

Inspection report for Rebecca Cheetham Children's Centre

Local authority	London Borough of Newham
Inspection number	384063
Inspection dates	12–13 December 2012
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Linked school if applicable	Rebecca Cheetham Nursery Education Centre URN 102702
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Rebecca Cheetham Nursery and Children's Centre URN 132352

The inspection of this Sure Start children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

Report published: December 2012



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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager and coordinator, representatives from the local authority, the governing body and the children's centre committee. They also spoke to partner services, for example a health visitor and representative from adult education, parents and other users of the centre.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the delivery plan.

Information about the centre

This phase one centre was designated in April 2006 and it fulfils the full core purpose. The children's centre is managed by the governing body of Rebecca Cheetham Nursery Education Centre on behalf of the local authority. The headteacher of the school has overall responsibility for the children's centre, with a children's centre coordinator responsible for the day-to-day management. The children's centre committee acts as an advisory board. Services are available from 8.00am until 6.00pm, Monday to Friday, with activities on some Saturdays, for 48 weeks of the year.

The reach area covers six complete and eight partial Super Output Areas (SOAs). All but one SOA falls within the 18% most deprived in England, with two being in the lowest 5%. The area is very ethnically diverse, with 83% of families from minority ethnic groups including 37% from Asian backgrounds. Some 27% of children aged under five years live in households dependent on workless benefits which is well above with the national average. Information about the proportion of eligible families receiving the childcare element of Working Tax Credit is not available.

There are 1,528 children aged from birth to five years living in the centre’s reach area. Children’s skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years provision are typically well below the level expected for their age.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children’s centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for families

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre’s capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

2

Main findings

Rebecca Cheetham Children’s Centre provides a good service to families. It has been particularly successful at forging excellent partnerships with a wide range of services. These, combined with outstanding levels of care, guidance and support from very well-trained and dedicated staff and excellent safeguarding procedures, means that families feel very safe at the centre and extremely well served. One comment summed up many similar ones, ‘They go out of their way to help me with everything.’ Consequently, outcomes are good overall with some outstanding elements.

Adults and children make excellent progress as a result of their contact with the centre. The wide range of courses for adults ensures that many achieve good levels of education and are very effectively supported to help their children learn. Well-planned activities focusing on early years development, boosted by regular specialist drop-in sessions, not only lead to very high levels of participation and enjoyment but also ensure families have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lives. This helps parents keep their children safe and improves family relationships.

The number of families using the centre’s services is growing rapidly across all target groups where this can be measured. However, the number of fathers accessing services is relatively low across the centre’s reach area as well as the borough as a whole. Families who use the centre are fully involved in the development of services through the community group and ‘Stay and Say’ (parents’ forum) meetings. However, whilst there is family representation on the governing body and the children’s centre committee, the pool of parents that sit on those bodies is relatively small. In addition, the children’s centre committee, whilst supportive, has a limited number of partners currently attending which limits the extent to which it effectively challenges the centre.

The relatively new leadership team has quickly come to a clear understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for development. It is proactive in adjusting services to meet need, for example establishing 'Fantastic Phonics' classes for parents to help fill the gap in children's early reading skills. There is a very strong team ethos and vision for the centre, although this is not fully reflected in the delivery plan where priorities are too wide and targets are not consistently measurable or time specific. Nevertheless, the good or better outcomes that have already been achieved and this combined with a very strong commitment from all staff and partners to meet the needs of the most vulnerable groups, show there is a good capacity to continue to sustain improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the number of fathers who access services by working with other children's centres across the borough to provide specific activities to meet this group's needs.
- Widen the membership of the children's centre committee by recruiting more partners and increasing the number of parents involved and extend the level of constructive challenge it provides to the centre.
- Improve the centre's delivery plan so that priorities are clear, and use data effectively to set consistently measurable and time specific targets, to enable the centre to measure outcomes more precisely.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Childhood obesity levels, although declining, are still slightly above national levels and so the centre has made this a strong focus of its work. The weekly swimming sessions, 'Growing Great' gardening group, healthy cooking and specialist drop-ins from health visitors and nutritionists ensure that a large majority of families are developing a good awareness of how to keep themselves healthy. Their good levels of engagement with health services are reflected in improving immunisation and sustained breastfeeding rates. The centre has responded very effectively to a drop off in the number of children having two-year-old development checks by arranging for health visitors to conduct them in the centre in the future. There are good outcomes for those with emotional needs through access to specialist services such as counselling or baby massage to help with bonding and postnatal depression.

Children using the centre behave in a very safe manner because there is a very strong focus on developing an excellent understanding of dangers through 'Child Safety Week', fire service visits and the 'Traffic Club'. Structured parenting programmes and staff support for managing children's behaviour ensure that the large majority of families, including the most vulnerable, show great improvement in their confidence and parenting skills, promoting comments such as, 'I'd be lost without them.' They are further protected by staff who are highly skilled in using the

local authority's multi-agency triage system and through the fortnightly 'Every Child Matters' forum led by the early intervention team. This ensures much improved outcomes for children subject to child protection plans including looked after children.

