

Fulham Central Children's Centre

Tudor Rose Community Hall, Shottendane Road, London, SW6 5PG

Inspection dates	24–25 June 2015
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Inadequate	4
The quality of practice and services		Inadequate	4
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a centre that is inadequate.

- The centre has not identified clearly which groups of families are in the most need of its services. It has not shaped services to meet the needs of the priority groups it has identified.
- Not enough two-year-olds who are eligible for free early education are receiving their entitlement. The centre has only recently had the information to identify these children.
- The centre does not work effectively with its local schools. It does not know whether its work is improving children's school readiness.
- The needs of children and families who come to the centre for special help are not accurately assessed, and this limits the effectiveness of the centre's work to support families most in need.
- The centre's leadership, governance and management structures are inadequate. The advisory board does not challenge and support the centre to improve its work. The centre does not work effectively with parents who are the most in need. As a result, they are not provided with the services that they most require. Not enough parents who are in most need are contributing to shaping its services.
- The local authority has not provided the centre with all the information it requires to direct its services to where local need is greatest.
- The centre is not evaluating its work effectively. It does not know what it needs to do next to improve its services, particularly for those in most need.
- The centre has not developed a strong pathway to support the employability of workless families. It does not check whether these families are accessing the help they need.

This centre has the following strengths:

- Over the last year, the centre has worked hard to increase its registrations. Most children in the locality are now registered with the centre and their families have access to its information. The centre has increased its registrations for those living near Ray's Playhouse through partnership work with social services, health and education providers.
- The centre's partnership with local early years providers is improving their quality of practice.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that access to services is good for children and families from all priority groups by:
 - working with the local authority to obtain clear and accurate information that will enable the centre to identify its target groups
 - working with all partners to identify the requirements of the families in most need, and providing the right services for them
 - improving the take-up of two-year-olds who are eligible for free early education, working with their families to identify any unmet needs they may have, and providing support for those who choose not to take up the offer of free early education.
- Ensure that services have a positive impact on improving outcomes for all priority groups by:
 - tracking and checking the impact of each of the centre's activities to reduce any inequalities
 - improving school readiness by identifying which groups of children in the locality need additional support, and working with schools and other partners to improve children's knowledge and skills in preparation for when they start school
 - tailoring services, such as 'Stay and Play' to meet the needs of the centre's identified target groups of children and families
 - developing activities to support parenting skills, and tracking the progress of parents who are referred to other agencies to develop their parenting skills
 - developing e-safety and first-aid courses to further improve parenting and the safety of children
 - accurately assessing the needs of vulnerable children and families referred to the centre for support and involving parents in this work
 - creating effective links with employment and adult learning partners to improve the economic well-being and outcomes for the families in most need.
- Develop the effectiveness of leadership, governance and management by:
 - ensuring that the local authority and other partners provide the centre with the information required to improve its services and target priority groups more effectively
 - developing and shaping the centre's services to meet the needs of its priority groups
 - developing the centre's knowledge of how well it is doing by basing judgements on secure tracking and checking of its services
 - producing an effective and working action plan, with timescales and precise targets for improvements, that enables the centre to improve outcomes for all priority groups
 - developing parental involvement from priority groups in the work of the centre, particularly through its advisory board and parent forums
 - improving the quality of challenge from the Pre-School Learning Alliance and the local authority
 - developing a strong advisory board by securing the appointment of an independent chair to ensure that the board is in a position to effectively challenge and improve the work of the centre.

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 children's centre manager and a representative from the lead body, Pre-school Learning Alliance. Discussions were also held with staff, volunteers, parents, and members of the advisory board. A wide range of partners such as representatives from early years settings, a school, health, community, and social care were also included in discussions.

The inspectors visited activities held at Fulham Central Children's Centre, including 'Stay and Play' and the 'Talking Together' programme. An inspector visited 'Movers and Shakers' at New King's Family Space. Safeguarding documentation was checked for Bishop's Park and Normand Croft Family Centre. An inspector visited Ray's Playhouse, the children's centre linked site. Joint observations were undertaken with the children's centre manager and a senior member of staff.

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

Inspection team

Teresa Kiely, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Peter Towner	Additional inspector
Sarah McDermott	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Fulham Central Children's Centre 'hub' is run from purpose-built premises in the Fulham Court. There are three 'spoke' delivery sites: New King's Family Space, Bishop's Park Community Building and Normand Croft Community Space. The 'hub' and 'spoke' form of management for Fulham Central Children's Centre has been in place since 2011. The centre also has a linked site, Ray's Playhouse, which is commissioned and funded by the Local Authority to deliver Children's Centre services. New King's Family Space and Normand Croft Community Space are on school sites. These primary schools are subject to separate reporting arrangements and their reports can be found at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>. The centre is managed by the Pre-school Learning Alliance. An advisory board is in place to support governance, and the interim chair is the manager of the centre.

There are approximately 3,191 children under five years of age living in the locality. The area is diverse, with areas of affluence, and pockets of disadvantage. There are 37 distinct areas in the locality. Nine areas are ranked among the 10% most disadvantaged in England, six fall within the next 20%, and four more within the next 30% least advantaged areas. The proportion of young children living in households where no one is in work is 17%.

The range of children's skills and knowledge when they start school is very broad, but is generally typical for their age. There are diverse ethnic groups in the locality. The main groups are White British, any other White background, any other mixed background, and those of African ethnicities, including Somalian and Ethiopian communities.

