

Bowes and Garfield Children's Centre

Garfield Childrens, Centre Springfield Road, New Southgate, N11 1RR

Inspection dates	10–11 February 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.

- Most local families are registered with the centre and a large majority of families in most need of support, including those from priority target groups, access the centre's services on a regular basis.
- The quality of activities provided by the centre is typically good and in some cases outstanding; attendance at sessions is consistently high.
- Children who use the centre's services enjoy their experiences and show a good level of development from their individual starting points. Parenting courses are effective in improving parents' confidence in raising their children and helping them achieve successfully.
- Dedicated and professional staff provide very good support for children and families, especially in times of crisis. Particularly good work helps families new to the area to feel welcome at the centre.
- Governance is robust and includes close checks on the centre's performance. Senior managers at both linked schools provide very good support for the newly appointed centre manager.
- There is a clear and shared strategic vision for the centre, the action plan is helping move things forward at a good pace and leaders monitor the work carefully to ensure that the overall effectiveness of the centre is good.

It is not outstanding because:

- The lack of reliable information provided about the take up of free education places by eligible two-, three- and four-year-olds hampers managers' otherwise effective work to assist children's school readiness.
- The use of volunteers to support the life and development of the centre is underdeveloped.
- The way in which the support for families is recorded in case files is too variable. The management oversight of case files is currently not rigorous enough.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Work with the local authority to improve the accuracy and timeliness of the information provided about local children's eligibility for free early education.
- Establish a reliable picture of the take-up of free places, including in adjoining local authority areas, and ensure that all eligible children are contacted and offered a place in a good or better quality setting.
- Identify, recruit and train parent volunteers so that they can help build experience and workplace skills and make a contribution to the life and development of the centre.
- Implement the plans to conduct a review of all current practice in case file recording, particularly of the actions identified for follow up.
- Establish clear guidance to promote best practice and ensure that time is used at supervision meetings for managers to check that guidance is being fully met.

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 the centre manager and staff, parents and volunteers, partners in health, education, social care and community services, advisory board members, and representatives from the local authority.

The inspectors visited both sites used by the centre to observe the centre's work. Visits to activities such as 'Stay and Play' and 'TalkActivity' were undertaken. The inspectors looked at the centre's self-evaluation, action planning, a sample of case files, safeguarding practice, policy and procedures and a wide range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Alan Comerford-Dunbar, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Sarah McDermott	Additional inspector
Anthony Mundy	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Bowes and Garfield Children's Centre is managed on behalf of Enfield local authority by Bowes Learning Alliance (URN: 102021) and Garfield Primary School (URN: 101992). Bowes and Garfield Children's Centre began as two separate children's centres in 2006. They became a stand-alone children's centre in April 2012 and deliver services on both school sites which include family support, work in the community, early education activities, parenting and adult learning opportunities. The schools are subject to separate inspection arrangements. Their reports can be found at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>. The centre is governed by a joint committee attended by governors from both schools. An advisory board is in place to assist governance. A new centre manager has recently been appointed.

The centre has approximately 1,262 children under five years of age living in its reach area which is mixed socially and economically. Approximately 6% of children registered at the centre live in workless households. Currently, a quarter of families are White British, with others from different Black minority ethnic groups; some arrive in the area at short notice and directly from war zones. Approximately half of families speak English as an additional language. Most children enter early years provision with a range of skills and knowledge that are below those typical for their age.

The centre has identified the following priority target groups: families from Black minority ethnic groups including those from Eastern Europe; children living in the most deprived areas and children living in families referred to the centre by partner agencies.

The area served by the centre borders two other local authority boundaries; families living in the area use children's centres in all three authorities. Significant housing redevelopment is taking place locally, and, as a result of compulsory purchase orders, hundreds of houses are empty, with families being moved out of the area. The centre is one of 12 children's centres in Enfield. The local authority is conducting a review of all children's centres and decisions are expected later this year.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- Most families are registered with the centre and have access to good information about services available in the area. A large majority of children from Black minority ethnic families, children of Eastern European heritage, children living in the most deprived areas and children living in families referred to the centre by partner agencies attend centre activities on a regular basis.
- The information about families that the centre uses is accurate and up to date and comes from a variety of sources. Staff work well with a range of partners operating in the area served by the centre and this assists the high take-up of services. However, the centre does not have a clear picture of how many families access services in the bordering local authority areas.
- Parents expecting children are accessing services well and receive good advice and guidance as they prepare for the birth of their baby. As a result, access to early childhood services is good, and families benefit from the strong partnership between centre and health professionals. Senior managers have a clear strategy to encourage the ongoing use of the centre by families with children under two years of age.
- Families for whom English is an additional language attend the centre frequently to receive good advice about housing, workless benefits and where they can access English classes. Staff are highly skilled and supportive when helping and advising these families, who come from a wide range of minority ethnic heritages. As a result, the centre is known locally as a safe haven for many families new to the UK.
- Although recently improved, the information available to centre managers shows that too few eligible two-, three- and four-year-olds appear to be taking up their free early years education place.

