

Inspection report for Chesterton Centre for Children and Families

Local authority	London Borough of Wandsworth
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Chesterton Primary School URN 101003
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 manager and staff, representatives from the local authority, and the governing and advisory boards. They also spoke to partner representatives from health and family support agencies, parents and other users of the centre.

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

Information about the centre

This phase two centre was opened in 2008. It was fully designated and operational, following the completion of building works, in November 2009. It fulfils the full core purpose. It is located in the grounds of Chesterton Primary School. The centre team comprises the centre manager, an outreach worker, an early years practitioner and an administrator. The centre manager is line-managed by the senior assistant headteacher of the school. The governing body of the school manages the centre on behalf of the local authority. There is also an advisory board. Services are available from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. Monday to Friday, with monthly Saturday morning groups. The centre is open all year round apart from Christmas and Bank Holidays.

The centre falls within the Queenstown and Latchmere wards of Battersea, an area of high economic and social deprivation. Of the five super output areas in the reach area, three are ranked in the top 10% and one in the top 20% most deprived in England. The area is very ethnically diverse with 84% of families from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups, the largest of which are Black Caribbean (15%), and Black Somali (11%). White British heritage families account for 16% of the population. The predominant languages spoken, other than English, are Somali and Arabic.

Some 33% of children aged from birth to four years live in households dependent on workless benefits, which is well above the national average. The proportion of eligible families benefiting from the childcare element of Working Tax Credit is 22%, which is higher than the national average.

There are 670 children aged under five years living in the reach area, with 60% 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

The effectiveness of Chesterton Centre for Children and Families in meeting the needs of, and improving outcomes for, families is good. Excellent partnerships across a range of services, especially those supporting the most vulnerable families, ensure that children are safe, and protected extremely well. Very well-established relationships with the link school ensure that children in particular make excellent progress. Families have very high levels of confidence in the 'gentle and friendly' staff because they are very approachable, knowledgeable and provide outstanding levels of care, guidance and support. They put their extensive training in all aspects of safeguarding to very good effect so that outcomes for the most vulnerable families are excellent. Families summed this up by stating: 'It is such a relief to have this support' and 'They changed my life with my children.'

Outcomes are good overall but satisfactory in relation to being healthy. This is because the measures for healthy lifestyles indicate that childhood obesity levels, whilst reducing slightly, are far higher than the borough average. In addition, the rate for breastfeeding at six to eight weeks dropped in 2011/12. Some of the data in relation to these measures have only recently been made available to the centre. Although there is a very strong focus on healthy lifestyles in the centre, this impact is not yet being seen in the key performance indicators.

Some adults achieve well through their contact with the centre and they are encouraged to enhance their education and return to work. There has been a

positive impact on the social and economic well-being of the majority of families who come to the centre, with many examples of where families' lives have improved. However, the tangible benefits for families are not always noted. The longer-term benefits of the centre's work with adults are also not tracked consistently to enable its impact to be measured and to ensure specific needs are being met.

Everyone involved with the leadership and management of the centre has a clear understanding of its strengths and areas for development. This is reflected in an improvement plan that has appropriate key priorities and targets that are measurable and set within a specific time-frame. Much has been achieved in the time the centre has been fully opened, with particular success in the number of fathers, young parents and families from BME groups who access the services. Outcomes are good overall and there is a strong team ethos amongst staff and partners to continue to improve and to strive for excellence. Consequently, there is a good capacity to continue to improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Decrease levels of childhood obesity and increase sustained breastfeeding rates in the reach area by working with the health services and the local authority to analyse available data and develop effective strategies to improve health outcomes.
- Develop a consistent method for tracking the progress and achievement of, and benefits to, adults who access the centre and use this to measure the impact of provision and identify where precisely to target services by:
 - tracking the tangible benefits to adults who access advice sessions
 - liaising with partners to develop a consistent method to track the progress of adults when they have accessed training, further education or employment advice.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Promoting healthy lifestyles in partnership with health services is a strong focus of the centre's work. Family exercise classes such as Zumba, promoting healthy eating through vegetable picking and focusing on healthy snacks ensure that most families have at least a satisfactory understanding of how to lead healthy lives. However, although dropping slightly, childhood obesity levels in the reach area are still high at 17%, compared to the borough's 10%. Sustained breastfeeding rates at 64.4% have fallen to below the borough level in 2011/12 of 73%. Families' specific health or emotional needs are met effectively through easy access to specialist services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, drop-ins, and group activities such as baby massage.

The number of children subject to child protection plans in the reach area has

dropped significantly in the past year, with other agencies attributing much of this to the work of the centre. Families are supported very effectively through the centre's use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and increasingly the borough's replacement referral system 'Signs of Well Being'. A wide range of structured parenting programmes are highly effective in giving parents confidence and understanding to protect their children and to deal with specific problems such as behaviour issues. Workshops on family home safety, paediatric first aid and internet safety equip parents very well to safeguard their children. Consequently, outcomes for the most vulnerable families, including those where children are looked after or deemed children in need, are excellent.

