course. However, the centre is not yet systematically tracking the impact of its provision on the achievement of users to assist the shaping of future services, including those for specific target groups.

Leadership and management are satisfactory with good aspects that assist the centre in moving forward rapidly following reorganisation and shortfalls in staffing. Action to bring improvement is concerted and effective. For example, the developing cluster partnership with three nearby centres ensures targeted services are well integrated and enables the exchange of best practice working. Clear terms of reference are in place for the cluster advisory board and governing body who oversee the work of the centre. However, the relationship between the two is not sufficiently precise and currently neither body is injecting enough critical challenge into decision making or rigorously monitoring the impact of actions.

The centre has a passionate commitment to promoting equality and diversity. Resources that are shared with the co-located schools are of high quality and these, together with the displays around the centre, reflect positively the different ethnic backgrounds of families. Evaluations and inspectors' discussions with parents show that they greatly appreciate the non-judgemental, friendly welcome they are given and have very high regard for the style of leadership. Self-evaluation is rooted in a detailed analysis of the centre's strengths and shortcomings, and provides an accurate and realistic view of the next steps required. A sensible number of priorities underpin the centre's good capacity to further improve its effectiveness.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- With health partners, work to reduce the level of obesity in young children so that outcomes meet or better the local authority average.
- In partnership with the local authority, sharpen the capture of data about specific target groups living in the area and engaging with the centre, and establish systems to measure the longer-term impact of the centre's work on their future achievement.
- Strengthen governance and accountability arrangements by defining the relationship between the governing body and the cluster advisory board, increasing the level of critical challenge in decision making, and ensuring robust checks that demonstrate how well the centre is performing against its core priorities and key performance indicators.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Particularly effective partnerships with midwifery and health visitors result in the majority of families engaging with health services. The baby-weighing clinics held at the centre are incredibly popular and provide a good forum for the centre to promote its services to target groups. Health outcomes, though satisfactory, are improving, as shown in the 93% immunisation rate and rising breastfeeding rates. Obesity levels in young children remain stubbornly high despite a range of activities, such as 'Toddler Tumble' groups, free fruit at sessions, and cooking courses which are on offer to help families live healthier lives. The centre recognises that more precisely targeted interventions are required in going forward.

Families are well protected due to the strong safety net of support in place, including the use of 'team around the child' procedures. The centre plays a lead role in using the Common Assessment Framework to pinpoint the actions required once a referral is made. Children most at risk, including those subject to a child protection plan, receive a good level of support from different agencies who work collaboratively to ensure a joined-up approach. Plans are in hand to further improve data sharing so that responses are consistently timely and effective, especially in times of acute crisis. A home-safety project last year included awareness-raising workshops and safety equipment being provided for 59 local families. Evaluations show parents' increased understanding about how to avoid dangers and ensure safety in the home.

Children build their skills for the future with the highly effective partnership with the co-located infant school helping their future readiness for school. At 49%, the proportion of Reception-age children achieving a good level of development is below both the local average of 56% and the national average of 64%, but is rising over time. The gap between the lowest-achieving 20% of children and the rest is closing, albeit slowly. Children benefit from early learning experiences, such as 'Stay and Play' sessions that are well planned and resourced with different exciting activities available, including painting, junk modelling and clay-making, as well as large construction blocks to stack, various toys to play with and books to read. At least three quarters of attendees at 'Stay and Explore' sessions are from target groups. 'Workshops for Grown-Ups' are held regularly and provide opportunities for parents to seek advice about child development matters or listen to presentations from visiting specialists, such as psychologists and speech and language therapists. Staff are good role models and this results in adults and children replicating their respectful relationships and positive behaviour.

Staff have recently begun to assess the outcomes from sessions and to record their observations in books that contain photographs alongside written comments. The provision of a crèche at parenting courses and adult learning sessions, such as English as a second other language classes (ESOL), are greatly appreciated by parents who say they 'feel very relaxed and comfortable to come to family learning at Bounds Green'. Aspirations are encouraged with pathways offered for further learning on accredited courses. The centre receives some information about how the adults it signposts to courses get on, but information about achievement is not

followed up rigorously. Additionally, there is currently no specific data captured about the take-up of services by target groups, such as those from workless homes, and this is a missed opportunity to inform future planning.

Parents across target groups make a good contribution to the life of the centre through writing evaluations following sessions or by writing their ideas on a paper leaf and pinning it onto the 'Ideas Tree'. Volunteers improve their skills through the work they do in support of centre staff and as parent representatives on the cluster advisory board. Links with Citizens Advice enable some parents to improve their economic health as a result of debt counselling, while others are helped to claim eligible child tax credits or other benefits.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	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	3
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment	3

How good is the provision?

3

Satisfactory provision underpins the satisfactory outcomes and the care, guidance and support provided are particular strengths. The centre is currently reaching over 61% of 0–5-year-olds in its area, with an increasing take-up of services by families living in the most deprived neighbourhood. Data show participation rates improving over time but does not drill down to specific groups. The centre has undertaken its own mapping exercise of the reach area and is working proactively to increase the engagement of Turkish, Somali and families from Eastern Europe. Satisfactory learning and development opportunities underpin children's and adults' sound educational achievements.

