

3R2 Croxley Green Children's Centre

Morris Minors, Dulwich Way, Rickmansworth, WD3 3PX

Inspection date 22–23 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Not applicable	
Access to services by young children and families		Good	2
The quality of practice and services		Good	2
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a good centre because:

- Staff have excellent knowledge of the reach area and have been very successful at increasing the number of targeted and more vulnerable families registered. As a result, a large majority of families are actively engaging with the centre and are benefiting from the well-matched services on offer.
- Although the centre operates from a small building with a tight budget, it is run very efficiently. It uses the limited resources brilliantly and is always open for users as a safe haven and a place for a 'cuppa and a chat' for those families that are not coping well and are seeking help.
- Leadership, governance and management are good and have a positive impact on the quality of practice and services. Working closely with a skilled local authority improvement partner has helped the centre undergo a successful period of rapid development in the last year.
- The 'Pregnancy Club' which started at the centre is an example of a high quality service where nearly all local mothers-to-be attend because the advice, guidance and support is highly effective. Mothers confirmed that they have made 'friends for life' to share the ups and downs of parenthood.
- Links with pre-school organisations and schools are good and ensure a smooth transition when families take up their two and three year old pre-school educational entitlement whilst also continuing to be supported at the centre.
- A particular strength is the way that the centre deals with many families often in crisis. Families receive very individual support and as one parent said: 'staff go not just the extra mile, but often an extra ten miles.'

It is not outstanding because:

- The recent big increase in registered families means that many are new to the centre and it is too

early for them to feel the full impact of the services they are using.

- There are insufficient opportunities for targeted parents to volunteer, have work experience and to learn the skills they need to return to work
- The systems that are used to track the progress that children and adults make are not fully joined up. As a result leaders do not fully track how effectively outcomes for families are improving.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children’s centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

This inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the heads of centre, family outreach worker and other centre staff, local authority representatives and a range of partners. These included representatives from health services, education, employment and other adult learning and training services. They also met with parents and representatives of the advisory board.

The inspectors observed activities at the centre and senior leaders attended all the inspection team meetings.

They observed the centre’s work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the self-evaluation form, service improvement plan, a sample of case studies and files, parental satisfaction surveys, safeguarding policies and procedures and a variety of assessment files for the range of activities delivered.

Inspection team

Lead inspector

Catherine Stormonth

Additional Inspector

Peter Towner

Full report

Information about the centre

The centre became operational in 2009 as a phase three stand alone children's centres. The centre operates from a purpose built centre on the same site as Yorke Mead Primary School (URN 117130) which is subject to separate inspection arrangements. The report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk. The centre works with the school as an independent community partner managed by the owners of the Morris Minors pre-school.

The centre serves the Croxley Green area in the town of Rickmansworth. It is supported by an advisory board of key partners and parents. The centre meets the core purpose by providing early education, childcare and health services, family support and adult learning courses. Most children enter early education with skills that are at the expected level for their age.

The centre's reach area includes 813 children aged under five years of age, the majority of whom are White British. The largest ethnic minority groups are from Eastern Europe and there are smaller numbers of African and Asian families. The area is very mixed socially and economically with pockets of deprivation. The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index ranks the centre 76th out of 82 centres in Hertfordshire. Data shows that 6.5% of children live in workless households and 10% are lone parents. Key target groups include vulnerable families, those living in poverty, lone parents and expectant mothers and fathers.

What does the centre/group need to do to improve further?

- Provide more opportunities for targeted parents to volunteer and have work experience so that they can contribute more to the running of centre activities and increase their chances of going back to work.
- Leaders and managers should strengthen the processes used to track the progress that children and adults make at the centre. Specifically they should ensure that the centre is able to demonstrate the impact it has on:
 - Supporting parents who undertake English for Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) courses;
 - Adult learning, including personal, academic and vocational skills development leading to greater employability and work;
 - Improving the achievement of children, particularly at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The centre has made a real effort to increase registrations in the last year and has enlisted the Parents' Forum help to carry out promotional activities and sign ups at the 'Revels' local fair, summer fun activity sessions and to undertake mailshots to targeted areas. As a result most families are now registered in the reach area and a large majority of families are engaging with the centre on a regular basis.
- The 'Pregnancy Club' attracts almost all those expecting children, including pregnant teenagers. When babies are born, a good number of new mothers return to use the mother and baby services thereafter and many become frequent users of the centre.
- Senior centre staff provide highly effective approaches that encourage families who are normally

reluctant to come to the centre to join programmes that match their needs. Trust is built up quickly and these parents are encouraged to try other programmes, socialise and engage more fully. Work is often carried out on an individual basis with carefully tailored help and support that is very much appreciated.

