

Barra Hall Children's Centre

Bara Hall, Wood End Green Road, Hayes, UB3 2SA

Inspection dates		9–11 June 2015	
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
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:

- Not enough children and families from priority groups use the centre regularly.
- Less than half of eligible two-year-olds take up their free early education place.
- The local authority is not providing the centre with enough reliable or up-to-date data, particularly about the children and families in most need. Other partners are not sharing enough information, such as about families where there is social care involvement. This hampers leaders' ability to fully address the needs of priority groups.
- The gap between the outcomes for some children at the end of the early years and that of their peers is not reducing quickly enough. Tracking children's progress when children move on to school and nursery is not well developed.
- Opportunities for adults to improve their learning, skills and employability are limited. Some partnerships are still developing and so the systems to track the longer term benefits for adults are not robust enough.
- The local authority, leaders and managers are not setting targets that are focused clearly enough on the centre's impact on priority children and families. The local authority's monitoring is not robust and reviews do not provide an accurate picture of the centre's effectiveness. This limits the centre's capacity to improve.
- Some safeguarding policies and documents are not updated regularly enough.

This centre has the following strengths:

- The centre is very welcoming to everyone in the community. There are many opportunities for families to access early health services delivered from the centre by midwives and health visitors. This gives families an early introduction to the centre's services and has helped to lift registrations, so that three quarters of young children are now known to the centre.
- There is a strong focus on getting children ready for school and on home learning. Staff are very experienced in early years development and this threads through sessions such as Attention Hillingdon. Children who need additional help receive a high level of support from the centre.
- The manager leads the team of experienced and highly motivated staff well. They have an in-depth understanding of the local community, as do members of the well-attended locality advisory board.
- Parents are very positive about the centre and the support they receive from trusted staff.
- The centre is well resourced. Good use is made of other children's centres in the locality to share some of the services for families, such as the Jigsaw project to support adult learning.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Increase the regular contact of the identified priority groups so that the large majority make use of the centre's services until their needs are met by:
 - establishing why some families do not use services after they have registered
 - ensuring that when families use services at other borough children's centres, or at partners supported by the centre, this information is captured to provide a more accurate picture.
- Increase the take up of free early education by eligible two-year-olds so that most, if not all, get off to the best start. Look to provide appropriate centre support for families who decline the offer.
- Work with the local authority and partners to improve the quality, accuracy and timeliness of data made available to establish how many children and families from priority groups live locally. Use this to identify their particular needs. Ensure that information about young children in the local area who are subject to social care supervision, plus new birth information, is shared regularly.
- Work with early years partners and local schools to develop consistent and effective methods to track children in the longer term to measure more accurately the impact of the centre. Use these partnerships to support settings and schools to reduce the gap in achievement between different groups of children when they are five.
- Build stronger links with Jobcentre Plus, colleges and training providers to extend the range of appropriate further learning and skills training, particularly for those living in poverty. Use these links to increase priority groups' take up of services and to track the longer-term impact of the centre.
- Ensure that data about the regular attendance of priority children and families are used as an effective management tool to set challenging targets that are consistent across all documentation. The local authority should ensure that quarterly monitoring reviews are thorough and provide a more accurate assessment of the centre's impact on priority children and families to support its drive for improvement.
- Ensure that all safeguarding policies kept on file are the most up to date and that staff have taken note of them.

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. It was carried out at the same time as three other children's centres, Charville, Pinkwell and Yeading.

This inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre manager, staff, local authority officers and members of the advisory board. They also spoke to several partners, including those from health and early years settings. They took into account the views of parents and volunteers.

The inspectors visited a number of activities held in the centre including Attention Hillingdon and Mover and Groover groups. The Language for Life session was observed jointly with the early years teacher.

The inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation including the centre's action plan and local authority reviews. Safeguarding policies, procedures and practice, as well as case studies, were examined in depth.