Outreach work is increasingly being targeted to those families most in need of support, and caseloads are manageable. Partnership work with staff from a nearby children's centre builds capacity in family support work in order to meet the most pressing needs. The introduction of home visits to all families in the area with a new baby is a positive feature in supporting the planning and shaping of services. The programme has been revised this term in the light of the needs assessment with new

additions including 'Baby Wonder Week' – an eight-week course for parents and new babies covering all aspects of development and a chance for parents to meet and make new friends.

The care, guidance and support offered to families are good and have a demonstrable impact on keeping them safe. Mothers in abusive relationships told inspectors how they were better equipped to take control of their lives due to the centre's interventions. The words of one mother reflect this: 'I feel safer – I am in a much better place because of the staff's help.'

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	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Last year was a challenge in many respects due to staffing matters and the centre being without a community outreach worker until June. Since the appointment of a full complement of staff, there has been clear improvement, as reflected in the rising numbers of local families, including those most in need of support, who satisfactorily engage in centre services.

The coordinator has a very realistic picture of the centre's strengths and shortcomings. Through her rigorous evaluation and clear focus on a small number of targeted actions, she builds good capacity to quickly raise the centre's effectiveness to good, especially for those most in need of early intervention. Partnerships are building positively, and some good work with other children's centres and health partners in particular has enabled the centre to have an 'extended reach'. This proves beneficial in the delivery of dovetailed services that are responsive to meeting local needs. Parents value the non-judgemental, friendly welcome they are given and have very high regard for the centre's leadership. Their satisfaction levels are high.

Day-to-day management ensures that the shared premises are used effectively. Resources, including the deployment of staff and the use of volunteers, are appropriately managed; in consequence, value for money is satisfactory. Governance arrangements are clear and understood, and the direct involvement of parents on the cluster advisory board ensures that their views inform strategic decision making. However, the relationship between the governing body and advisory board is not sufficiently precise and, although supportive, currently neither body is providing sufficient challenge.

High priority is given to safeguarding which, together with good-quality guidance and timely support, ensures that families are well protected. Policy and procedures fully meet requirements. Staff appointments are vetted carefully and the centre undertakes comprehensive health and safety checks. Staff are fully up to speed in child protection matters. Parents identify strongly that they feel safe when they use the centre.

Good attention is paid to equality and diversity aspects, and inclusion is promoted very effectively within the centre. Displays welcome centre users in their home language, and books and some information are translated into various mother tongues. The use of home language in all sessions is encouraged and this is acknowledged by centre users as a practice 'that makes everyone feel valued'. Families with children with disabilities or special educational needs are helped by calling on expertise from the co-located schools as appropriate - for example, in devising specific packages of learning mentor support or more generally helping families with positive behaviour management strategies.

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	3
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	3
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	3
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	3

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

Not applicable

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Bounds Green Children's Centre on 15–16 January 2013. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We talked with some of you, your children, staff, and a wide range of partners, cluster advisory board, governing body and local authority representatives linked to the centre. We looked at evaluations of the centre's work and a range of documents, and very much enjoyed chatting to you during activities. Well-planned activities support your children's first steps to learning and it was lovely seeing you having fun with your children as they made pictures from different materials and also enjoyed a healthy fruit snack. As one father attending for the first time said, 'It is a very nice atmosphere and I have felt very welcome today.'

The centre has made steady progress in adapting its provision and extending services over the last 12 months to better meet your needs. Well-focused leadership by the coordinator and the growing partnerships with service providers in the area help the small staff team to reach an increasing number of families, including those whose circumstances make them particularly vulnerable. Outcomes are currently satisfactory overall and improving. The centre places a high priority on safeguarding which, together with good-quality guidance and support, ensures that you and your children are well protected. It is great to see how keen you are to have your say and that some of you play a vital role in the centre as volunteers and on the cluster advisory board. We have asked the centre to make sure that the work of the governing body and cluster advisory board dovetail, and that more challenge is injected into their decision making.

The good partnership with health services and effective work going on helps families to live healthier lives. Nevertheless, at 15.3%, the proportion of young children living in the reach area that are obese is much higher than the local average of 11.5% or national average of 9.4%, and so we have asked the centre to prioritise this. Your children build confidence to 'have a go' during play experiences; and, through the close working partnership with the co-located infant school, they are helped to move on to the next stage of education positively. Some of you who attend the centre are helped to manage your finances and secure the benefits to which you are eligible, due to the centre's help, while others access courses, such as family learning or ESOL classes. However, the centre is not yet systematically tracking how well you or your children get on in your achievements and we have asked staff to give attention to this so they can use the information to help future planning.

Leadership and management are satisfactory with good aspects that assist the centre in moving forward rapidly after a challenging year. The action being taken to

bring improvement arises from accurate self-evaluation is concerted and effective. A sensible number of priorities underpin the centre's good capacity to further improve its effectiveness. For example, the developing cluster partnership with three nearby centres ensures targeted services are well integrated and enables the exchange of best practice working. The centre has a passionate commitment to promoting equality and diversity. You told us how much you appreciate the centre's friendly welcome, inclusive, non-judgemental practice.

We thoroughly enjoyed our time at the centre and would like to send you our very best wishes for the future.

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