

Inspection report for Clapham Manor Children's Centre

Local authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	383652
Inspection dates	22–23 March 2012
Reporting inspector	Steve Nelson

Centre Manager	Jane Christofi
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	16 Belmont Close Clapham London SW4 6AT
Telephone number	020 7627 9917
Fax number	020 7623 0043
Email address	jchristofi@claphammanor.lambeth.sch.uk

Linked school if applicable	Clapham Manor Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Triangle Nursery School and Clapham Manor Nursery

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.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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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 centre staff, the local authority, the children's centre manager and members of the governing body. They met with a number of representatives of services who work through the children's centre, including health visitors and the outreach workers. Inspectors spoke to groups of parents. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the centre's self-evaluation, development plan, user evaluations and case study information.

Information about the centre

Clapham Manor Children's Centre is a phase one children's centre that provides full core purpose provision. Its catchment area covers Clapham Common, Clapham Town and Ferndale wards.

The governing body of Clapham Manor Primary School oversees the centre's work and the advisory board acts as a steering group. The advisory board consists of representatives from partner organisations and key stakeholders that work with the children's centre, the local authority and parents.

The centre is used by a very diverse group of families with a wide range of languages spoken, including Spanish, Portuguese, Amharic, Tigrinian, French, Polish and Somali as well as English. Families using the centre are from Black Caribbean, Black African, White British and other White origin, with a smaller proportion of families of Asian origin represented. Data for the reach area places it in the bottom 10% to 40% nationally for deprivation. The children's centre has 1,018 children under 5 in its reach area. About 20% of children and adults who use the centre come from homes that are dependent on benefits and where no one is in work. When they start early years provision, the majority of children have skills, knowledge and abilities that are below those expected for their age.

The range of activities offered by the centre includes support at the local community baby clinic, antenatal birth clinic, breastfeeding support and baby massage. The centre has links with health visitors, community midwives and speech therapists. It signposts families to a range of providers that offer adult education, volunteering opportunities, and activities designed to support parents back into employment and training. The centre opens 48 weeks each year on weekdays from 8.00am until 6.00pm.

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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

Clapham Manor Children’s Centre provides an outstanding level of support for children and their families. This is because the welfare of the whole community, whatever individual or group needs are, is at the heart of the centre’s work. Children’s centre staff demonstrate an exceptional understanding of individual families needs. These are initially assessed extremely well, with high levels of sensitivity, giving children, parents and their families high levels of confidence in what the centre is doing. ‘A gem in Clapham. My daughter and I discovered this incredible centre after I finished work and needed to find local activities for her and I,’ said one parent. Through excellent support for children with disabilities and those with special educational needs, centre staff are helping parents overcome discrimination towards disability.

The work of the centre is fully focused on equality of opportunity. The multilingual skills of some staff and parents are used very effectively to support those who speak very little or no English. This approach gives new families confidence that they will be understood and gives them a wide knowledge of what the centre can provide them to enhance their lives in this country.

Safeguarding of children and other users takes a high priority in the centre’s work. The centre exemplifies high-quality practice. Practitioners have a strong knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities with regard to safeguarding

children.

Leaders and managers are very well supported by the senior leadership team and the advisory board. They consistently review and evaluate the impact of their work, so that all outcomes are outstanding and provision is excellent. Staff morale is very high and all show high levels of commitment to the community and take pride in their work. There are high levels of engagement with the community with 84% of children under the age of five in the area reached. The centre has engaged particularly well with target groups such as lone parents and workless households. Demand to attend the centre's activities is such that extra sessions have been run, including My Music and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Services within the centre are adapted well to meet local need. However, the centre has not expanded its services fully to further develop adults' basic skills in literacy, numeracy and the use of computers. High rates of success in adult education have fostered a hunger for more learning in the community.