Services provided by the centre include early learning, adult learning and volunteering, family support, child and family health. Priority target groups identified by the centre are: families referred for additional support, children with speech and language delay, two-year-olds eligible for free early education funding, and children who are in most need and who live close to Ray's Playhouse.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Inadequate

- Identification of the centre's priority groups is too weak. This is because partnerships, such as those with schools and Jobcentre Plus are not helping the centre to identify the needs of families who are in most need.
- The centre is not in touch with 'hard to reach' families and it is not making consistent and effective efforts to reach and engage with those families in need.
- The centre changed its identification of priority families last year. As a result, staff are still not yet clear about which groups have now been identified as experiencing difficulties, nor how the centre's work helps them to reduce the inequalities they face.
- Sessions such as 'Stay and Play' are not being used effectively to help families from priority groups to access the help they need. The centre does not track the outcomes of signposting priority families to the services they may need. This means that it does not know whether its advice is effective.
- The centre cannot accurately show that its targeted work with priority groups, such as children who experience speech and language delay, is effective. This is because partners are not sharing children's identified needs with the centre. The centre cannot check whether these needs have been fully met, or whether more activity from the centre is needed.
- Work with eligible two-year-olds is underdeveloped. The centre has only recently received the information it needs to contact families to help them to access free early education. Although the centre can show that a majority of these children are known to them, only a minority of these families have engaged with the centre and their children have taken up their entitlement.
- Children and families who are referred to the centre for support receive help in a timely way

through planned outreach support. However, only a minority of families identified by social care are known to the centre. This means that the centre has not been successful in identifying and working with its local vulnerable families, especially those who find it hard to engage with its services.

- The centre now receives information about live births from its health partner. This has helped increase registration; most families are now registered and a large majority are accessing information, advice and support.
- The centre has improved registrations, access and engagement for a large majority of children who live in the 10% most disadvantaged area in Sand's End, close to Ray's Playhouse. However, the centre has not measured the success of its partnership with Ray's Playhouse, or identified and addressed the requirements of the families in most need in this area of disadvantage.

The quality of practice and services

Inadequate

- Tracking and checking the quality and impact of the services offered by the centre is inadequate. The centre does not analyse the effectiveness of its targeted work with groups who have the most need. It does not check whether all its activities are focused on reducing inequality for those families living in the locality who experience disadvantage.
- The centre's work with its identified target groups is at an early stage of development because the centre does not share planning with partners effectively.
- In shaping its services, the centre does not use local information on children's attainment at the end of Reception class; nor does it use information from schools about their families' needs.
- The progress of priority children in their communication and language, physical and personal development is not tracked when they attend centre activities. Information sharing and partnership work with schools is very weak. This means that the centre cannot effectively show that it is improving school readiness.
- The sessions which are open to all are not checked to ensure that they are meeting the needs of those who are from its priority groups. As a result, too many activities are not improving outcomes for the families in most need. A large majority of those attending 'Stay and Play' activities are childminders and nannies, not needy families.
- Case workers have regular supervision, and this helps them to safeguard vulnerable children. However, there are weaknesses with the management of case files. Actions to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families are not identified effectively and this means that work is not sharply focused.
- The centre is not helping parents enough with their responsibilities for their children's welfare and well-being. Parenting sessions are too narrow in helping parents to support their children's development and well-being. Although most parents have the opportunity to attend baby massage sessions, the centre does not provide courses in parenting skills to help those who are experiencing difficulties. Some parents are encouraged to access a vocational course in childcare, but this is not appropriate or suitable for the vast majority of parents. E-safety training has not been delivered to parents and very few parents attend first-aid courses.
- Provision for adults, including the development of employability skills and training, is underdeveloped. The centre is not able to show that its work is having a positive effect on out-of-work families. As a result, its work to improve families' economic well-being is weak.
- The centre works effectively with its health partners and this supports them to offer services linked to children's well-being. Although childhood obesity is slightly above average, breastfeeding rates are strong, and smoking at delivery is well below national averages.
- Partnerships with local early education providers are improving the quality of practice in these settings.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Inadequate

- There is a lack of strategic direction at all levels of leadership, governance and management of the

centre. This means that there is not a clear, targeted and effective plan to support families who experience difficulties and inequalities.

- The centre's evaluation of its own work is very weak. It is not measuring the impact of all its activities in terms of reducing inequalities. The centre's actions to check its service and track improvements for its priority group's life chances are poor. Consequently, the results of its planned actions to improve its services are also poor.
- The centre is aware of some of its difficulties, and has a plan to put in place needed improvements. However, it has not been able to access all the information it needs from the local authority to target its services to where they are most needed. The local authority has not monitored the centre's work to improve outcomes for priority families sufficiently closely. As a consequence, the centre is not achieving its core purpose.
- The centre manager administers the performance of staff appropriately and supports the development of staff skills, but this is not linked to improving outcomes for the centre's priority groups. Governance is weak, and lacks rigour and challenge. The advisory board members have accepted what the centre has told them without challenging the decisions that managers have taken. They have not sought to find out whether the centre's decision to change its priority groups is based on an accurate knowledge of needs in the locality. Board members have not asked the questions about the centre's performance that would improve its management. They have not secured an independent chairperson. There is no active parent representation on the board. As a result, the advisory board is not in a position to provide adequate challenge to the centre in improving outcomes for those families who need its services the most.
- The sites used by the centre are safe and secure places. Staff are effectively vetted so that arrangements for safeguarding children are secure.
- The Pre-school Learning Alliance knows the centre's weaknesses in assessing needs, tracking results and measuring the impact of its services. However, it has not taken a strategic lead or acted quickly enough to bring about improvements.

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	21223
Local authority	Hammersmith and Fulham
Inspection number	452808
Managed by	The Pre-school Learning Alliance on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	3191
Centre leader	Sheila Kane
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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