

# Cranbrook and Gearies Children's Centres

The Drive, Ilford, Essex, IG1 3PS  
 Waremead Road, Gants Hill, Essex, IG2 6TF

## Inspection date

February 2014

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Good	2
The quality of practice and services		Good	2
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This children's centre group is good.

- Most families who live locally have registered with either Cranbrook or Gearies Children's Centres and have access to good quality support and advice.
- Strong leadership has led to rapid improvement across the group in recent years. Staff now have a good understanding of their community and have developed a very relevant programme of activities. Services are well advertised and, as a result, significantly more families are now engaging in services than two years ago.
- The centre works extremely well with a range of partners. Good information sharing and a strong emphasis on working closely with other agencies mean that the centres are successfully identifying and engaging with the large majority of those families most in need.
- A wide range of good quality services is provided for families in the area served by the group of centres. These services are having a positive impact on preparing children well for school, ensuring most health indicators, such as breastfeeding rates, remain strong, and improving parenting skills.
- Families who may be at risk of domestic abuse receive well planned, effective support. In partnership with children's social care staff and specialist organisations, staff ensure families receive help as early as possible. As a result, increasing numbers of children and adults are kept safe.

### It is not outstanding because:

- The centres have had less success at helping lone parents to access their services.
- Information provided by the local authority about how well the centres are doing is not always helpful or used well enough in self-evaluation so that leaders have an up-to-date understanding of how effectively the centres are working with those families who most need their help.
- While leaders have a clear picture of their priorities for improvement, action plans lack clear and measurable targets to ensure that leaders, staff and the advisory board can fully understand what needs to be achieved.

### Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children's centre group was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. The centres that form part of this children's centre group are Cranbrook Children's Centre and Gearies Children's Centre.

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders and managers in the local authority, centre leaders, partner agencies including health and social care, parents, family support staff, volunteers and representatives of the advisory board. The children's centre manager, the deputy and the local authority strategic leads attended all team meetings.

The inspectors visited the centres' two sites.

They observed the centres' work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

### Inspection team

Jane Burchall	Her Majesty's Inspector, Lead Inspector
Deavon Baker-Oxley	Her Majesty's Inspector
Libby Dickson	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the group

Cranbrook and Gearies are two centres that form a group in the north locality of the London Borough of Redbridge. Both are phase two centres which were designated in 2008. They are managed directly by the local authority and share an advisory board with the other five children's centres in their locality. Cranbrook Children's Centre is on the site of Cranbrook Primary School and Gearies Children's Centre is on the site of Gearies Infant School. Both schools are subject to separate inspection arrangements and their reports can be found at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>.

The centres serve the Cranbrook and Barkingside wards of the borough. These areas are not identified as being deprived overall. The proportion of children living in households dependent on workless benefits (17.1%) and the proportion of eligible families benefiting from the childcare element of working families tax credit (7.2%) are below local authority averages. There are a total of 1,575 children under five years living in the area served by the centres. Of the population, 73% are from minority ethnic groups, with families of Asian heritage representing the largest proportion at 53%. Many families speak English as an additional language.

Children in the area start early years provision with skills broadly in line with those typical for their age, although communication and language and literacy skills are the weakest areas. The centres meet their core purpose by offering a range of services which include health services, family play sessions, parenting programmes, adult learning and family support. Services are offered from the two main children's centre buildings and some community venues.

### What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Together with the local authority and the advisory board:
  - ensure self-evaluation is better supported by the use of information about how well the centres are doing
  - ensure development plans include clear, challenging and measurable targets.
- Together with the local authority and partners, improve the accuracy and relevance of information about the centres' performance so that:
  - the centres are able to better identify how well they are engaging with those families who most need help and support
  - the advisory board is able to more effectively challenge the centres and hold them to account.
- Develop and implement effective strategies to increase the number of lone parents who benefit from children's centre services.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The large majority of families who live in the area served by the group regularly access centre activities. Staff understand the local community well and provide good quality, relevant services, particularly for those families with greatest need. This has seen rapidly increasing proportions of those families who most benefit, such as families at risk of domestic abuse and children with disabilities, get the help they need. Leaders recognise that staff now need to focus on encouraging more lone parents to participate.
- Staff promote the work of the centres well. Close working with a range of partners, such as schools, health and children's social care, is successfully helping to identify specific families who would most benefit from services, including those expecting children. Effective information sharing between these partners means the needs of individual families are known, understood and well met.
- Family support workers provide effective targeted support so that families with the most complex needs receive appropriate help. They work successfully to build positive relationships so that

families remain engaged in relevant services until their needs are met.

