

North Cray Children's Centre

1 Davis Way, Sidcup, Kent, DA14 5JR

Inspection dates 29–30 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
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 large majority of children and families in the area from priority groups are registered with the centre and access children's centre services regularly, especially those in workless households, families living in the most disadvantaged areas, disabled children and those with special educational needs.
- The main site is located in a community centre which acts as the main hub for community activities, where all families feel at ease. The two satellite centres are co-located with health and adult education, which families find very convenient. Staff know the local community well, listen to families and provide good-quality support.
- Highly effective programmes enable parents to improve their confidence and parenting skills, and to manage their children's behaviour positively. Children attending the centre's sessions make good progress from their starting points and, as a result, move into school well prepared to learn.
- Leadership, management and governance are good. The business plan used by the centre is highly effective and accurate with a clear focus on improvement. Staff and members of the advisory board work well together to support families in most need. Partnership working is strong, resulting in good capacity to make further improvements.

It is not outstanding because:

- Local authority targets for reducing childhood obesity levels and increasing breastfeeding rates are not being achieved quickly enough.
- There are not enough opportunities for adults who are not in work to train or acquire skills that will improve their chances of gaining employment.
- Although the centre uses a wide range of information, it is not always specifically related to the community the centre serves. Consequently, the centre is unable to demonstrate whether its services are making a positive difference to the lives of children and families.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Build upon the centre's partnership work with health partners and educators to improve obesity rates and further increase breastfeeding rates.
- Extend the opportunities for more adults, particularly from workless homes, to improve their economic well-being by:
 - working more closely with Jobcentre Plus, especially lone-parent advisers, and voluntary and community organisations, to provide more opportunities for users to develop their literacy, numeracy and work-related skills and engaging a higher proportion of parents to volunteer.
- Strengthen the quality, accuracy and analysis of information about the community the centre serves, especially health-related data, so that centre leaders are able to monitor and evaluate the centre's effectiveness.

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 three additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders and managers in the local authority, health, education and social care partners, parents, outreach workers, early years practitioners, volunteers and representatives from the advisory board.

The inspectors visited the centre and two satellite centres. They observed the centre's work, such as 'Baby Café, and looked at a range of relevant documentation. The inspectors looked at the centre's self-evaluation, business planning, a sample of case files, safeguarding practice, policy and procedures, and a range of other relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Alan Comerford-Dunbar, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Jaswant Mann	Additional inspector
Jameel Hassan	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

North Cray (Locality 5) Children's Centre is a stand-alone centre located in Sidcup. The centre is co-located with North Cray Community Centre. The centre has two satellite centres known as Sidcup Children's Centre and The Oval & Queen Mary's (QMS) Children's Centre.

Governance is through the local authority; the centre's advisory board is responsible for the children's centre and its two satellite centres. The advisory board is made up of members of the community, professional agencies and parents.

The centre provides a range of supporting services including health, adult courses and educational workshops. Some services are delivered off-site and in association with other organisations. The centre provides a range of activities including 'Stay & Play', 'Baby Café', 'Buggy Babes' and 'Wheelie Babies Workout'.

Priority families are those families from the most deprived areas, teenage parents, children with additional needs and referred children.

The community the centre serves is urban and densely populated with areas of significant wealth as well as other areas of social deprivation. Families come from a wide range of backgrounds, although more than 86% of individuals are of White British heritage. The next largest group are Asian/Asian British, at under 5%, of which 40% are of Indian heritage.

Currently, 3,560 children under the age of five live in the reach area. About 8% of families live in workless homes and just above 9% of families are claiming the childcare element of working tax credit. Most children enter Reception classes with a range of skills and knowledge that are above the expected standard for their age.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families Good

- Most families with young children, including those with disabled children and special educational needs, lone parents, families living in the most deprived areas and those from workless households, are registered with the centre. The majority of these families in most need engage in the services provided by the centre.
- The centre acts as a hub for the community, Co-located as part of the community centre, the building is a busy, vibrant place with lots of activities for children of all ages; as a result, centre staff know their families extremely well. Services available for everyone are well attended; targeted services, such as a group for children with disabilities, are highly valued by parents.
- Access to early childhood activities by families, including expectant mothers and priority groups such as those from the most disadvantaged areas, teenage parents, children with additional needs and referred children, is good. Most targeted children take up their free entitlement to early education, especially families in most need with two- and/or three-year-olds. Due to the centre's effective work, learning outcomes are consistently improving, and this helps reduce any inequalities. Outreach workers have a good knowledge of the various issues facing families in their community. Effective work with families in their own home ensures that many of those who are suffering from a range of difficulties are very well supported. The centre promotes information about its activities and other services of help and advice well, to encourage those less likely to access services, particularly through the use of social media.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The centre provides a good balance of services open to everyone and those specially designed to support individual children and families in most need. Parents are actively involved in shaping the centre's services through the highly effective advisory board and 'Parent Voice'. Good-quality services, based on a thorough checking of needs and good local knowledge, meet the needs of children and families who access services well.
- Children are well prepared for school through their attendance at the centre and involvement in good-quality activities. Parents report improvement in their children's behaviour because of the impact of using effective strategies they learn on the parenting courses. Parents who have been identified to receive individual support at home are equally enthusiastic and make good progress in improving their parenting skills.
- The centre provides high levels of care, guidance and support, particularly to families in times of crisis. All families, but especially those who are in most need, develop a very good understanding of how they can remain safe. Case study evidence demonstrates the centre's success in taking appropriate and timely action to keep children safe.
- The impact of centre services on families' economic well-being is less well developed. There are examples where individuals have been supported back into work. However, too few families, particularly those from workless households, have been helped to take up training that enhances their skills, employability and life chances.
- Strategies are in place to support local health initiatives such as reducing obesity and improving breastfeeding rates. However, leaders are aware that these outcomes need to improve. Obesity rates are above national and local rates, and sustained breastfeeding rates are low. The centre has introduced many interesting and good-quality initiatives, for example 'Baby Café', to encourage mothers to breastfeed, although it is too early to judge the full impact of these activities.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Leadership, management and governance arrangements are good as a result of the clear direction and support provided by the local authority and the highly effective advisory board. Appropriately qualified and drawn from a range of professional backgrounds, staff are enthusiastic and support the centre's drive for improvement. These features result in improved outcomes for children and families, especially those in most need of support. The centre is well resourced and staff work well with a broad range of partners within the reach area. Leaders work well with key partners to share resources, and this enables them to respond effectively to the needs of families. The on-site partnership between the children's centre and community centre is seamless. Parents value the careful planning that enables them to attend sessions while at the same time allowing their children to also participate in community centre activities.
- The centre monitors and evaluates its services well through consultation with parents. They are fully involved in helping to shape services as well as being an integral part of the advisory board. Relationships among families and with staff are extremely positive, and the quality and effectiveness of staff training is good. The centre's ethos ensures that parents from different social backgrounds feel welcomed and involved in centre life.
- Safeguarding arrangements are robust and meet requirements. Policies and procedures are well written and followed by staff and managers. Staff are vigilant and parents understand the importance of adopting safe practices. Staff's good knowledge of safeguarding plays an important role in meetings with other professionals about children who are subject to the Common Assessment Framework arrangements or child protection plans.
- The local authority's monitoring and review of performance of the centre are robust; the resulting business plan correctly judges the centre's strengths and areas for improvement. However, although

leaders have identified the right priorities for improvement, because most of the information used is not specifically related to centre, managers cannot accurately measure the impact of its services.

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.

Centre/Group details

Unique reference number	22169
Local authority	Bexley
Inspection number	442842
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	3,560
Centre leader	Jane Vong
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