

Didsbury Park Children's Centre

Wilmslow Road, Manchester, M20 2RW

Inspection dates	3–4 February 2015
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
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 is a centre that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- The offer of adult learning and training opportunities is very limited. Too few adults access courses to develop their qualifications, well-being, parenting and employability skills.
- The centre does not do enough to track the progress of adults who do attend courses and the impact of this learning on their lives.
- Links with local schools and early years providers are not strong enough to improve on children's learning and their readiness for school.
- Leaders and those in governance have brought about improvements to the quality of practice and services. However, plans for future improvement do not set clear enough targets for development and do not include all of the most important priorities. This makes it difficult for the advisory board to effectively hold the centre leaders to account.

This centre has the following strengths:

- The services provided are of good quality and the centre ensures that those families in most need of support can attend.
- The centre has ensured that almost all families in its reach area are registered with the centre, and most are engaged in centre services.
- The newly appointed manager has a good awareness of the centre's strengths and areas for development.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Develop clearer priorities and targets in action planning in order to drive improvements more effectively and enable the advisory board to better hold the centre to account.
- Develop partnerships with schools and early years providers to ensure continuity in learning and improved school readiness.
- Improve access to services by:
 - increasing opportunities for adults to develop skills in order to improve their well-being, parenting skills and life chances
 - developing further systems to demonstrate the impact of this learning.

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 senior leaders, staff members, local authority officers, partner professionals from other agencies, advisory board members and parents. The inspectors visited the 'Stay and Play', 'Jo Jingles' sessions and 'Healthy child drop-in clinic' that took place at the centre.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centre's self-evaluation form, improvement plans, policies and procedures, and children's case files.

Inspection team

Elaine White, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Heather Hartmann

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Didsbury Park Children's Centre is a standalone centre. It opened in 2010 as a purpose built centre and is situated within the grounds of Didsbury Park. Governance is provided by the local authority, along with an advisory board. The advisory board is shared with five other closely located children's centres, Burnage, Chorlton Park, Chorlton Library, Old Moat and West Didsbury. The centre manager is newly appointed.

There are 881 children under five in the reach area, 224 of whom live in the Ladybarn and Pytha estate areas, which are in the 40% most disadvantaged. The remaining areas are in the 70% most disadvantaged. In partnership with other professionals, the centre offers a range of services including health care and information, sessions to help parents support their children's learning and development, and individual advice and guidance.

The area includes families from a range of minority ethnic groups, including an increasing number of Pakistani families. However, the majority of families in the area are White British. Approximately 23% of children live in households dependent upon workless benefits. Most children's skills and knowledge on entry to early years provision are in line with those typical for their age.

The main priority groups assessed in need of the centre's services are identified as: families with children living in the Ladybarn and Pytha estate areas; Pakistani families; families with children who are looked after or who are supported through the Common Assessment Framework and families with children eligible for two-year-old funding.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Not enough adults are accessing courses to improve their well-being, parenting skills and life chances. There are no adult courses running at the centre and, although centre staff signpost adults to courses run at the local 'learning hub', few adults access courses.
- Over the last year, the centre's outreach work has been successful in increasing registration and engagement of local families. As a result, most families now access services.
- The number of Pakistani families, families living in the Ladyburn and Pytha estates, those who are looked after or supported through the Common Assessment Framework has also increased and most of these families are accessing services.
- The centre monitors attendance at its services to ensure that places are taken by families who live in the centre's reach area, and that priority is given to families most in need of support.
- Some families in the reach area attend services at another children's centre closer to their home. Centre staff know which services families attend at these centres to ensure that all families are accessing relevant services to meet their needs, including expectant parents.
- The centre works well to ensure that two-, three- and four-year-old children eligible for free early education places take up these places. As a result, most children access their places in good-quality settings.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The centre provides a range of relevant services, most of which are open to all families in the area. Adults need to book in advance for most services, and the centre ensures that the families most in need of help are able to attend.
- Sessions provided at the centre such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Baby Massage' are well attended and

are of good quality. Children's learning is tracked and, although still developing, this system ensures that staff build on children's learning and promote their progress well.

- Children generally achieve well at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, although achievement is lower in more disadvantaged areas. In 2014, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was well below the national average in the Ladybarn and Pytha estate areas. The centre does not have strong links with the schools and early years settings in the area to share information and track learning to ensure that all children are well prepared for school.
- Tracking of adult education is in the very early stages and, at present, shows little evidence of positive progress for adults in improving life chances and reducing inequalities. The centre is working more closely with the adult learning service to engage more parents.
- Centre staff provide a good level of support to families and there is evidence of the impact of this on improving lives in terms of reducing isolation, and improving parenting skills. Case files are documented well and families routinely involved.
- Parents make a positive contribution to the development of services. Their views are sought and acted upon and this has resulted in the timetable being adapted to meet their needs. A parent volunteer is involved in the running of a popular 'Baby and Toddler' session.
- Health outcomes for the area are positive, with high rates of breastfeeding, immunisation and healthy weight children in Reception Year. The centre promotes healthy lifestyles through advice given at drop-in clinics and through the weekly 'Little Superstars' physical activity session.
- A positive partnership with health visitors contributes to ensuring that information is shared, registration rates are high and that families attend appointments for developmental checks and immunisation. Health visitors offer children's centre registration forms at all initial post-birth home visits. Centre staff remind parents of their appointments and attend the developmental checks.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The children's centre has experienced changes to leadership and governance since its establishment. There have been several changes of centre manager and the advisory board has been re-established to become a joint advisory board, overseeing six children's centres. This has slowed the rate of progress for the centre.
- The very newly appointed centre manager is an experienced centre manager and has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the centre. She is fully committed to closing the gap and improving outcomes for families and children and building on the improvements led by the previous manager.
- The centre's action plan targets are not always precise, and plans do not include all of the recognised areas for development, such as the need to develop partnerships with schools. This hinders the rate of improvement and makes it more difficult for the advisory board to effectively hold the centre to account.
- The local authority provides good support in evaluating the centre, and provides clear targets for improving registration and engagement. An external evaluation in February 2014 identified significant weaknesses in the centre's performance. Since then, centre leaders have made improvements to registration, engagement and to the quality and monitoring of services.
- Over the past year, the centre has more accurately identified the families most in need of its support, and has ensured that most of these families are accessing services. As a result, there is some evidence of improvements to families' lives in terms of increased registration and positive outcomes from the centre's involvement with individual families. This contributes positively to closing the gap and reducing inequalities for children and families.
- The advisory board has an accurate overview of how well the centre is doing and how staff performance is managed. It is familiar with the data and knows which areas the centre needs to improve in order to further reduce inequalities for children and families.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are effectively in place. Staff attend a good level of training and are vigilant in ensuring families are safe at the centre. The centre knows all the children who

are subject to a child protection plan, in need or looked after. Staff work closely with partners to give full support through the use of the Common Assessment Framework.

- Resources are used appropriately to ensure that a suitable range of services for families are provided by staff and partners.

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	20958
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	454017
Managed by	The local authority.

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	881
Centre leader	Nicola Peak
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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