

Inspection report for Academy Gardens Children's Centre

Local authority	Ealing
Inspection number	384010
Inspection dates	25–26 January 2012
Reporting inspector	Wendy Ratcliff HMI

Centre leader	Kate Saunders
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	1 Academy Gardens Northolt UB5 5QN
Telephone number	020 8842 0220
Fax number	020 8842 4898
Email address	ksaunders@ealing.co.uk

Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	118108 Medcliffe Community Nursery EY288676 Medcliffe Open Door 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.

Report published: February 2012



Corporate member of
Plain English Campaign
Committed to clearer communication

361

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100080.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No.100080

© Crown copyright 2012



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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the head of centre, head of childcare, members of the advisory board, staff, a local authority representative and partner agencies, including a representative from the health service. They had informal discussions with parents, carers and children and visited activities held in the centre and in the community.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including key policies, the centre's self-evaluation documents, school development plan, evaluations and data about people who use the centre.

Information about the centre

Academy Gardens Children's Centre is a phase one centre that is now part of a cluster of two children's centres. The centre was designated in March 2006 and is run directly by the local authority. The centre provides a range of integrated services across three sites. These include Medcliffe Community Nursery and Medcliffe Open Door Nursery. The advisory board contributes to the management of the centre and includes representatives from a number of community and statutory partners. The centre is open from 9.00am to 5.00pm, each weekday for 52 weeks of the year.

The centre serves an area that is ethnically, socially and economically diverse. There is significant overcrowding, high levels of transition and a high number of vulnerable families in the reach. Parts of the area are among the 10% most deprived areas in England. Overall, the centre serves one of the 30% deprived areas nationally.

There are 1,985 children under five years in the reach, with around a third living in households dependent on workless benefits. Around 84% of families accessing the centre are from minority ethnic groups, which include Eastern European, Afghan and Black Caribbean families. Several different languages are spoken in the community. The levels of skills shown by children on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are below those expected for their age.

The children's centre offers multi-agency services for families and children under five years. These include midwifery services, family support, including outreach and support for those seeking employment. The majority of services are delivered from the Academy Gardens Centre. The Supportive Action for Families in Ealing (SAFE 0-12) team is located and managed at the centre. Families also attend stay and play sessions held at the Limetrees Park Children's Centre.

Childcare for children aged six months to two years is provided at Medcliffe Open Door Nursery. The Medcliffe Community Nursery provides childcare places for children aged eighteen months to five years. Both nurseries are registered on the Early Years Register and are open from 8.00am to 6.00pm each weekday, for 48 weeks of the year. The childcare was last inspected in March 2009 and May 2011.

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

The Academy Gardens Children's Centre makes a good contribution to improving outcomes for families. The centre is a highly welcoming place and considered by families as an integral part of the community and seen as a safe haven. The centre is inclusive and a very large majority of families accessing services are amongst the groups and individuals in most need of intervention and support. Families particularly value the individual welcome from staff and feel less isolated as they access the centre on a regular basis, for example for help with placing online housing bids, writing letters or making telephone calls to the benefits agency.

A key strength of the centre is the family support work, which is helping those who are experiencing difficulties in their lives to make significant improvements. Parents develop a secure understanding of how to keep their families safe and protect them from harmful situations, such as domestic violence. Parents were overwhelmingly keen to share how the centre has helped them to make changes in their lives. For example, one parent said, 'I am in a totally different place to where I was six to eight months ago.'

Children's safety and well-being are enhanced because staff are vigilant and have a secure understanding of safeguarding. They act promptly in order to provide families and children with the correct support or refer them on for specialist services such as child protection.

Families respond well to the range of advice and guidance provided by health professionals to keep their children healthy. As a result, 88% of children under five attend their GP for immunisations, which is higher than the local authority average.

Children and families using the centre, including those from target groups, treat each other with respect and value opportunities to celebrate different festivals, such as Chinese New Year. One young parent told us, 'I don't feel judged by anyone at the centre.' Informal opportunities are used to seek the views of families, for example through satisfaction surveys and questionnaires at the end of the six-week baby massage course. Parents confidently told inspectors that they feel able to share their views with staff and provided suggestions about being more involved in shaping services at the centre, such as helping out at stay and play sessions and raising money by holding cake sales. Families are not yet systematically involved in the governance of the centre.