Families thoroughly enjoy all the activities, such as the baby group and the singing sessions where children participate eagerly in the well-planned activities. Consequently, children make excellent progress as shown by the tracking of children in the nursery where those who have accessed centre services show higher levels of skill development across all areas. The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile results for the reach area show a significant improvement over the past three years, and at 74.2% in 2012, outcomes are well above the borough and the national average. Although the gap between the lowest 20% and the rest increased slightly over the same period, at 25.8% it is still well below the national average. Very strong links with local schools, and initiatives such as the excellent 'Learning Bags' initiative where children have a variety of resources to introduce them to their new setting, ensure that children are very well prepared for transition to school. The large majority of adults using the centre also develop their skills very effectively. Excellent ties with Birkbeck University enable them to improve their education levels to an impressive extent. For example, 14 students completed a psychology course and eight finished an 'Approaches to Study' course. Many others have improved their skills through groups such as the centre-devised 'Fantastic Phonics' sessions, numeracy and English language courses, with some also achieving National Vocational Qualification levels in childcare.

'My confidence has gone up hugely,' was a much-voiced view. As a result of this improved self-esteem, most families are happy to express their views through the community group and regular 'Stay and Say' sessions. They also contribute well to the centre through volunteering, with several using this as a platform to employment in the centre and elsewhere. Some families are engaged more formally in the governance of the centre, although the numbers who attend the children's centre committee fluctuate and are limited at present.

Families have access to a wide range of good quality advice, such as from the training and employment adviser. The centre has also been very successful in helping 47 families gain access to the Nursery Education Grant for two-year-olds, providing free care for 15 hours per week. In addition, the very active childminders' network provides training and advice for this group as well as helping families access childcare options. Several parents have been supported back into work, with many more benefiting from adult learning. Consequently, the majority, including those most in need of support, have seen improved economic and social circumstances.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

<p>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</p>	<p>2</p>
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The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	1
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment	2

How good is the provision?

2

Health staff register all families with the centre when they come into contact with them on enrolment at a health centre or where there is a new-born child. Consequently, the great majority of children under five are registered. The local authority's sophisticated tracking system shows that the large majority then go on to access children's centre services at Rebecca Cheetham and/or across the borough. There is no baseline data available for some target groups, such as lone parents, as this information is not requested at registration. Where data is captured, the centre can demonstrate clearly how successful it is in engaging with children from minority ethnic groups, teenage parents and children with disabilities. The number of fathers accessing services, whilst satisfactory overall, is relatively low in comparison. The popular weekly Saturday football sessions have stopped over the winter months. At present there are no specific groups running at weekends or evenings.

Popular, well-attended groups and drop-in sessions, such as the 'Weaning party' and a carefully planned focus on children's early development, ensure that most target groups are engaging well. Certificates and award ceremonies, and pictorial learning journeys for children in the crèche ensure that adults' and children's achievements are celebrated well and built on effectively to extend their skills even further. This has led to good or better outcomes across all areas.

'If it wasn't for the staff, I don't know what might have happened,' summed up the way many families feel about the centre. The highly effective blend of compassion and professionalism shown by the outreach workers and the family support worker ensures that families receive excellent levels of care, guidance and support. Families are unanimous in their view that this is so, with many describing the 'very personalised care' they receive. This is especially so for the most vulnerable families who may be experiencing such difficulties in their lives as impending eviction or depression. Systems to track and monitor the impact of this support and the way staff persevere in enlisting the best targeted help ensure that families receive very high quality tailored advice and guidance. As a result, outcomes for these families are excellent.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Overall, leadership and management are good and there is excellent day-to-day organisation. Senior leaders and managers work as a very effective team with the full support and confidence of the rest of the staff. However, the delivery plan does not fully reflect the priorities the centre is working towards as they are too wide and their success is not easy to measure. The local authority provides good support and monitors the centre's work rigorously. Governance and accountability arrangements are clear, as are lines of responsibility. The level of challenge from the governing body and the children's centre committee does not yet match their high level of support however and parent representation on both bodies is relatively small.

The centre has a full timetable of activities with a good balance of those open to all, drop-in specialist sessions such as with the health visitor, and targeted groups such as 'Chatterbox' and 'Talking Together' to support children's speech and language development. Although space is limited in the centre's rooms, additional accommodation and resources from the nursery are well utilised. The staff are used very effectively; with, for example, crèche staff having other responsibilities such as for the 'Learning Bags', the library and supporting in different activities. All of this is having a positive impact on the number of families using the centre and resulting in good or better outcomes. Consequently, the centre provides good value for money.

Everyone treats each other with high levels of respect in this very inclusive centre. Those who attend, as well as the staff, reflect the culturally diverse make up of the community. The centre's strong role at the heart of the local community is reflected in over 300 attendees at the summer Carnival Day. There is zero tolerance of any form of discrimination. The provision of a crèche nine times each week has been a major influence on the high number of adults who are able to access courses and so narrow the achievement gap between different groups in the community. The needs of disabled children and those with special educational needs are met well through strong links with local organisations and the provision of holiday activities, as well as the use of the sensory room in the centre. The building is fully accessible to the disabled, is warm and welcoming and has equality and diversity at the core of all its work.

