

Clare Gardens Children's Centre

349 Westbourne Park Road, London W11 1 EG

Inspection dates	9–11 December 2014
Previous inspection date	26–28 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
Access to services by young children and families		Requires improvement	3
The quality of practice and services		Requires improvement	3
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for children and families

This children's centre requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Not enough families from the some of the less advantaged areas the centre serves are using services regularly.
- It is too soon to see the impact of new systems to measure the difference the work of the centre is making to families. The progress of adult learners is not currently tracked effectively enough.
- Health partners are not providing the centres with information about health outcomes at the local level and there are no shared targets. This means it is not possible to measure the contribution of the centre's work to improving children's and families' health in the area.
- Advisory board members, partners, managers, staff and parents need more support to make effective use of the improved information about the centre's effectiveness.
- Systems to monitor children's progress have been recently introduced but are not yet well established. Planning for sessions does not show how children's interests, needs and next steps in learning are routinely considered.
- Partnerships with some primary schools are underdeveloped. Achievement gaps between children from poorer backgrounds and their peers are still too wide in some parts of the area.

It has the following strengths:

- The local authority has established a clear vision, strategy and structure for the children's centres in the borough. Much effective work has been carried out since the last inspection. Managers and staff are committed, reflective and capable; capacity for further improvement is, therefore, good.
- The centre is ensuring that parents' views are driving the design and delivery of services. Committed parents have re-established the parents' forum and have made an immediate impact at the centre.
- Parents are positive about the services they receive and there are good opportunities to volunteer.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that systems are well established and consistently implemented to measure accurately the impact of the centre's work with families, including adult learners.
- Further strengthen governance arrangements by ensuring that parents on the early help advisory board are well supported to fulfil their role.
- Further improve information sharing arrangements with partners, particularly from health and education, to ensure information about local needs is used to set and monitor targets.
- Close achievement gaps for children from poorer backgrounds by:
 - enhancing the quality of stay and play sessions to ensure children's learning needs are consistently identified and next steps are planned for
 - developing partnerships with all local schools to promote the centre's work and help children to be better prepared for starting school
 - ensuring children from the more deprived parts of the reach area that are not geographically close to the centre are accessing good quality 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 parents, volunteers and members of the advisory board. They also talked with senior managers within the local authority, the centre manager and staff. Meetings with partners including those from education, health, social care, early help teams and the voluntary sector were also held.

The inspectors visited the centre, Kensington Town Hall and Family Services offices.

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

Inspection team

Penny Fisher, Lead Inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Graham Saltmarsh

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Kensington and Chelsea's children's centres are divided into two areas, north and south. Clare Gardens Children's Centre is one of four children's centres that works collaboratively in the north of the borough. Three of the centres were inspected at the same time. The other two centres are St Quintin Children's Centre (URN 22882) and Holmfield House Children's Centre (URN 23743). Inspection reports for these two centres can be found at www.gov.uk/ofsted. The one centre not involved in this simultaneous inspection, Maxilla Children's Centre, was inspected in May 2011, and was judged to be good.

The children's centres form part of the Early Help Service (0–19) which sits within the local authority's Family Services. The Early Help Service has one borough-wide advisory board, which provides governance. Representatives, including parents, from each of the centres attend this board. Each centre has its own parent forum.

The centres are led and managed by the local authority. The early years operations and project manager has overall responsibility for all three centres. Each centre has a member of staff responsible for the day-to-day running of the centre. In Clare Gardens, this member of staff is the children's centre manager who is also responsible for the on-site day nursery. This childcare provision was inspected in 2012 and judged to be outstanding. The inspection report for the nursery is available to view at www.gov.uk/ofsted. The centre offers universal play activities, adult education opportunities and health services. Family support is delivered through the Early Help Service.

The area the centre serves has increased geographically since the previous inspection. There are now over 2,000 children under the age of five living in the area served by Clare Gardens Children's Centre. The area the centre serves contains some of the most affluent areas in the country and borders the London Boroughs of Westminster and Hammersmith and Fulham. A high proportion of children in the area are privately educated. However, there are some areas of significant deprivation in two of the four wards the children's centre serves. Colville ward, in which the centre is sited, has the highest population of any ward in Kensington and Chelsea and has significant overcrowding.