Children attending the linked nurseries make good progress in their learning from their starting points. Those who attend the various stay and play sessions at the centre make good strides in their social and communication skills, which prepares them well as they start school. For example, children have excellent opportunities during sessions such as 'Happy House' to develop sensory and physical skills as they use their 'listening ears to hear the sounds' and search for 'Tatty the cat'.

The centre has undergone significant change in recent months with the transition from being a Sure Start centre to the Academy Gardens Children's Centre. This has resulted in some reorganisation of services provided. For example, health partners are no longer based at the centre, but partnership links remain strong. Staff and key partners remain enthusiastic and passionate about their work with families. This is because those in charge demonstrate a clear vision and inspire continued improvement. They have a secure understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for improvement, such as increasing the number of fathers accessing services. As a result, the centre's capacity to improve further is good.

The centre uses available data provided by the local authority and their local knowledge well to identify need, plan and review services. As a result, the centre is reaching a large majority of target groups, including teenage parents and families living in workless households. Leaders are focused on promoting high-quality services and undertake a range of monitoring activities. Self-evaluation is accurate and supported by evidence of impact on outcomes and leads to areas for development. However, the current evaluation and monitoring system does not include all available information from partners. For example, the centre is not including the success data of families who access adult learning at the West London

Academy to evidence the full impact on the outcome economic well-being.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop the effectiveness of the centre's evaluation and monitoring cycle to ensure all available data are more robustly analysed to enable outcomes for families to be explicit.
- Provide opportunities for more families to engage in shaping services and the governance of the centre

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Parents report that their engagement with the centre has improved their confidence and independence, which in turn has led to a better quality of family life. There are examples of some families improving their economic stability as a result. For example, a small number benefit from volunteering, become engaged in training which, for a few, has led to finding suitable employment.

Parents and their children really enjoy the opportunities to interact with others, through the highly popular stay and play sessions, for example. This is enabling children to become more independent in developing social skills and in becoming inquisitive learners. The impact of the centre's work is evident in rising attainment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, with around 83% of children achieving 78 points or more. The centre recognises this remains below the local authority average. It has become part of the Ealing Early Years Pilot to further develop stay and play sessions and use the home learning measures to demonstrate the improved outcomes, particularly for the vulnerable two-year-olds, and to continue to narrow the attainment gap for the lowest 20%.

Health outcomes are improving as the large majority of families in the reach area are accessing the many services provided. The promotion of emotional well-being is an important aspect of the centre's work. Obesity rates in the reach are higher than average and the centre is tackling this effectively through the promotion of healthy eating and physical activity in sessions. For example, babies enjoy being active during 'Roll and Rumble' as they use the soft play, baby gym and sensory room. Mothers are actively encouraged to breastfeed their babies. Recent data show that around 70% of babies aged six to eight weeks are partially or totally breastfed.

Children are developing a good understanding of dangers as they use role play to practise crossing the road safely. Parents told us visits from community police officers, who hand out reflective stickers, is helping children understand the importance of 'Be seen, be safe'. There are striking examples of families facing challenging circumstances showing improvements in their parenting skills. As a result, there is evidence of improved outcomes for children on protection plans and

those subject to the Common Assessment Framework. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well and receive specialist support, for example the educational psychologist and through speech and language therapy.

Children and families from a wide range of backgrounds get on extremely well together and new friendships are forged. As a result, social isolation is reduced and community cohesion enhanced. Many parents contribute their views through evaluation and discussions with staff. Parents of children attending the childcare provision are actively engaged in the nursery's management committee. However, opportunities for parents, including those from target groups, to take part in the governance of the centre have been more limited.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
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	3

How good is the provision?

2

The head of centre and her staff know the families in the area very well and, with partners, skilfully identify the ones whose circumstances make them more vulnerable and in the greatest need of support. Staff skilfully build trusting relationships with families. Parents greatly appreciate the good care, guidance and support they receive from highly sensitive staff. As a result, they feel extremely well supported in times of crisis. One parent told us, 'We were in a really bad place and the centre has helped us come through some very difficult times.'

The centre makes the most of its partnerships with the Family Nurse Partnership and the YMCA to provide support for young families to become confident parents. As a result, 89% of young parents are engaging in services at the centre.

The centre uses the data profile supplied by the local authority along with extensive knowledge of the local area to identify the needs of the community and plan

services. It provides a good range of services that meet the needs of the large majority of children and families, including those from target groups, such as children living in households dependent on workless households and families from minority ethnic groups. There are a good range of weekly activity sessions, which are well attended, and newer groups such as 'Baby Beeps' are establishing well.