- Attendance at activities is monitored and there is effective follow up for vulnerable families to make sure they have high attendance rates at targeted programmes such as 'Positive Beginnings.'
- The two year development assessment checks are carried out at the centre and referrals are made for any early interventions when needs arise. Speech and language development support is commonplace when communication delays are detected.
- Take up of the free entitlement to early education for two year olds is improving and about three quarters of children have been awarded places. Most pre-school settings are full so the centre has commendably been working with a large number of childminders to help them qualify to provide places for these children.
- Local schools and pre-school nurseries say that they are confident to refer families for help and support to the centre when they are in difficulty with family break-up issues, bereavement, domestic violence and debt problems. One pre-school leader said that her families were given a 'lifeline' at the centre.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- There is a good range of both targeted and universal services which are a well match to identified needs in the local area. The centre is particularly effective at contributing to early childhood learning and improving parenting.
- The information about the ethnic make up of the local reach population lacks details about the number of families who have recently entered the country and are at an early stage of learning the English language. Although some families are given extra support when language barriers are identified, the centre does not yet fully identify all the families who would benefit from the ESOL courses and outcomes are not sufficiently well tracked.
- In line with national trends, boys have been identified as a significant group who are not yet meeting their age related learning and development expectations and their lively behaviour is a cause for concern with some families. As a result, the centre provided the 'About Boys Course' programme and parents heaped praise for the positive impact achieved. Parents said that they 'had got their lives back under control' and felt much calmer and families say they are happier after attending.
- A strength of the centre is the high quality support given to families who experience a range of difficulty after their babies are born. Some find aspects of motherhood hard to cope with and some suffer post-natal depression whilst others feel socially isolated. Parents consistently confirmed their gratitude for the advice that helped to improve their individual circumstances.
- Children get a good start in their early education at the centre and the 'Walkie Talkies' session observed during the inspection was well planned and each activity table had some clearly identified learning outcomes shared with parents. The Early Years Foundation Stage profile results show that by the end of reception year children achieve well above both local and national averages. The achievement gap between the lowest achieving children and their peers is narrowing well.
- Adult learning, education and skills development is an area for further improvement. Some parents have been able to access the Hertfordshire Family Learning Service courses at Yorke Mead School to help with literacy development and to support their children's learning. However, the number of parents accessing courses is low. The outcomes for developing better employability and getting jobs are uncertain as there is little follow up of the signposting and links with Jobcentre plus are under development. The opportunities for work experience are underdeveloped.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management**Good**

- Strong partnership working and a shared pursuit of high standards has led to notable improvements in access and the quality provision and outcomes for both universal and targeted families. The leadership and management of the centre are good.
- Governance arrangements are well established and together with local authority guidance are helping to effectively drive the centre's recent ambitious improvements forward. Local authority support is good and there has been a keen focus on targeted families which has helped to bring about some rewarding improvements in the quality of those more vulnerable family lives. Parents are highly satisfied with the centre and are pleased that their views are used to shape services.
- The centre runs very smoothly with highly skilled and knowledgeable staff that form a strong team devoted to helping families in most need. Resources are stretched and the small centre building imposes limitations on activities especially when there are adverse weather conditions. The outdoor accommodation lacks shelter and shade and this prevents its use at times. Half of the outside space cannot be used as it is too muddy in wet weather. Staff use resources efficiently in challenging circumstances, finances are well managed and the centre provides good value for money.
- Safeguarding policies, procedures and practice are very good. All aspects of health and safety including risk assessments and safe recruitment are in place. The centre successfully works to reduce harm to children, particularly those who are subject to child protection plans and children in need. Staff use the Common Assessment Framework effectively to ensure the best possible outcomes for children and families.
- Although there are many files with a range of evaluations of activities, programmes and events, there is little to bring it all together to give leaders and managers a fully informed overview of the centre. There is some evidence of early years learning monitoring but it is at an early stage and is a work in progress. Data is available but could be used more to ensure services match need. For instance the local population has changed in recent years and a quarter of the reach area is a mixture of ethnic groups and these are not fully analysed and known.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Practice consistently reflects the highest aspirations for children and their families and as a result inequalities are reducing rapidly and gaps are closing.
Grade 2	Good	Practice enables most children and their families to access good quality services that improve children's wellbeing and achieve the stated outcomes for families.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	Performance is not as good as it might reasonably be expected to be in one or more key areas.
Grade 4	Inadequate	The needs of children and families in its area are not being met and/or the leaders and managers are not providing sufficient challenge to bring about improvement to the quality of services.

Children's Centre/Children's Centre Group details:

Unique reference number	20010
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	430191
Managed by	Hertfordshire Local Authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	813
Centre leader	Delia Morris
Date of previous inspection	N/A
Telephone number	01923-805110
Email address	manager.croxleygreen@hertschildrenscentres.org.uk

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