The centre managers from all four children's centres attended all team meetings which were held jointly with lead and team inspectors.

Inspection team

Joan Lindsay, Lead Inspector	Additional Inspector
Libby Dickson	Additional Inspector
Graham Saltmarsh	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Barra Hall is a stand-alone centre that is part of the London Borough of Hillingdon's South East Locality. This consists of eight children's centres that work collaboratively, three of which, Charville, Pinkwell and Yeading, were inspected at the same time at this centre. Four others in the locality, namely Belmore, McMillan, Nestle's Avenue and Uxbridge College children's centres, have previously been inspected. All the reports can be found at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>. The centre manager has additional management oversight of four other children's centres directly managed by the local authority that are spread across the three locality areas.

The centre is located in an old manor house in the heart of Hayes, in Middlesex. It originally opened in 2001 and was relaunched in June 2007. It provides early years experiences, family support, adult learning and health services through partnership work. The centre is managed directly by the local authority. There is a locality advisory board in place, shared by all eight centres, to assist governance.

There are 1,569 children aged under five living in the area served by the centre. The area covers sections of the wards of Townfield, Barnhill and Yeading where some parts are within the 20% least advantaged nationally. Almost 40% of children are considered to live in poverty compared to the local authority average of around 26%. One in five families claims Working Tax Credit in the area served by the centre. The local population is very mobile, in part because Heathrow Airport is based in the south of the borough. The area is very ethnically diverse. Approximately 40% of children are from White British backgrounds. The next largest group is from the Asian community. Children generally enter early education at levels well below those typical for their age.

The centre has identified the following priority groups as needing most support: young children living in the highest levels of poverty; families with two-year-olds who are eligible for free early education; and, children who have a special need or disability.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Overall, the centre has registered over 75% of the young children living in its area. However, the regular use of services by children and families from the groups identified as needing most support is not high enough. The reasons for this low take up have not been fully explored by leaders, and this aspect requires improvement.
- At present, less than half the eligible two-year-olds are taking up their entitlement to free early education. Some families are reluctant to do so because they feel their child is too young. However, the centre has not fully established alternative ways to support them to encourage regular access to services. All three- and four-year-olds take up their early education places.
- The information that the local authority provides to establish how many children and families from priority groups live locally is not always reliable, accurate or up to date. Also, arrangements for sharing information are not robust enough to ensure that the centre is aware of all families currently receiving social care supervision. This makes it difficult for the centre to ensure there is a fully accurate picture about which priority groups are using this centre or other centres in the locality, and how to best meet their needs.
- The centre has not fully assessed the needs of families where children are living in the highest levels of poverty to ensure services are tailor made to support them as effectively as possible. However, there is a good range of services to meet the needs of some of these children who require extra help, such as with their speech and language or following a diagnosis of autism. The Attention Hillingdon sessions and Language for Life groups are beginning to increase the regular contact by a growing number of these children.
- The centre provides many opportunities to access early health services on a daily basis, with