The pursuit of excellence in all of the centre's activities has led to outstanding outcomes. Self-evaluation at all levels is grounded in sophisticated and robust analysis. The improvement in the centre's impact on the community and the high quality of provision mean that the centre has an outstanding capacity to sustain further improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase opportunities for adults to develop their literacy, numeracy and computing skills by extending the range of courses provided.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

Health outcomes for families are outstanding. The very large majority of families are fully engaged with health services. The numbers of mothers, including those from targeted groups, who continue to breastfeed are above average and rising. Obesity rates are lower than average for the area. The Sensory Explorers programme is significantly improving the health and well-being of disabled children and those who have special educational needs. A parent said, 'The extra equipment provided by the centre has increased my child's physical interaction and socialisation with other children.' The Healthy Eating on a Budget course is particularly effective in extending parents' understanding of a healthy diet. A parent commented, 'I gained very good knowledge about food groups and now check labels for sugar and salt content.'

Early Years Foundation Stage data from local schools in the area indicate that children make excellent progress from their starting points in developing the skills that will help them in the future. The centre has taken very effective action to reduce the achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years

Foundation Stage and the rest. All activities offered by the centre are popular. A parent attending the Jelly Babies sessions said, 'It gives me a chance to enjoy time with my baby, doing things I can't do at home.' High numbers of parents completed the Family Learning courses, with 89 achieving accredited qualifications. Evaluations of parents completing the Language and Play course show they have a much better understanding of their child's language development and ways to support this at home. Children are very well prepared for transition into nursery.

Parents say they are very safe at home because of the increased awareness of safety that the centre has given them. Children and adults behave in ways that are safe for themselves and others, for example adults locking gates to safeguard children. Children help tidy away in the play room and show very good awareness of the importance of risk assessing situations and use of equipment themselves. Adults are confident to approach the centre with concerns about community issues. Case studies show significant impact and improved outcomes for children on child protection plans and looked after children. Very effective working with partner agencies ensures that families who may be at risk of harm and children assessed under the Common Assessment Framework are closely monitored and kept safe.

One hundred and forty eight families have been provided with advice leading to a very good understanding of their rights to housing as a result of overcrowding and housing benefit. Families in workless households are very appreciative of the financial advice and guidance provided by the centre. Information on Child and Working Tax Credits is very effective in improving families' economic well-being. High numbers of parents have successfully completed the English for speakers of other languages course (ESOL), with many progressing on to further education. One parent commented, 'I am now able to read books with my daughter at home. I can't thank the centre enough.' Unemployed parents attending the weekly Job Club sessions have developed their job search and interview skills very well, with increasing numbers moving into sustainable employment.

The centre has established itself at the heart of the community. Adults' fundraising events, such as the summer fete and Christmas Fair, have raised £6,800 to fund a family learning bus that will provide outreach services to the community. Children's behaviour is excellent and the children form positive relationships with each other. Children are able to influence the environment in which they play because sessions offer high levels of child-led play. Parents of children with speech and language difficulties influenced the introduction of more singing and literacy sessions to help them develop better communication skills with their children. In the last two years, twelve parents or student volunteers have worked at the centre and progressed on to further education or employment.

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>1</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	1
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	1

How good is the provision?

1

The centre works effectively with other agencies to ensure assessments, such as those carried out for disabled children and those who have special educational needs, are robust and well informed. The use of the Common Assessment Framework is well established and effective in highlighting families who are at risk and in need of support. The reach of the centre is high and is increasing as a result of targeted outreach work. Services within the centre are adapted to meet need and local participation rates by the targeted group of families. For example, the oversubscribed My Music sessions have been changed to a three-week booked session. This enables the centre to prioritise families from disadvantaged groups. The introduction of the Somali Sewing Group has been successful in engaging the Somali community. The centre engages well with fathers, with increasing numbers attending the Saturday morning dads' swimming sessions. However, the centre's provision does not provide enough opportunities for adults to develop their language, numeracy and computing skills.

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage at the centre is excellent. Children are provided with an outstanding range of activities and learning opportunities from birth that supports their development effectively. Staff make highly effective use of assessments of children's achievements to plan the next steps in learning. These are shared with parents so they are able to reinforce the learning at home. Activities are very effective in engaging children and families in most need of support, such as the Young Parent Support Group and story-telling sessions by speech and language therapists. The centre promotes purposeful learning well. For example, a parent attending the Make and Bake cooking course said, 'My son is much more involved in cooking at home, he talks about what he has cooked and uses numbers in weighing food.' The centre is very good at recognising families' personal development and achievements through celebrations of work produced by children and families.

