

Violet Melchett Children's Centre

30 Flood Street, Chelsea, SW3 5RR

Inspection dates	30 June–1 July 2015
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
		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:

- Too few families are registered with the centre, and not enough families from some priority groups access the centre on a regular basis. This is specifically the case for two-year-old children eligible for free education and children who are being supervised by social care.
- Not enough children are accessing their free early years education place.
- Systems are not in place to track the progress children make, particularly those from priority families, once they leave the centre and enter nursery or school.
- An insufficient number of parents access courses and volunteering programmes, as a first step towards further training and employment.
- Not all staff, managers and advisory board members have the confidence to analyse data so they can judge the impact of the centre's work on reducing inequalities. This impedes the centre's capacity to make improvements.

This centre has the following strengths:

- Every family that visits the centre receives good advice, guidance and support from staff dedicated to helping families.
- The centre's successful partnership work with health professionals has resulted in positive and improving health outcomes for families.
- Strong partnerships between centre staff and social care provide effective support for children subject to child protection plans or early assessment of families in need.
- The local authority provides good support to the centre, through its rigorous programme of quality assurance and governance.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- With the local authority, continue with plans to increase the sufficiency of suitable early years placements, to ensure that most eligible two-, three- and four-year-olds take up their free early education place.
- Ensure most families are registered and regularly attend centre activities, particularly two-year-old children eligible for free education and children who are being supervised by social care.
- Expand upon the programmes currently being delivered to help adults back into work, and increase the number of parents completing courses and volunteering programmes.
- Track the progress children make following their attendance at the centre, particularly those from priority families, when they transfer to pre-school or nursery. This will help centre staff to better judge the quality and impact of their work with children over the longer term.
- Ensure centre staff, managers and advisory board members are helped to gain the skills and confidence to better analyse data, so that they can demonstrate the impact of the centre's work on reducing inequalities and improving the lives of families.

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 the inspection of Chelsea Open Air Children's Centre (URN 20661) with which it works in collaboration.

This inspection was carried out by two Additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager and staff; parents and volunteers; partners in health, education and social care; advisory board members; and representatives from the local authority.

The inspectors visited the children's centre. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the centre's self-evaluation, development plan, safeguarding practice, policy and procedures and a sample of case files.

Inspection team

Alan Comerford-Dunbar, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Elizabeth Dickson	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Violet Melchett Children's Centre opened in 2007, as a stand-alone centre. It delivers a range of services including health, parenting classes, stay and play sessions, adult learning and family support. It is one of four children's centres which form part of the Kensington and Chelsea South Locality. The centre works in collaboration with Chelsea Open Air Nursery and Children's Centre (URN 20661), Cheyne Children's Centre (URN 105681) and St Cuthbert with St Mathias CE Primary School and Children's Centre (URN 244460), sharing services and data. Violet Melchett Children's Centre and Chelsea Open Air Nursery and Children's Centre were inspected simultaneously.

The centre is managed by the local authority. There is also an advisory board responsible for both centres being inspected, which comprises of parents and key partners. The centre has its own parents forum. The centre operates on the site of Violet Melchett Children's Day Nursery (URN: EY105748). This is subject to a separate inspection and the report can be found at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

The number of children under five years of age living in the area served by the centre is 910. The surrounding area is very affluent but has small pockets of deprivation. The unemployment rate in the area is low, at 7.3%. About half of the children living in the area are educated privately. Children's skills and abilities on entry to early education are below the levels expected for their age.

The centre serves a community that is culturally diverse, with high numbers of families moving in and out of the borough. Just over a quarter of families are of White British heritage, with the remainder being from a range of minority ethnic groups. Just over half of all families speak English as an additional language.

The centre has identified the following priority groups as needing most support: two-year-old children who are eligible for free education; children who are receiving early help; and children who are being supervised by social care.

The local authority is currently making transitional changes to the way in which it delivers children's centre services, in order to be cost effective and to reach more families who are in most need of support.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Although the majority of families are registered with the centre, strategies for encouraging families to attend regularly are not fully effective. Too few families, especially two-year-old children who are eligible for free education and children who are being supervised by social care, attend services on a regular basis. In contrast, all families of children who are receiving early help access services on a regular basis.
- Too few eligible two-, three- and four-year-olds take up their free entitlement to early education. The local authority is researching the reasons for this, and some useful engagement with families living in the area suggests this is linked to the affluence of some families who choose not to access their entitlement. There are sensible plans in place to further increase the sufficiency of places locally.
- Effective strategies such as 'The Pregnant Family Pathway', recently introduced by the centre, are gradually improving early contact with families. Access to early childhood services is improving due to the centre's highly effective partnership working with health colleagues, and in particular local midwives. This ensures that antenatal and postnatal classes held locally and at the centre are now well attended and highly valued by parents-to-be and those with new babies.