A strong focus on early years development in sessions such as the very popular 'Stay and Play' groups ensures not only high levels of enjoyment but also that children make excellent progress. Tracking of children who go on to the link school shows that they settle very well, thanks to the 'Getting Ready for School' sessions enhancing their confidence and independence. Tracking also shows that the vast majority who used the centre reach the expected level for their age at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, with some obtaining very high scores. Overall, the profile results for children in the reach area have increased significantly over the past three years, with 69% achieving a good level of development in 2012 compared to 56% in 2010. This outstrips both the borough and national results. The achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest has narrowed significantly to 28.8% from 33.8%, again better than national and borough averages. The grade for this aspect is good overall because the same outstanding achievements for adults are more difficult to pin down in hard data and so it is difficult to measure the impact of the centre's work and where precisely to target its services.

Over 40% of adults have accessed adult learning such as English language classes or gone on to further training, education or employment such as working in child care or setting up small businesses. Drop-in sessions with Family Action or other specialist services such as Contact a Family to support disabled children ensure the most vulnerable families' economic and social well-being are both improved. Several young parents have been helped to access community grants for furniture. Eight families have been helped to access funded nursery places for two-year-olds, which has had a positive impact on their economic and social well-being. However, the longer-term impact of the centre's interventions for the majority of families involved is not tracked consistently.

Children behave consistently well in the centre, largely due to staff, including the 'Stay and Play' leader, helping parents interact with and support their children. Some families, including from the large Somali community, are involved in the governance of the centre through sitting on the governing body or the advisory board. Five volunteers provide valuable support for the centre and also benefit from raised self-esteem and confidence. Weekly 'parents' corner' sessions enable families to have a specific time to put their views across, although this is not done in a formal way or minuted to be presented to the advisory board. Nevertheless, families do feel their views are used to shape services such as requests met for changes to group times.

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	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	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 meets the needs of most target groups well. It is particularly successful in engaging young parents through weekly 'Play and Learn' sessions. Disabled children's needs are met through the excellent links with Contact a Family who provide weekly drop-in advice sessions. Fathers are increasingly accessing services, thanks to the enthusiasm of the outreach worker as well as Saturday football sessions and 'Stay and play' groups. The number of BME families coming to the centre has increased substantially because of good assessment of their needs, such as developing English language skills and adapting the programme to accommodate this. There are relatively fewer lone parents who access services although the centre is aware that many do not disclose their status at registration. Groups are generally well attended, with most people who start longer courses finishing them.

Children's early learning is promoted very well through excellent links with the link school and other local early years settings and schools, the work of the early years practitioner and the group facilitator. Activities are of a high standard. Personal achievements are celebrated well through the Achievement Book, where families are encouraged to think of something they are proud of and then record it in writing or in pictures. Children receive regular praise and encouragement, which gives them confidence to build on their achievements.

'They have helped me with so much in my life' sums up the views of many parents. There are many examples of where families have turned to the centre in times of crisis or with highly personal problems and have been given immediate and highly effective support. This is because staff not only have very high levels of expertise themselves but can also call on specialist support or advice straightaway. For example, the Family Action workers are based in the centre and there are excellent relationships with social care and specialist health workers. This means that highly personalised, multi-agency support or one-to-one help from the centre manager or

outreach worker can be enlisted for the most vulnerable families, speedily resulting in very positive outcomes.

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 school's senior assistant headteacher and the centre manager work well together to ensure the centre's smooth day-to-day running. The governing body and the advisory board are clear about their different roles and responsibilities and provide effective support and challenge. The local authority monitors and supports the centre well. All those involved in leadership and management of the centre are clear about its strengths and areas for development, such as to improve health outcomes. Consequently, self-evaluation is accurate and there is a strong sense of everyone, including partners, working together to continue to improve outcomes for families.

A full timetable of events makes good use of the centre's accommodation and good quality resources. However, there is currently no regular use made of the school's outdoor area apart from during school holidays. Staff resources are used well, combining a mix of permanent staff and those commissioned to run groups or drop-ins, all of whom have high levels of expertise. This ensures that the needs of most target groups in the area are well met and that the centre gives good value for money.

There are high levels of respect amongst all those who work in or use the centre, because equality and diversity are central to its work. The reach area is very ethnically diverse, with a changing population, but the inclusive nature of the centre has ensured that all families feel welcome. 'The relationship is like a family' and 'It feels like a second home' are comments that reflect this. The numbers from White British and BME groups accessing services accurately reflect the population. The centre has been especially successful in engaging those from the Somali community, especially through the rolling-programme of English language classes. This is effectively narrowing the achievement gap between different groups in the community. The building is accessible to disabled people, and those families' needs are met very well through excellent links with specialist partners. The centre is accessed through the school reception, where there is a warm, friendly welcome.