The area is highly ethnically and culturally diverse and has a high proportion of families moving in and out of the area. The majority of residents are of European heritage, with smaller but significant groups from South and Eastern Africa, North America, Australia and The Caribbean. English is spoken as an additional language by over half of the borough's state school children. Levels of skills and knowledge on entry to nursery are variable.

Priority groups identified by the centre include families with children aged under five living in the Colville ward and children supported by social care and families with at least one child under five supported by Early Help Services and children eligible for the two-year-old free funded place.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, the local authority has improved the centre's knowledge and understanding of the area the centre serves. As a result, new priority groups have been identified appropriately. Nevertheless, work continues to collate accurate information about other potential target groups, such as those from minority ethnic groups.
- Overall, only around half of children are registered with the centre. However, the area the centre serves is very mixed, with many families living in one of the most affluent areas in England. Research conducted with some of these families shows that they do not require children's centre services.

- The local authority has appropriately focused on registering and engaging families and those expecting children from the areas of least advantage. This means that resources are now better targeted at those families that need help the most. The large majority of these families are registered at the centre and engaging with early childhood services. Other more deprived areas are much closer to centres in other London boroughs. Work is underway to identify whether families living in the Clare Gardens reach area are attending these services.
- The centre has registered, and is engaging with, the large majority of other identified priority families. These include those families whose children have a child protection, child in need or early help plan in place. Information sharing with children's social care has improved following the last inspection, so that staff are now aware of these families.
- The quality of the information about the families that are using the centre has improved following a data cleansing exercise. Systems are now being used more effectively so that staff have up-to-date and accurate information regarding the registration and engagement of families. However, there is some work being undertaken by centre, such as support and information provided by staff, which is not yet being captured efficiently.
- Data show a recent upward trend in registrations. Activity programmes provide evidence of an increasing range of activities and services available at centres. There has been an improvement in the number of families accessing children's centre services, such as the increasingly popular stay and play sessions.
- The very large majority of families with eligible two-year-olds are taking up their entitlement to free early education places. These children are all placed in good or better settings. The proportion of three- and four-year-olds taking up their entitlement to free early education is above the borough average, but below the national average at 85%. This is thought to be due to the high proportion of affluent families using private, independent nurseries.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, the centre has introduced new ways to demonstrate the difference that children's centre services are making to families' lives. For example, the 'outcome star' has been introduced to identify families' starting points and progress as the families receive support from staff who work in the community. Learning journals are being introduced for children that regularly attend stay and play sessions. However, it is too soon for these new ways of working to provide a clear overview of the impact of all the centre's work on family outcomes.
- A wide range of good quality resources are provided for children attending group play sessions. Staff interact well with children and adults and are good role models. Staff's planning for these sessions follows the prime areas of learning, but learning intentions are not clearly outlined. Learning journals contain good introductory information about the children's likes, dislikes and family. Some observations have been carried out, but there is limited evidence of next steps in learning being identified or observations being used to inform future planning.
- Some parents have benefited from the wide range of relevant family and adult learning opportunities that have increased their confidence and skills. Courses, such as first aid, have been provided within the centre following requests from parents. Overall, however, the centre is not able to demonstrate the number of adults taking up and completing courses, progressing on to other courses, achieving qualifications or moving into work. The tracking of adults' progress is an acknowledged area for development within the centre.
- There is good partnership work with front-line health partners, who value the services provided by the centre. However, information regarding health outcomes is not available to the centre at reach area level. This means that there are no shared health targets and the centre is unable to show how the work within the centre is contributing to better child and family health in the area.
- Overall, children's achievements by the end of the Reception Year are above average in the area. Children eligible for free school meals in the reach area achieve well in comparison to their peers across the local authority as a whole. However, there is still more to do to close the achievement gap for some children from less affluent backgrounds. Exciting joint work with a local primary school is underway, but links with the two other primary schools are under developed.