Furthermore, the centre is unclear about how many children are accessing places in neighbouring authorities, although appropriate plans are now in place to overcome this problem. The local authority has been slow to keep track of the growing number of eligible children, and the absence of reliable information impedes the centre's otherwise good work with young children.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- Parents enjoy attending sessions intended for all families as well as those targeted at supporting children and families in most need. The quality of activities is good, and in some cases outstanding. All sessions are run to capacity and clearly have a positive impact on those who attend.
- Children accessing centre services are happy and well mannered and enjoy learning. They are well prepared for school and make good progress from their starting points. The gap between the lowest achieving Reception-age children and the rest is closing year on year and is better than that seen nationally. Parenting courses are effective in improving parents' confidence in raising their children.
- Staff work well with local schools and are highly effective at tracking the impact of their work on children who have attended the centre on a regular basis. For example, a sample of children aged eight are still being tracked at both linked schools. All of these children are outperforming their peers and achieving higher than the level expected for their age. This reflects very well on the centre's effective work to reduce inequalities.
- Families are very well supported by staff at the centre, who consistently provide caring, personal support, especially for families at a time of crisis. Staff work well with social care and health partners to ensure that all the support provided has a positive impact on family life. One mother said, 'My baby was born premature, at 23 weeks, and if it wasn't for the staff here, he wouldn't be thriving like he is now.'
- Breastfeeding rates are good and well above local and national figures. Centre staff and colleagues from health services are delivering a range of good quality support that are having a positive impact on reducing obesity rates. At every session, participants receive helpful advice about healthy eating and how to lead a more active and healthier life.
- The centre provides good support and guidance for adults who wish to improve their employment or education chances. Staff are highly effective in signposting parents, including those from the most deprived neighbourhood, to the services of partner organisations operating locally. Work is developing to keep their achievements under close review.
- The centre manager is working successfully to obtain the views of parents and involve them in helping to shape services. As a result, several recent changes have been made to the content and timetabling of activities run at the centre. However, there are few opportunities to engage parents in the daily life of the centre, for example as volunteers. Suitable plans to drive improvement have been devised; however, it is too early to judge the impact of the planned actions.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Leaders, managers and those responsible for governance share a clear vision for the centre and have devised well-conceived plans for sustaining improvements. Good quality support and robust challenge are provided by the Bowes and Garfield joint governing committee at their termly review meetings. The effective annual review led by the local authority ensures close checks on the centre's performance. As a result, the overall effectiveness of the centre is good.
- Well-qualified staff come from a range of relevant professional backgrounds and provide highly effective support for children and families. Leaders from both linked schools have provided the recently appointed centre manager with very good support. Already, the manager is making a significant improvement to the quality and appropriateness of services offered; all staff receive training which supports centre-specific targets.
- Both sites used by the centre are safe and secure places which children and families enjoy visiting.

Policies, procedures and the practice of staff ensure that arrangements for safeguarding are robust and effective. Centre staff work well with social care colleagues to ensure that children who are looked after, in need or subject to child protection plans, and those families being supported through early help assessments, are well protected.

- Staff work well with partners from health services, local schools and adult education to provide a wide range of effective and timely help for families. In particular, the support for adults for whom English is an additional language is highly popular and very effective. Centre staff provide good support for children and families referred by colleagues under the Single Point of Entry (SPOE) assessments process.
- The centre manager and staff have been instrumental in sustaining the involvement of parents using the centre during a period of high mobility caused by major housing redevelopments in the community. Parents are appropriately involved in the work of the advisory board and are able to have their say in planning future services.
- Resources are good because staff make the most of the space available and most activities are full to capacity. Careful planning ensures that both sites offer activities that do not clash with events at other local children's centres. Parents report that they feel safe and very welcome at both sites used by the centre.
- Files used to record the support given to families in most need lack a consistency of approach and this makes it difficult to track the impact of actions being taken and their impact on families. Also, whilst supervision of family support is regular and valued, it is not well documented within the family files. These shortcomings have already been recognised by managers. However, the intended plans for full file audits, clarification of policies and procedures and staff training have yet to be implemented.

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	21240
Local authority	Enfield
Inspection number	454042
Managed by	Bowes Learning Alliance and Garfield Primary School on Behalf of the Local Authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,262
Centre leader	Mandie Patterson
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