

Parkfield Children's Centre

44 Park Road, Hendon, London NW4 3PS

Inspection dates	15–16 January 2015
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

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 centre shares information very effectively with its partners so that it knows the families with children under the age of five in the area very well. Most register their interest in using the centre and make use of its services.
- A large majority of families, including those in most need, who live in the centre's two priority areas, Wessex Gardens and Claremont, benefit from the help of the centre and the services it provides on a regular basis.
- The centre is a very busy place and provides a wide range of good quality services, with the support of its key partners, to help parents to assist children's early learning and development and prepare them well for school.
- The centre works very effectively with families in their own home to improve family life and keep children free from harm, when they might not otherwise come to the centre.
- The centre manager has provided committed and passionate leadership over time which has led to continual improvement and the development of a dedicated and effective staff team.
- The local authority provides good support for the centre and challenges it to become even more effective, currently through the work of the active performance board.
- The centre's key role in the community is recognised by parents and partners who speak unanimously of the warm welcome they receive and the willingness of staff to provide support when and where it is needed most.

It is not outstanding because:

- Parents do not yet have access to a wide enough range of courses, leading to qualifications, to develop their language, literacy and numeracy skills and increase their chances of employment in order to improve the economic stability of their families.
- Parents, particularly those in need of most help, do not make enough contribution to the running of the centre through the parents' forum or the local authority's interim advisory board arrangements.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Enable parents from priority groups to take part in a wider range of courses that develop their language, literacy and numeracy skills, enhance qualifications and increase their chances of employment and improving the economic stability of their families.
- Provide more opportunities for parents, especially those in need of most help, to contribute to the running of the centre through:
 - their involvement in the parents' forum or other groups
 - the local authority ensuring that parents have a prominent voice in the interim advisory board arrangements.

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 or telephone conversations with the centre leader, representatives of the local authority, staff, parents and key partners in, for example, health, early education, adult training and employment, victim support and social care.

The inspectors visited a number of activities held at the centre and a 'Rhyme Time' session which took place at Golders Green Library. One observation was conducted jointly with the centre manager.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including information about families in the area, the centre's evaluation of its own effectiveness, feedback from parents, case files and policies, procedures and practice related to the safeguarding of children.

Inspection team

Graham Lee, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Shagufta Shahin, Team inspector	Additional Inspector
Lesley Talbot-Strettle, Team inspector	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Parkfield is a large stand-alone children's centre in the south of Barnet. It opened in 2006 and is located in its own purpose-built accommodation within the grounds of Parkfield Primary School. The centre is managed directly by the local authority and on a day-to-day basis by a centre manager who has been in post since 2009. At the time of the inspection, the deputy leader was absent on maternity leave. The centre works closely with the three other children's centres in the south locality, The Hyde, Bell Lane and Child's Hill. Parkfield staff also provide services at other venues in the community including Golders Green Library, Wessex Gardens Primary School and Claremont Primary School.

The local authority set up a Children's Centre Improvement Programme Board last year. This group oversees the entire children's centre programme and provides particular support to Parkfields. It replaced the advisory board as an interim measure and will be in place until locality boards are established. The centre provides courses to support children's early learning and development, parenting skills and adult education in conjunction with its key partners. Centre staff visit families in their own homes when they need more support. The centre also helps to put parents in touch with the right people for advice about issues such as housing, benefits, domestic violence and the management of debt. The centre provides full-time early years education for children aged 0–5 years of age. This provision is subject to separate inspection arrangements.

There are about 2,124 children under five years of age living in the area served by the centre. Around 60% are from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds with a growing population of Eastern European families, mostly from Poland, Bulgaria and Romania. There is also a significant Jewish population in one of the more affluent parts of the area. There is significant deprivation in some pockets of the locality and about 16% of young children live in households where no adult is working. A significant number also live in working families where income is low. Children's skills and understanding on entry to early years provision are often below those typically found, especially in language and communication.

The centre has identified two areas of significant hardship, Wessex Gardens and Claremont, where it is concentrating its resources to provide more support. These areas include a higher proportion of families from different ethnic backgrounds and where there is worklessness and financial hardship.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- As a result of very strong partnerships with health particularly, and a range of other agencies, the centre knows all of the families expecting children and those with under fives in the area. Most children are registered with the centre and three quarters of families have benefited from its courses, support and advice over time.
- The centre is a very busy place and many parents first come to Parkfield to meet with the midwife and to take full advantage of the clinics that take place there. Many of these families go on to participate in the other services offered by the centre and its partners.
- The centre works effectively with other children's centres in the south locality to meet the needs of families in the area and to avoid duplication of services. There is a good sharing of information so the staff at Parkfield know which of their families have attended activities in other centres in the south locality, including those that may be reluctant to do so.
- The proportion of families using the centre's facilities and expertise rises in the two areas identified as being in need of particular support, Wessex Gardens and Claremont. This includes families from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds and those suffering from financial hardship which are especially highly represented in these areas.
- The centre's work with families in their own home is particularly effective in getting children and their parents the help they need in a timely fashion. As a result, some go on to benefit from the

services provided at the Parkfield and other centres in the locality.

