

# Inspection report for East Tilbury Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Thurrock Council
<b>Inspection number</b>	383432
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 January 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Steve Nelson

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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Little Angels Day 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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## 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 advisory 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 and carers. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the centre's self-evaluation, action plan, user evaluations and case study information.

## Information about the centre

East Tilbury Children's Centre is a phase two children's centre that was established in 2010. It provides full core purpose provision. It operates in the north-east locality of Thurrock from one site. Outreach areas cover East Tilbury.

The centre manager is responsible for the day-to-day running of the centre. The advisory board consists of representatives from partner organisations, parents, key stakeholders that work with the children's centres in the north east locality and a representative from Thurrock Council.

The majority of the families who use the centre are White British. A growing number of families using the centre are of Black African heritage. Data for the reach area place the user base in the top 50% nationally for deprivation. The children's centre has 446 children under five in its reach area. About 16% 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 in line with those expected for their age.

The range of activities offered by the centre includes child development checks, breastfeeding and signposting to special educational needs and disabilities support. The centre has links with health visitors and speech therapists. It signposts families to a range of providers that offer adult education, volunteering opportunities, and activities designed to support parents and carers back into employment and training. The centre opens 48 weeks each year on weekdays from 8am until 6pm.

## 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**

**3**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**3**

## Main findings

The recently appointed centre manager conveys a strong sense of purpose and direction. He demonstrates sound organisational and communication skills, valuing the work of everyone. Consequently, on a day-to-day basis, activities run smoothly. Satisfactory outcomes for children and families are underpinned by the provision, which is satisfactory overall. The centre is doing good work with individual families. It ensures that the various services operating from the centre are brought together to support families and their children in a timely manner. However, the centre does not provide enough opportunities for adults to participate in adult learning programmes, or have arrangements in place to track their progress.

Parents and carers feel comfortable in the centre and know they will get a warm welcome from the staff. One user expressed a view that was typical of many others, 'Fantastic staff that make you feel really at ease.' Suitable procedures are in place to safeguard families, who say they feel safe at the centre and that their children are well cared for.

The quality and range of services offered are adequate to meet the needs of some of the users in the reach area. While the centre is making progress in developing its systems to collect and use centre-specific data, families' evaluations of activities and other local information are not yet used systematically to identify and engage with target groups. Overall, learning and development opportunities are satisfactory.

Partnership working with the on-site nursery and nearby infant and primary schools is good. However, links with social care and Jobcentre Plus are not yet developed to

deliver a fully integrated provision for users.

Accurate self-evaluation identifies the key priorities for improvement. The number of families accessing the centre's provision has increased during the last year. Nevertheless, although referrals are followed up effectively, not enough is done to promote the centre's services to benefit more families. Those that discover its location thrive on the support it offers, but it is not signposted well enough for easy access for newcomers.

Governance and leadership are satisfactory. Managers and staff form a committed team that is determined to improve provision and extend services to the wider community. They are appropriately focused on improving areas of weakness and gaps in provision and outcomes. The local authority is keen to support developments and monitor the outcomes for users, and there have been recent improvements in the centre's overall performance. This provides the centre with satisfactory capacity to further improve outcomes for families and children.

## **What does the centre need to do to improve further?**

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Reach targeted groups by improving systems to collect and use data and other local information to accurately assess the needs of those not engaged.
- Increase the number of families accessing the children's centre by:
  - raising the profile of the centre in the local and wider community
  - displaying signposts that help local users find the centre more readily.
- Provide further opportunities for adults to access further training and development and monitor their subsequent progress.
- Create stronger partnerships with social care and Jobcentre Plus to enhance opportunities to improve user outcomes.

## **How good are outcomes for families?**

<b>3</b>
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Health outcomes for families are satisfactory and beginning to improve. Data supplied by the centre indicate that average numbers of mothers are continuing to breastfeed. This is having a positive impact and is giving babies an excellent start to life. Obesity rates in the reach area remain above average. The weekly 'Worlds of Discovery' session for children and their parents encourages physical activity at the centre and home. A parent commented, 'Great play activities that give my child plenty of exercise.' Families, such as those referred for early intervention, benefit from appropriately integrated services to promote their well-being.

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

rest. Playroom facilities are varied and children enjoy their time using the many good resources available at the centre. Activities offered by the centre are popular. A parent attending the 'Mobile Babies' sessions said, 'It promotes interaction between you and your child.' Families using the centre make satisfactory progress in developing their skills including parental skills and demonstrate improvement in their educational and personal development.

Staff supervise children appropriately throughout the day. They ensure that parents develop sound observation skills in supervising their children. The parent outreach worker works effectively with families promoting safety in the home. One parent said, 'I am now a better role model to my child. I stick to routines and practise safety more, giving clear instructions.' Regular meetings and effective communication between centre staff and partner agencies mean that some families who may be at risk of harm and children assessed under the Common Assessment Framework are closely monitored and kept safe. Case studies show positive impact and improved well-being and welfare for children on child protection plans and looked after children.

An increasing number of families using the centre are improving their economic stability and well-being. For example, positive parenting programmes help parents and carers manage their children's behaviour. Families are very appreciative of the financial advice and guidance provided by the centre, in particular the advice given on managing family budgets. Although the centre has taken action to increase the proportion of parents who have taken on an adult education programme, take-up rates are low. The centre's systems to track the progress of adults engaged in further learning is underdeveloped.