midwives and health visitors providing clinics from the building. This has had a positive impact on the number of families who register at the centre. However, systems to pass on information about new births in the local area are not fully effective, which is preventing registrations from being even higher.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The quality, range and relevance of services require improvement. This is because the specific needs of priority groups have not been fully met as not enough use the centre regularly following registration. For example, although the large majority of children living in most poverty are registered at the centre, only half use the centre regularly.
- Although improving, in 2014 just under half of children who are five achieved a good level of development, which is well below the national picture. The gap between the achievements of some groups, such as boys and children eligible for free school meals, is not narrowing quickly enough.
- The centre's early years teacher and practitioners are highly experienced and provide positive role models. There is a strong focus on early learning in the high quality sessions delivered, such as Language for Life. Detailed and informative learning journeys for individual children, such as those who benefit from time in the respite crèche, show that children make good progress. Parents and early years settings are fulsome in their praise for the centre's transition programme. However, this evidence is largely anecdotal as there are no consistent methods to track the longer term impact of the centre's work.
- Opportunities for priority adults to extend their learning, skills and employability are limited. The locality's Jigsaw project has had some impact on improving the range of services. However, the number who has been able to be supported this way is relatively small. Although Jobcentre Plus does deliver some services from Barra Hall Children's Centre, the links are not fully developed with this partner or with local colleges and adult education providers. Consequently, information is not being used to track the longer-term impact for families is not being shared.
- The proportion of babies still being breastfed at around two months is well above that seen nationally. This is as a result of good support offered via the centre and regular opportunities to access health professionals. Children's weight is generally at a healthy level at age five. The centre has a strong focus on ensuring families make use of the outdoors through Saturday gardening sessions, for example. Parents are supported well to understand how to eat healthily by centre cooking courses such as Feed My Family.
- Although there are no specific family outreach workers attached to Barra Hall Children's Centre, families who need additional support have their needs met effectively through the use of early help checks. Key workers, who are part of the early help team, are co-located in the centre and they also provide effective support for families with more complex needs to ensure they get their lives back on track.
- Parents have very positive views of the centre and are especially trusting of staff. A typical comment made was, 'If you are worried or scared, this is the place you would run to.' Well attended monthly coffee mornings provide regular opportunities for parents to air their views, that are then reflected on the 'You said, we did' boards, ensuring parents are full involved in the centre.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- Those who lead and manage the centre have been hampered in their ability to do so effectively due to a lack of reliable data relating to priority children and families and their regular use of the centre. Targets set at all levels are not precise or measurable enough or consistent across all documentation; there is not a strong enough focus on improving access by priority children and families. Consequently, targets are too easy and not challenging enough.
- The local authority conducts regular reviews. However, these are not thorough enough to ensure the centre has a clear and accurate understanding of its impact on families who need support the

most. This hinders the centre's capacity to improve and its ability to reduce inequalities in the local area.

- The locality advisory board is expertly chaired and has a broad membership from partners and parents. It makes an effective contribution through challenging, as well as supporting, the centre. Members are knowledgeable about the local community and well informed about the centre. They ensure they know what is going on by visiting sessions, but their work is hampered by a lack of information about priority children and families' access to centre services.
- Some of the centre's safeguarding policies, such as the lone worker policy, are beyond their review date. Staff are fully aware of other policies and procedures, but the system to record that they have read and understood the contents is not robust enough. Although staff are well trained in child protection and safeguarding aspects, the training record has not been updated recently to reflect this.
- Other safeguarding aspects, such as working in partnership to support families through early help assessments, are effective. This is because there are well-developed links with health partners and early years settings. The centre provides effective support for children subject to child protection plans, children in need and those who are looked after when they know who those children are. Current arrangements for sharing information do not automatically ensure the centre has this information.
- The centre manager has a wider responsibility, overseeing four other children's centres across the borough. Although this puts additional demands on her time, she is ably supported by dedicated and experienced staff who work cohesively as a team.
- Arrangements for setting targets for staff and supervision are carried out regularly and effectively. The team feels well supported in this regard.
- Resources are of a high quality and are enhanced through the collaborative work with other centres. The centre's outdoor area and adjacent park are particularly well used. This allows children to have easy access to a wide range of resources to develop their early learning and encourages them to be active. Staff resources are used effectively, especially in relation to supporting children to be ready for school. The provision of crèches to give parents some respite and to support attendance on parenting programmes groups is also a useful resource, much appreciated by parents.
- Parents' views are sought frequently. As a result, parents feel valued by staff and their views are acted on. For example, when numbers got too high for everyone to attend, leaders put on additional sessions of Come and Play. Survey results and regular evaluations reflect the high levels of satisfaction.

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

Unique reference number	20191
Local authority	London Borough of Hillingdon
Inspection number	455093
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,569
Centre manager	Lorraine Penson
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01895 277877
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