- The take-up of funded early education is good. Most three- and four-year-olds access early education and the centres have worked hard to ensure that almost all eligible two-year-olds also receive their entitlement.

### The quality of practice and services

Good

- The assessment of the needs of individual families is comprehensive and leads to well-planned actions that support families to make positive changes to their lives. The Common Assessment Framework process is used particularly well to assess the complex needs of families and to ensure that the centres work successfully with a range of other agencies to provide the help that families need as quickly as possible.
- Effective partnership working with health services, including health visitors and teenage parent midwives, leads to good health outcomes in most respects. Good quality advice and support result in high levels of mothers breastfeeding beyond six to eight weeks after birth and very good immunisation rates. However, obesity levels vary across the locality and are higher than the national average in the Cranbrook area. Leaders, partners and staff are working closely together to implement a suitable plan to support families better in adopting healthier lifestyles.
- Centre staff use information available to them well to identify where children may benefit from extra support and help, such as in developing their language and communication skills. This enables children to get off to a good start so that the large majority of children reach a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Well planned and delivered sessions such as 'Choose your play', alongside a good uptake of early education, are helping to effectively narrow gaps in achievement between the lowest 20% and the rest.
- The centres provide a range of opportunities for adults to improve their personal and parenting skills. Courses support speakers of a range of languages to learn English and many progress on to other training opportunities and to gain qualifications. Parents are well supported in groups to understand how their children learn and develop. Many replicate at home the activities that their children take part in while at the centres, helping to promote their good progress. Volunteering opportunities are well planned and organised, so that adults gain relevant experience to help them realise their career aspirations.
- Staff respond swiftly and effectively when families are in crisis. They are resourceful in securing a range of help to ensure families are well supported and their circumstances improve. Families really value this good level of care, guidance and support and show consistently high levels of satisfaction. This was demonstrated by families who told inspectors, 'You can ask them anything – they always have a solution. They always help us.' 'I love the children's centre – I sing its praises all the time.'

### The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Both centres have both made rapid improvements over recent years. This is because the local authority, the centres' leadership team and key partners work well together to agree the priorities for the group and set a clear strategic direction. The accurate analysis of local needs effectively informs the development of appropriate services and resources. Good systems are being implemented to bring consistency to children's centre provision across the borough and to support better the accurate checking of the difference services are making to the lives of families.
- Arrangements in place to safeguard children and their families, including those subject to a child protection plan, are strong. Relevant checks are undertaken to ensure that those who work directly with families are suitable, and staff and volunteers are well trained. Risk assessments ensure both the premises and activities are appropriate and safe. Particular attention is given to keeping those families at risk from domestic abuse safe through well-thought-out processes.
- The quality of information about the centres' performance has improved over time. Leaders continue to work with the local authority's central data team to refine it further. However, there remain inaccuracies in some of the information available to centre leads, such as how well they are

reaching some groups who most need help. In addition, information is not always specific enough to give centres a clear picture of how successful they are, particularly at helping those who need them the most.

- The local authority checks the effectiveness of the children's centres through an annual review, where priorities and areas for improvement are identified. However, these are often too broad and targets for improvement are not easily measurable so that everyone can understand the contribution they can make to the success of the centres.
- Governance arrangements are well established. Advisory board members are clear on their role to support the development of services as well as to challenge the centres to improve. However, weaknesses in information are hampering the board's ability to fully hold the centres to account.
- Resources are used well. Families have access to well planned facilities in the children's centre buildings. Staff are well qualified and their skills are used effectively across the two centres to support families and to deliver good quality services.
- The centres demonstrate a very strong commitment to ensuring the inclusion of all children and families. The development of Cranbrook Children's Centre as a hub for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is a clear example of this. Targeted activities and the provision of a dedicated sensory room have seen a rapid increase in the participation of this particular group and have also enabled families to access a wider range of early childhood services.
- Parents contribute to the evaluation of individual services and activities. They share their views through both the parents' forum and advisory board. Families are well consulted about their needs and this information is used well to develop services.

## 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.

**Group details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	80086
<b>Local authority</b>	London Borough of Redbridge
<b>Inspection number</b>	422811
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority
<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	1,575
<b>Group manager</b>	Claire Delay
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8709 2012
<b>Email address</b>	cranbrookcc@redbridge.gov.uk

**This group consists of the following children's centres:**

- 20851 Cranbrook Children's Centre
- 21246 Gearies Children's Centre

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