

Christchurch Children's Centre

The Teacher's Centre, Melbourne Road, Ilford, Essex, IG1 4HT

Inspection dates

8–9 May 2014

| Overall effectiveness | This inspection: Previous inspection: | Good | 2 |
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| 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.

- The centre offers a wide range of good quality services that meet families' needs well.
- Almost all families with children under five living in the area are registered with the centre and most make use of its services.
- Some aspects of the centre's work are highly effective, such as the innovative programme 'HELP' ('Helping Empower Ladies Programme') which was designed by centre staff for those affected by domestic abuse.
- The local authority and centre leadership team puts families' needs at the heart of service planning; they have an accurate overview of the centre's strengths and weaknesses and as a result, the centre implements planned initiatives with prompt thoroughness.
- Parents have a strong voice in how the centre operates. They are consulted regularly about proposed change and their forum, 'Your Say', regularly informs governance.
- The centre is regarded by many as the hub of their community and both parents and partners hold it in high regard.
- Parents speak enthusiastically about the positive difference the centre has made to their lives; one comment, 'The centre is like a big sun to me', sums up the views expressed by most.

It is not outstanding because:

- Governance arrangements involve too few relevant partners and governors to provide an outstanding level of rigorous assessment of the centre's practice.
- Some services are not excellent. On occasion staff are over-stretched or do not demonstrate exceptional expertise, and so they do not deliver highly effective sessions.
- Participation rates of some groups, notably of fathers and male carers, are not as good as for some other groups who attend.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Enhance governance arrangements by involving more governors and partners in the processes of leadership, including the evaluation and planning of services.
- Develop the provision available to families so that:
 - sessions are of outstanding quality and are expertly delivered, with sufficient staff available to maximise children's and adults' learning and development.
 - more fathers and male carers make regular use of services.

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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with leaders, managers and staff. They spoke with parents, partners, a member of the governing body and representatives from the local authority. The inspectors observed a range of the centre's work consisting of 'Creative Families' (a play session), a 'Learn to Crochet' session, a 'Bookstart' visit, and a baby massage session. They looked at a range of relevant documentation including evaluations, parent feedback, policies and procedures, together with planning and evaluations. They carried out an online scrutiny of six case files and the accompanying case file auditing system.

Inspection team

Susan Mann, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Marinette Bazin

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Christchurch Children's Centre opened in 2011 and operates as a stand-alone children's centre located in the north of the Borough of Redbridge. It is co-located with Christchurch Primary School and makes timetabled use of the school's premises, including the halls and school library. In total, there are 17 children's centres in the borough. Christchurch Children's Centre serves the wards of Christchurch, Cranbrook, Gearies, Fullwell and Forest, Hainault, Newbury and Peabody. The centre is managed by the governing body of Christchurch Primary School on behalf of the local authority. The school's headteacher is also the centre manager and took up her post just under two weeks ago, having worked at the school as a teacher and deputy headteacher for a number of years previously. The centre provides a range of services that include family support, adult learning services, and early intervention and help. There is no linked on-site childcare provision, and many children use the school's nursery or one of several early years settings located nearby.

The centre serves families living in the Valentine's ward and there are 1,200 children aged under five living within its catchment area. The centre is situated in the sixth most deprived ward in the borough. Over the catchment area as a whole, a number of families live in temporary accommodation. The large majority of families have minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest groups being Indian and Pakistani families. The proportion of children who live in families dependent on workless benefits is higher than found nationally or in the borough. Children's levels of learning and development are variable when they enter early years provision, but generally these are below expected levels. The centre prioritises a number of groups to work with, including families at risk of child poverty (including workless households), those affected by domestic abuse, fathers and male carers, families with English as an additional language and those in temporary accommodation.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families Good

- The centre reaches almost all eligible families and engages most of them in its services. It provides a welcoming and cheerful environment that families enjoy attending, saying it is their 'highlight of the week'. The centre is well known in the community as a result of its involvement with the school and with local events such as the May Fayre. As a result, levels of attendance are good and the centre is popular with parents and their children.
- Leaders make good use of statistical information and they work effectively with a number of partner organisations so they know of families in need of help. Social care and health services share useful information with the centre, such as live birth data and referrals. Families are quickly contacted and given the support they need.
- Most identified by the centre as priority groups attend regularly. Staff are proactive in promoting services with partner organisations such as the local hostels. Families at risk of child poverty, including workless households, have very good levels of engagement, as do those living in temporary accommodation.
- The very large majority of families who have English as an additional language benefit from using the centre. For these families, an ID (identity) card system makes it easier for adults to sign up for sessions and services. The staff are respectful of cultural practice and speak a number of relevant languages between them, which assists communication further. Families appreciate this reflection of their community, and feel secure and valued as a result.
- Although overall levels of centre use are very good, some groups are less well engaged. In particular, the centre's own information shows that few fathers and male carers use its services. Those who come attend regularly, but the relatively low number involved limits the universal impact on these parents' experiences and understanding.
- Individual families whose circumstances make them unable to attend sessions do well because of sustained work carried out in the home. This work enables families to benefit from a wide range of

services on a regular basis. Frequent contact through home visits and telephone calls keeps families involved successfully.