Safeguarding everyone, but particularly the most vulnerable, is woven through all of the centre's work and the centre's outstanding practice results in the highest level of

care and protection for children and families. Staff are very highly trained, often in response to meeting changing needs such as the increased incidents of domestic violence in the area. There are highly robust systems to record any concerns, however small, then to collate and act on the information by galvanising the multiple and highly effective partnerships fostered by the centre. Information sharing protocols and multi-agency meetings are crucial to the safeguarding of families and lead to excellent outcomes, particularly for the most vulnerable. All appropriate Criminal Records Bureau checks are carried out or verified on anyone working with families.

Partnership work is outstanding. There are very high levels of mutual respect between the organisations and services working with the centre, with everyone working to a common goal of improving outcomes for families. The diverse nature of service providers, including the Salvation Army, Women’s Trust, Birkbeck University, childminders and many health specialists, ensures that families have access to a very wide range of high quality support that is tailored to meet their specific needs. The excellent bonds in place with the link nursery and day care provision ensure a smooth transition for children, as well as sharing expertise of staff which greatly benefits the good progress children make.

Frequent evaluations of groups and sessions such as baby massage and swimming enable parents to air their views and be involved in developing services to best suit their needs. Children’s views are also taken into account through observing and photographing their responses and noting their preferences. As a result, most families express high levels of satisfaction, as reflected in the comment, ‘I can’t give staff enough credit.’

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre’s policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	1

<p>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision</p>	<p>2</p>
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Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

The findings of the last inspection for Rebecca Cheetham Nursery Education Centre which took place on 8 and 9 March 2011 and that of the linked childcare facility on 19 June 2012 were taken into account in relation to attainment on entry and the leadership and management judgements.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Rebecca Cheetham Children’s Centre on 12 and 13 December 2012. We judged the centre as good overall. There are some outstanding aspects of the centre’s work such as the levels of enjoyment and achievement of adults and children. In addition, safeguarding procedures and the care, guidance and support you receive are also excellent, as are the partnerships the centre has developed. As a result, you all have very high levels of trust and faith in staff to do their best to help you and our families. This was summed up by comments such as, ‘If it wasn’t for the staff, I don’t know what would have happened,’ and, ‘I’d be lost without them.’

Thank you for your participation in the inspection and for taking the time to tell us about the centre’s work and how staff have helped you and your children. It was very helpful to visit the activities taking place such as the baby group, the singing sessions and some of the adult learning classes such as Fantastic Phonics. Thank you for welcoming us into your groups and for being so open in telling us all about your contact with the centre and how it has helped you. Here is a summary of what we found.

Outcomes are good overall because the centre makes good provision for all the families who use it. You told us that through things such as healthy cooking classes, the ‘Growing Great’ gardening club, swimming and drop-in sessions from the nutritionist, for example, you have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lives. This shows in the increasing numbers who are still breastfeeding when babies are two months old and better immunisation rates. The number of children who are obese is falling, but is still above the national figure, and so this is a focus of the centre’s work. The centre has done much to help you understand how to keep your families safe, such as through events like ‘Child Safety Week’, the ‘Traffic Club’ and

courses to help your parenting skills. The staff have been able to resolve some very difficult emotional situations, or where there are relationship difficulties, by working very effectively with other services such as counselling and health specialists. One common view was, 'They go out of their way to help you with everything.'

Because everyone feels very welcome and secure in the centre, you all say that you have complete trust in staff who many of you describe as 'amazing'. This also has an impact on the numbers who come to the centre, and whilst most groups are well represented, the proportion of fathers who attend is relatively low. We have asked the centre to improve this by working with others across the borough to provide specific services for this group.

Children who come to the centre make excellent progress, helped on the way by well-planned activities, very experienced staff and great support for parents to develop their skills to help children learn. For example, the 'Fantastic Phonics' course, literacy and English language groups have all contributed to this. Similarly, a great many adults have been able to improve their skills and education through excellent links with Birkbeck University and very good quality advice and guidance from the training and employment adviser. Several of you have gone on to volunteer in the centre, with some moving on to employment as a result of this or other support you have been given. Many of you voiced similar views, for example, 'My confidence has gone up hugely.' You all feel you have a voice in developing centre services through the community groups and the 'Stay and Say' sessions and some of you also sit on the governing body and the children's centre committee. However, the number who does is currently slightly small and we have asked the centre to recruit more of you, as well as more partners, to sit on the committee. This will enable this body to not only support the centre but also provide more challenge.

Everyone, including families and partners who work with the centre, is committed to improve outcomes for families and there is a clear understanding of its strengths and areas for development. However, the priorities in the centre's delivery plan are not concise enough and the targets are not set using information and timescales consistently enough to enable the centre to measure its impact across more aspects. This is something we have asked the centre to improve. Despite this, the excellent day-to-day leadership and management, the compassion and professionalism of the outreach workers and the family support worker, as well as the welcoming reception staff, have ensured that outcomes for the large majority of families are good with some that are outstanding. As a result, the centre has a good capacity to continue to improve.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.