- Too few parents currently benefit from programmes available to help improve their employability chances or education. Those who do attend, including those who speak English as an additional language, receive good advice about housing and the benefits to which they are entitled. Although the processes used to train parents as volunteers are appropriate, too few are taking part in the training programme.
- Within the centre, good use is made of wall space and displays to reinforce key messages about health and safety, celebrate achievement and ensure all visitors are aware of the centre's priority to support families in greatest need. Families enjoy attending the centre; as one mother put it, 'It's a safe, friendly place to come.'

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The number of children and families from priority groups attending activities is not high enough, and this requires improvement. The range of activities, both those open to everyone and those designed specifically to support priority groups, is appropriate to meet the needs of families. Following recent initiatives, such as the 'Live Birth Pathway', increasing numbers of families are benefitting from the services on offer.
- The quality of courses provided for parents, for example English for Speakers of Other Languages and paediatric first aid, are good. Some parents have benefited from family and adult learning opportunities that increase their confidence and skills. However, the low take-up limits the impact they have on fully meeting needs and reducing inequalities.
- Information and advice for families seeking work or wishing to volunteer are effective. In particular, those adults who opt to work with the Families and Communities Employment Services (FACES) receive good individual support. There are good outcomes for these individuals, with a third gaining employment. However, there are too few adults becoming volunteers or benefiting from services of FACES.
- Within sessions, the centre effectively tracks the development of targeted children who regularly attend. However, the centre is not ensuring that it knows how its good work is helping children make a positive start to their learning as they move on to nurseries and schools. Broadly, the proportion of children who attain a good level of development is below national figures, although the achievement gap between children from the poorest backgrounds and others is reducing more quickly than seen nationally.
- Families are well supported by staff at the centre, who consistently provide good support, especially in times 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. As one father highlighted, 'When my daughter was diagnosed as disabled, I didn't know what to do, but the staff here have helped me to cope.'
- Centre staff work closely with colleagues from health and together they are delivering a range of good quality services that are having a positive impact on the health of families. Noticeboards are full of helpful information and tips on how to improve families' health and well-being. Breastfeeding rates are good, and the obesity rate for Reception-age children is in line with national figures.
- Parents are fully involved in centre activities and clearly have a voice within the centre. Parents talk about the positive impact attending the centre has on their well-being. For example, they say they feel more confident to involve themselves in the education of their children and build knowledge about how to keep their children safe. The centre responds well to any issues or concerns raised by parents.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership, governance and management require improvement because not enough focus has been given to ensuring that most children and families are registered and attend centre activities regularly. Nevertheless, as a result of making good use of the recently acquired 'live birth' data, more families, including those from target groups, are now starting to attend centre activities.

- The effectiveness of the advisory board requires improvement, which members acknowledge, because they are still developing their role and procedures in order to effectively challenge leaders and hold the centre's performance to account. Membership of the advisory board is appropriately drawn from the voluntary and community sectors, and includes parents and carers. Members receive helpful data from the local authority and are becoming increasingly confident about asking questions concerning the differences in performance between centres in the locality.
- The centre manager provides good support for well-qualified staff, who come from a range of relevant professional backgrounds. Staff are working positively to meet local needs during a time of significant change, including their roles and responsibilities being reviewed. All staff receive appropriate training which helps them meet centre-specific targets and enables them to perform their duties with competence and confidence.
- Policies, procedures and the practice of staff ensure that arrangements for safeguarding are robust and effective. The centre is a safe and secure place that children and families enjoy visiting. 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. Centre staff work closely with a wide range of partners to provide effective and timely help for children and families most in need.
- The centre has sufficient resources, which are appropriately deployed. The building is spacious and well resourced. It is very much at the heart of the local community and appreciated by a wide range of families from different heritage backgrounds. Classrooms and outdoor play areas have a lovely array of resources and toys for children to play with. Other occupants of the building include health professionals and early years educators. The centre is a busy, safe environment for families to visit.
- The local authority has recently implemented a rigorous programme of quality assurance visits to monitor the centre's performance. This is proving effective in supporting improvements and having a positive impact on the quality of sessions run, especially those for children. Managers and staff are comfortable with the process, which is conducted in a supportive manner that helps staff to improve their practice.

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	23422
Local authority	Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
Inspection number	447567
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	910
Centre manager	Bash Kehinde
Telephone number	0207 938 8621
Email address	Busola.kehinde@rbkc.gov.uk

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