- Parents value the centre's services and evaluations show they enjoy sessions and activities such as stay and play. Staff within the centre are warm, welcoming and inclusive. Some parents told moving stories of the support they have received and how the centre had reduced their feelings of isolation and increased their confidence. One parent commented that they had 'found community and understanding' at the children's centre.
- Close links with speech and language services are enhancing the delivery of good quality early years provision in the area. Therapists promote new registrations and signpost parents to other early help services effectively. Centre staff are providing support for specialist services within the centre, making parents feel comfortable and welcome.
- Intensive support for those without work has been effective for a small number of families in the area. Parents that have benefited from children's centre services in the past are keen to 'give something back'. The volunteer programme is successful in helping a small, but growing, number of parents to develop their skills and prepare for a return to employment. For example, the Women's Circle are highly valued sessions that are led by two highly trained volunteers.
- Effective direct family support is delivered by the Early Help Team. Cases seen were of good quality and well supervised. The work is leading to positive improvements in outcomes for most families. Cases are being referred to children's social care appropriately when needed. However, social workers and early help workers acknowledge they are still learning about the new children's centre delivery model and ways of working.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The quality of information made available to the centre by the local authority and partners has improved since the last inspection. For example, the centre has access to data regarding new births, eligible two-year-olds and information from children's social care teams. This means that resources can be targeted more effectively at those families most in need of help and support. But, further work is needed to ensure that managers, staff, and partners are able to access this easily and use it effectively.
- Core priority groups have been revised based on clear baseline data, which is sensible. The local authority is now continuing work to ensure that best use is made of all the available data to provide accurate information about other possible priority groups within the reach area. Local information is being shared by partners at regular Team around the Children's Centre meetings.
- The local authority has driven improvement in the centre at a good pace since the last inspection. However, some difficulties in recruiting the right number of suitable staff have hampered progress. A full, well-qualified staff team is now in place, led on a daily basis by a highly committed children's centre manager. Their impact can already be seen in the very recent increase in work in the community, building numbers of registered families and increased attendance at centre activities.
- An impressive amount of work has been carried out following the previous inspection. The key target for all centres throughout 2014 has been to establish the centre and the new ways of working. The overarching improvement plan that was drawn up following the last inspection has now been replaced by the interim strategy and individual centre development plans. Although this has generated improvement so far, precise targets need to be added to these plans to ensure the pace of improvement is maintained and progress is measurable.
- Governance is improving. The early help advisory board, led by parent representatives and the voluntary sector, held its first meeting in July this year. Meetings are well attended, terms of reference are in place and information regarding services has been shared. Parents have received some training on their roles and responsibilities, but need further support, especially with regard to using the data provided by the local authority effectively. However, parents' involvement on the parent forum and the early help advisory board has already led to some changes within the centres.
- Line management and supervision responsibilities are not well coordinated. However, good communication between managers is compensating for this. Supervision is taking place regularly; new staff feel well supported and are attending a wide range of training opportunities that are relevant to their new roles. Staff are rightly proud of what has been achieved so far and are keen to

improve further.

- Quality assurance processes are in place, but are not yet systematically carried out. A new handbook and quality assurance tools developed by the local authority have been useful in providing consistency and, where observations of practice have been carried out, they show that managers have a good understanding of quality.
- The operations and project manager is a reflective and tenacious manager. Her determination, alongside a new commitment and focus from the highest levels within the local authority, has driven the changes within children's centre services. Developments have been monitored closely through regular reporting and scrutiny processes. The local authority and managers know the strengths and areas for further improvement within the service well.
- The safeguarding of children underpins all of the work of the centre and the environment is safe and secure. All necessary policies and procedures are in place and meet requirements, including those in relation to safer recruitment. All relevant staff and partners are thoroughly and regularly checked. This is also the case for agency staff, students and volunteers. Staff attend appropriate safeguarding training and are aware of how to report concerns.

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 details

Unique reference number	20742
Local authority	Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
Inspection number	447545
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	2035
Centre leader	Busola Kehinde
Date of previous inspection	26–28 November 2013
Telephone number	07811 861 530
Email address	Busola.kehinde@rbkc.gov.uk

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