- Most eligible children take up their funded two-year-old place at an early years setting. Almost all of these places are at settings that are of at least good quality. There are similarly high levels of take-up for children who receive three- and four-year-old funded places, with the very large majority taking up their place to support their learning and development.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- Families access a good range of services and sessions at Christchurch. There is an appropriate mix of sessions available to all, such as the baby massage course, and of services targeted at particular needs, such as the centre's 'Community English' sessions. Timetabled provision is matched well to local families' needs and prioritises supporting children's development of communication and language to help them be ready for school. The level of care, guidance and support offered to individual families is superb.
- Sessions are of good quality. Staff are knowledgeable and have a clear understanding of the purpose of each session. However, the effectiveness of some early years sessions is limited. In 'Creative Families', for example, staff give excellent modelling of language when there is opportunity but they are sometimes too busy with the routine of the session. At these times, this means they are unable to give children and parents their full attention and this limits the learning benefits of the session.
- Systems used to measure the impact of services are well established in the centre's evaluative practice. These evaluations show that almost all sessions, including parenting sessions, have made a positive difference to the adults who attend. Case files are well maintained and give a clear picture of good progress for most families receiving this type of support.
- The proportion of women who breastfeed their babies in the centre's area is better than found nationally or locally, and is supported by breastfeeding spaces and support provided at the centre. Parents take advantage of having their baby weighed by centre staff to keep a check on growth. Families in need and those living in temporary accommodation are helped to develop healthy lifestyles through receiving food parcels, hot meals at the centre's own 'Food Kitchen' or through the centre's food bank.
- Families have a good access to relevant adult learning and this helps them improve their employability. The centre has identified that many adults require better skills in English as a first step towards employment. Thus adults have access to suitable courses at the centre and at local colleges to meet this need, and rates of attendance and course completion are good.
- Children are well prepared for school. Sessions cover all aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage and promote communication and language development. Library sessions including 'Story Explorers' and 'BookStart' develop children's listening skills, and session routines include clearing away plates after snack time to improve levels of independence. The progress of children who attended the centre and have now started school has been tracked; this shows they do significantly better in their learning and development than children who did not use the centre.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Overall, governance arrangements are effective. The local authority, together with the centre leader and deputy leader, has an excellent understanding of the centre's strengths and weaknesses. They monitor its performance closely, with regard to centre and borough-wide priorities in order to reduce inequalities for families. Parents contribute their views on the centre through both their forum, 'Your Say', and general consultation.
- Governance is not outstanding because too few governors and partners are fully engaged in the leadership processes, including the monitoring of the centre's performance and future planning. For governors, communication relies too heavily upon the capable and well-informed linked governor.

Though supportive, the governing body does not make sufficient detailed contribution to the centre's leadership. Representatives of health and social care services are involved in strategic assessment, but there is no formal opportunity for other partners to contribute to centre governance.

- The recently appointed centre leader has quickly established her knowledge of the role. The deputy leader is experienced and sets high expectations for the centre's work with families. Together they provide visible and sensitive leadership that steers the centre's skilful staff team very well.
- The centre is well resourced with a good range of toys, books and equipment. There is excellent collaboration with the on-site school resulting in use of some of the school's premises to deliver sessions such as the 'Food Kitchen' and school library sessions. Services meet the broad range of families' needs well. Some sessions are oversubscribed as a result of their popularity, and some are not always well attended: staff monitor this to ensure resources are utilised well.
- Safeguarding arrangements are very well established. Leaders prioritise the needs of children and vulnerable adults and work diligently to keep families safe. Children on child protection plans and those in need do well as a result of strong partnership working between social care, health and centre staff. Families assessed through the Common Assessment Framework receive planned support and provision that lead to greatly improved family life in many instances. Adults who have experienced domestic abuse receive an outstanding level of help through the centre's bespoke 'HELP' programme, and this helps keep them and their children safe.

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 well-being 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. |

Centre details

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| Unique reference number | 23734 |
| Local authority | Redbridge |
| Inspection number | 446623 |
| Managed by | The governing body of Christchurch Primary School on behalf of the local authority |

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|--|---|
| Approximate number of children under five in the reach area | 1200 |
| Centre leader | Kirsty Steedman |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Telephone number | 020 8708 8811 |
| Email address | kirsty.steedman@christchurchprimary.co.uk |

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