Staff are highly trained in all aspects of safeguarding. All appropriate Criminal Records Bureau checks are carried out or verified on everyone working in the centre.

Staff expertise in the link school is utilised to excellent effect in relation to ensuring continuity of care and that robust policies and procedures are in place. Staff are very quick to spot any concerns relating to possible abuse of children or adults, acting swiftly to ensure the correct advice is sought and highly effective support put in. The centre has been very proactive in responding to an increased number of cases of domestic abuse and has supported several families in removing themselves from such relationships and hence safeguarding their children.

There is an extremely high level of mutual respect amongst the wide-ranging, well-established partnerships that are in place. Family Action, Aspire adult learning, health professionals, social services and especially the ties with the link school all make an excellent contribution to outcomes especially with regard to the care, safety and progress of the most vulnerable children and families. Partners are fully involved in shaping services through regular consultation and sitting on the advisory board.

Regular evaluations and surveys show that families have high levels of satisfaction with the centre. This is reinforced by comments made during the inspection, such as 'It's a real privilege to have these services' and 'I always look forward to coming here.' Adults feel fully involved in shaping the services and there is good representation on the governing body and the advisory board. However, a method of ensuring the formal recording and passing on of parents' views to those bodies is not in place. Children's preferences and views are taken into account well through observation and asking them what they enjoyed at the end of sessions and using this to plan the next activities.

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 Chesterton Primary School, which took place on 10–11 March 2008, and the Interim Assessment statement of 7 January 2011 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 Chesterton Centre for Children and Families on 30–31 January 2013. We judged the centre as good overall.

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 Stay and Play and the young parents' Play and Learn sessions. Thank you for welcoming us into your groups.

Outcomes are good overall for families using the centre. In particular, you tell us, and we agree, that you receive excellent levels of care, guidance and support. As a result, you all feel very safe in the centre and have high amounts of trust and confidence in the staff to know how to help you. If they cannot help you directly, they can quickly enlist the help of many other agencies such as Family Action and Contact a Family, to give you expert support and guidance tailored to your specific needs. As a result, families who need help most have seen their lives much improved, as shown by comments such as 'It's such a relief to have this support' and 'When my children are happy, I am happy.'

The way children and families have been safeguarded is excellent. Staff are very well trained to spot where there may be concerns. The very strong links with Chesterton Primary School mean that the whole family can be helped and supported even if there are older children. These links with the school have also helped children to make excellent progress. Groups such as Getting Ready for School make sure that they settle very quickly. Adults also benefit from the centre's services and groups, such as through learning English or help with supporting their children to learn and develop. Some of you have been supported to train or go back to work. However, at the moment, the centre is not able to show how well it has helped a lot of you in the longer term as it is not tracking what happens in the same way it does for children. This is something we have asked the centre to improve.

The centre has a good focus on helping families lead healthy lives through activities such as zumba, vegetable picking and ensuring you know how to cook healthy meals. However, the impact of what they are doing is not showing in the information about child health in the area. The number of children who are obese at the end of the reception year is much higher in the local area than it is in Wandsworth and in England as a whole. Also the number of mothers who are still breastfeeding their babies six to eight weeks after birth has dropped in the local area and is lower than Wandsworth overall. This is something else we have asked the centre, working with the local authority and health partners, to improve.

You have high levels of satisfaction with the centre and how it helps you and your families, expressed in statements such as 'They have changed my life with my children' and 'It feels like a second home.' You feel you can give your views about what services you would like. Several of you support the centre well through sitting as governors or on the advisory board, or through volunteering. This is very important work as it means that you can help the centre in a more formal way. However, at the moment, the way your views are noted and passed on to the advisory board from the weekly 'parents' corner' is not formalised.

The number of families who use the centre continues to grow, especially amongst the wide range of different ethnic groups in the community. Everyone mixes very well at the centre and you all receive a warm, friendly welcome. 'I always look forward to coming here' sums up how so many of you feel. Some groups such as young parents, fathers and disabled children make good use of the centre through activities or drop-in sessions that are specifically for them. The popular Play and Learn group for young parents and the Saturday dads' activities, combined with the enthusiasm of the outreach worker, the centre manager and the Stay and Play group leader, have all led to good numbers from those groups benefiting from the centre.

All who are involved with the centre, including the local authority, governors, advisory board and all the leaders, managers and partners, are fully committed to continue to improve outcomes for families in the local area. They have a clear and accurate understanding of what the centre does well and what it needs to do to improve. They have been successful in creating excellent partnerships that have done much to improve the lives of families who need help most. As a result, 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.