The centre is beginning to establish its role in the community. The weekly 'Buggy Walks' provide families with opportunities to meet other families in the community. Children's behaviour is good and they form positive relationships within the centre. They are able to influence the environment in which they play because sessions offer appropriate levels of child-led play. The newly established parents' forum provides satisfactory opportunities for users to shape services offered by the centre. A few parents have progressed into volunteer work as a result of initiatives carried out by the centre.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop</b>	<b>3</b>

<b>positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	
<b>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</b>	<b>3</b>

## How good is the provision?

**3**

Significant reorganisation issues in the local authority affected the centre in the past year and more changes are planned for the coming year. However, the centre manager and his team have managed these changes effectively and maintained a provision of satisfactory quality and range. Activities include 'Baby Rhyme Time' at East Tilbury Library and 'First Parenting' sessions that provide fun and learning opportunities. These groups, which are well attended, allow children to experience a range of purposeful learning activities.

The centre works appropriately with other agencies to ensure assessments, such as those carried out for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are robust and well informed. The use of the Common Assessment Framework is well established and effective in highlighting users who are at risk and in need of support. Outreach services are effective in targeting identified needs in the wider community. However, the centre's engagement with some targeted groups in the reach area is not yet developed sufficiently to involve them in the centre's activities. The centre's systems to collect and use data are improving though they are not used systematically to identify targeted groups.

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage at the centre meets their needs appropriately. Children behave well and follow staff instructions. They are provided with a satisfactory range of learning opportunities from birth that aptly support their development. Appropriate resources that are age-related and interesting encourage children's engagement and promote purposeful learning. The centre's 'Two-Year-Old Offer' is targeting parents and carers of families with special educational needs and/or disabilities adequately. A parent commented, 'I have more information and knowledge to manage his autism, in particular around his behaviour.'

Adults were very keen to speak about the good-quality care and support that they receive from the centre. Families express high levels of satisfaction with the level of care, guidance and support offered by centre. Families particularly appreciate the support they receive at times of crisis. They report that their lives are better for having had the help they needed. A parent, who was feeling isolated has benefited greatly from the support and socialising at the centre, said: 'I can't thank the staff enough. I made so many friends, which I still keep in contact with.' Case studies clearly show that the centre is making a noticeable difference to vulnerable children and their families.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

**3**

The centre's work in providing services is making a difference to the lives of those users who access the centre's activities. There are appropriate performance monitoring systems in place to assure the work of the centre staff and partners. The centre staff have a 'can do' attitude and are focused on improving outcomes for all children and families. Leaders ensure a variety of users and service providers make use of the facilities, but an absence of signposts makes it difficult to locate for first-time users. During meetings with inspectors, families commented that the centre is not sufficiently promoted in the wider community. Self-evaluation satisfactorily identifies the centre's strengths and weaknesses. It has an appropriate development plan which outlines clear improvement plans. Evaluation has resulted in changes to the provision that increasingly meets the needs of families.

The centre's actions to promote greater equality for different groups are adequate in removing barriers, and effective for children and families with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The ethnic breakdown of users shows that it is broadly representative of the local area.

There is a secure system to maintain and update the appropriate safeguarding arrangements. The centre's staff are suitably trained in safeguarding, and for dealing with domestic violence and working with children or adults with disabilities. The centre is proactive and collaborates effectively with other key agencies to reduce the risk of harm to children. Agencies working in the centre understand the implications of the wider safeguarding agenda. Appropriate vetting procedures safeguard children and adults. They ensure that only suitable people work with children and families. Criminal Record Bureau checks are accurately recorded and maintained.

Services generally deliver coordinated provision for families, which has a positive impact on their lives. Staff work effectively in different aspects of the centre's provision, such as in reception and the playroom. Relationships between most statutory partners are increasingly clear and understood. The centre's relationship with social care, while satisfactory, is insufficiently well established. Its link with Jobcentre Plus is underdeveloped. Satisfactory outcomes and provision that engages increasing numbers of families indicates that the centre's resources are adequately managed. This represents satisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management



<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>3</b>

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

None

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the East Tilbury Children's Centre on 24 and 25 January 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We are very grateful to all the parents, carers and representatives from the centre and the professional partners who took the trouble to come and tell us about the work they do. You gave us a positive picture of the centre, and what you said was very useful in making our final judgements.

Sound leadership provided by the centre's management, coordinated teamwork of the centre's staff and its professional relationship with partners are at the core of the centre's work. The workers at the centre communicate well with each other and their feedback provides a sound knowledge and understanding of the community's needs.

You and your children benefit from the satisfactory services provided by the centre. Some of you are keen to attend classes to improve your skills. These must be enjoyable because we noticed that there is regular attendance on these courses. The family support and parenting practitioners offer you good support and build positive relationships with you and your families.

We have found a few areas that require improvement and the centre's management are already aware of these. We are recommending that managers engage with target groups that would benefit from the centre's services. We have recommended that the centre improves signage and promotes the centre to the wider community. We have asked managers to increase the opportunities for you to take up adult education programmes. We are also asking managers to work more closely with Jobcentre Plus and social care services, to involve them more in the work of the centre.

We wish you every success for the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).