Care, guidance and support arrangements are highly effective. Excellent tailored support develops families' well-being. Families express high levels of satisfaction with the level of care, guidance and support offered by centres. The open-door policy

provides a listening ear to support children and families all year round. The counselling service has impacted positively on families' lives. A parent who was feeling down and depressed and has benefited greatly from counselling said, 'I am now feeling more confident and willing to take action. It's now possible for me to enjoy every single moment with my family.' The centre works very well with the speech and language therapy team. It has been effective in consistently moving referrals off support. The centre is very good at supporting and integrating children with disabilities and those with special educational needs. For example, a parent of a child with a disability was encouraged to attend Sensory Rhyme Time sessions early and this helped the child take the first steps to mixing with other children.

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	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

The management team provides high-quality professional supervision for all staff, which supports outstanding performance. Governance and accountability arrangements are embedded and highly effective. The advisory board and local authority provide very effective supervision of the centre's activities. Excellent performance monitoring systems assure the work of the centre staff and partners. Morale is high and belief in the centre's success is evident at all levels. Self-evaluation at all levels within the centre is the result of rigorous monitoring and a high-quality development plan that identifies clear improvement targets. Evaluation has resulted in changes to the provision that meets the needs of families and target groups very well, for example, developing a sensory room in response to requests from families with disabled children and those with special educational needs.

Highly effective prioritisation of safeguarding ensures all families are safe. The Criminal Records Bureau checks are very well maintained and accurate. Robust procedures are in place with regard to suitability checks for new workers. Thorough risk assessments are completed prior to all activities. Very effective multi-agency working ensures children and adults are fully protected and safeguarded. Robust procedures and referral mechanisms ensure that concerns are followed up and support, where needed, is offered. The centre's staff are trained very well in safeguarding and in dealing with domestic violence and working with children or adults with disabilities. This extends to all volunteers who are required to complete a safeguarding qualification.

The centre's actions to promote greater equality for different groups are excellent in removing barriers, and effective for disabled children and families and those who have special educational needs. There is no discrimination and diversity is very well celebrated, such as the promotion of Black History at the Clapham Common One O'clock Club.

Outreach services are highly effective in engaging with the families in the area. They have been very successful in engaging targeted groups such as lone parents and teenage parents. Very effective partnership working enhances opportunities for families in the area and has a very positive impact on excellent outcomes. Resources are very well managed so that high-quality services are consistently engaging and give excellent outcomes for families. This represents outstanding value for money.

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	1
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
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
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	1

Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

None.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Clapham Manor Children's Centre on 22 and 23 March 2012. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

We are very grateful to all of the parents, carers and representatives from the centre's professional partners who took the trouble to come in to tell us about the work of the centre. You gave us an extremely positive picture of the centre, and what you had to say was very useful indeed in making our final judgements.

Clapham Manor has so many strengths that it is difficult to pick out any individual outstanding features. At the core of your centre's success is the strong leadership of the centre's manager, the exceptionally strong teamwork of the centre's staff and the relationship with professional partners. This means that the workers at your centre communicate exceptionally well with each other and their feedback provides a deep knowledge and understanding of the community's needs. These are met in full. Additionally, staff members continuously evaluate their own work and build on their practice to further improve performance. There has been a great deal of improvement in what the centre provides and how well the children, parents and carers are now doing. The number of families using the centre's facilities has improved dramatically over the last few years.

The centre's work on promoting health within the community is having a tremendous impact. Families are now thinking much more about their health through diet. The centre has established a high level of contact with families, and support young and expectant mothers very well. The emotional health of people within the community is of high importance and is supported effectively through outreach work. The safety of all families is high on the agenda. The centre's safeguarding procedures are exemplary, adults and children alike feel safe and confident while there. Children are very well prepared for transferring into nursery or school. Similarly, adults who engage in courses and adult education opportunities are empowered to improve their own lives. Adults' views contribute very effectively to the centre's improvement through the parent forums and through feedback after attendance at sessions.

It is clear that the centre provides high-quality provision for a wide range of community needs. So many families within the reach area are now accessing the centre's services that managers have had to put on extra sessions. This is true testimony to the centre's success.

We have found one area for improvement and the centre's leaders are already aware of it. We are recommending that they extend the range of adult courses to help you develop your basic skills in literacy, numeracy and use of computers.

We wish you every success for the future.

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