- The centre approaches all the families entitled to free early education to provide advice and support. As a result, most of those who require places for their children take them up in good quality early years settings.
- The centre makes it easier for families to take advantage of support and a variety of courses when they live some distance from the centre by providing services in various community venues. For example, the 'Rhyme Time' session held at Golders Green Library is extremely well attended. Staff also speak a variety of languages which helps to break down barriers and put parents at ease.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The centre provides a very full programme of good quality activities, in conjunction with its key partners. These help parents to support their children's early learning and development and to improve parenting skills and family life. Services are balanced well between those available to all families and those designed to support those in need of most help.
- The centre runs a wide range of services, such as 'play and stay' sessions to improve children's readiness for school. It also provides strong support to early years providers and has close links with the local schools. As a result of strong collaboration, outcomes at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage are above the level seen nationally. The centre is proactive in reducing inequalities as shown in the closing gap between the most disadvantaged children and others. The centre's tracking shows good progress for the most vulnerable children from their starting points.
- In conjunction with the health services, especially midwifery, the centre runs a wide range of highly effective programmes to promote healthy lifestyles. Consequently, the centre has met or exceeded almost all of its health related targets, for example in relation to parents' stopping smoking, reducing childhood obesity and mothers sustaining breastfeeding.
- The centre, in collaboration with its partners, provides a range of programmes, such as 'family links', to improve parenting skills and the well-being of families. The centre follows up the impact of these courses and can demonstrate that over time the improvements to family life have often been sustained.
- Case studies for families most in need are maintained to a good standard and demonstrate improvements in family life and the well-being of children over time.
- The centre provides some courses to support the language skills of the large number of families speaking little or no English. It also signposts others to the local college. However, some of these courses do not lead to qualifications or provide the range required to help parents to acquire the language, literacy and numeracy skills they need to increase their chances of getting a job and improve the economic stability of their families.
- The centre is a welcoming place for parents and the centre encourages them to contribute to the development of activities through their feedback. There is a thriving volunteer programme and evidence that some parents have gone on to training and employment as a result. The views of children are also considered and one child from Parkfield, for example, designed the logo to promote healthy lifestyles in Barnet. This is now being used on all documentation throughout the local authority.
- The centre provides high quality care, guidance and support for its families. This was confirmed time and again by parents who spoke to inspectors. Many were full of praise for the welcome and support they receive.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The centre manager has brought about consistent improvement to the centre's work through her dedication and enthusiasm. She is highly visible around the centre and well respected by all. She has developed a staff team which is equally ambitious for the families in the area. Consequently, morale is high and the centre continues to improve its effectiveness well.

- The centre manager uses the information she has about families in the area and their involvement with the centre effectively, to identify strengths and weaknesses and to plan for the future. This work is supported by the information she gathers from parents and key partners to shape services. For example, it was noted that outcomes at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage were lower in the Parkfield area and so further resources have been concentrated there. The centre's assessment of its own effectiveness is accurate and driving improvement well.
- A range of partnerships, especially with the health services, the providers of family learning and local schools, support the centre's work well and are underpinned by appropriate service level agreements. This ensures a coordinated and cohesive approach to improving the lives of families in the area.
- Staff are well qualified and benefit from regular training which improves and widens their skills. Systems for their supervision and performance management are also well embedded and enable staff to develop their roles and the positive impact their work has on families in the area.
- Over time the local authority has supported the centre well and challenged the centre manager effectively to bring about improvement. The Children's Centre Improvement Programme Board provides a range of expertise to help improve centres in the area. The board and local officers know what is happening in the centre and support the manager effectively in interpreting information about the area. They are rightly confident that the centre is improving and reaching those families most in need.
- The interim arrangements, however, currently lack the involvement of parents. Similarly, while parents contribute regularly to the shaping of services through their feedback, the parents' forum has not been well attended and parents, including those who live in the most deprived areas, have not had a significant role in running the centre.
- The centre's policies and procedures to promote the welfare of young children are effective and a priority for everyone at the centre. Similarly, the centre's work with children subject to child protection plans, the common assessment framework or identified as being in need is successful in bringing about improvements for families and keeping children safe.
- The centre makes creative use of its staff, buildings, partnerships and community venues to provide good services that lead to improving outcomes for families in the locality.

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 details

Unique reference number	22319
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	461145
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	2,124
Centre leader	Leanne White
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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