The range of activities clearly enables parents to develop social skills and increases their confidence in parenting skills. Information about housing, benefits and training is tailor made for individual families by their family support workers. There is evidence of improved economic stability for some families. Families are signposted to adult education, for example at the West London Academy, although only a small minority of parents have taken up opportunities for further training and education and subsequently returned to the job market. The centre is at an early stage of taking part in a new European Social Fund work-focused programme in the Northolt area, which is aimed at assisting families with multiple problems on their 'work journey' to employment.

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	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Governance and accountability arrangements are clear and understood and links between strategic planning and service provision are effective. Good partnerships with other services and key partners, such as Coram, SAFE team and Medcliffe Community Association, are firmly established, ensuring services are integrated and making a difference for families.

Day-to-day management ensures that the premises are used effectively. The recent reorganisation has resulted in a change of partners who are based at the centre. Partnerships remain strong and new partnerships are establishing well. Staff morale is high. Those in charge, including the local authority, recognise and fully appreciate the commitment from current staff to maintain high-quality services during a time of change and staff vacancies. The use of resources, including the current carefully-considered deployment of staff and the good outcomes for families, demonstrates the centre is providing good value for money.

There is a range of monitoring and evaluation systems in place, which ensure services are of good quality, improving outcomes for families and help staff to

identify where they need to develop services further. The centre's self-evaluation is accurate and leads to well-considered targets for improvement, such as providing more opportunities for families to access adult learning and volunteer in groups as they gain skills in preparation for future employment. The centre is yet to include the full range of evidence from partners and parents to demonstrate the impact their service has on outcomes.

The inclusion of all families, irrespective of their background or needs, is at the heart of the centre's work. This has resulted in significant improvements in the involvement of all families, especially target groups and those families in greatest need. As a result, the centre is narrowing the gap for the most disadvantaged.

Early intervention strategies and close partnership with the SAFE team, including the domestic violence social worker and family therapist, and other key agencies ensure children are protected effectively against harm. The centre's work is underpinned by robust safeguarding procedures, which are clearly understood by all ensuring the risk of harm to children is reduced. All staff, volunteers and partners are vetted to ensure their suitability for working with children. Staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding and are alert to signs of abuse.

The centre has been extremely successful in reaching out to target groups. Families overwhelmingly express high levels of satisfaction with the centre and its staff. Their views are sought regularly and there are examples of how this feedback has been used to make changes in activity sessions. Currently, there are too few opportunities for parents to be involved in the governance of the centre.

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	3
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	2
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	2

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	3
---	----------

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

The registered early years provision at the Medcliffe Open Door Nursery was previously inspected in March 2009. The Medcliffe Community Nursery was previously inspected in May 2011. This inspection of the children's centre was informed by the findings and judgements made at the time.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaining about inspections*, which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the Academy Gardens Children's Centre on 25 and 26 January 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We really enjoyed our two days at Academy Garden's Children's Centre and would like to thank all of you who took the time to speak to us during the inspection.

Your children's centre provides you with an attractive, safe and inclusive environment where you and your children feel safe, valued and respected. You told us how you greatly appreciated all the care, guidance and support you receive and particularly value the individual welcome from staff and how this helps you to feel less isolated. Partnerships with key agencies are strong so they can offer the correct support and guidance.

We can see you have good opportunities to take part in group activities and some courses that help you adopt healthy lifestyles and the importance of keeping you and your families safe. You told us how children are developing a good understanding of how to keep safe as they use role play to practise crossing the road safely. It was lovely to see how much you and the children enjoy the session 'Happy House', as the children search for 'Tatty the cat', use their 'listening ears' and catch bubbles. You told us how the activity sessions help prepare children for starting school. Children attending the Medcliffe nurseries are making good strides in their learning from their starting points. Some of you are attending adult learning courses at the West London Academy that lead to qualifications, for example in childcare. The centre is part of a new project which will provide further opportunities for you to gain skills in preparation for employment.

A key strength of the centre is the family support work, which is helping those who are experiencing difficulties in your lives to make significant improvements. You develop a secure understanding of how to keep your families safe and protect them from harmful situations, such as domestic violence. Some of you were overwhelmingly keen to share how the centre has helped to make changes in your lives. For example, one parent told us, 'I am in a totally different place to where I was six to eight months ago.'

Children's safety and well-being are enhanced because staff have a secure understanding of safeguarding. There are robust procedures in place, for example to ensure all adults working in the centre are suitable to do so.

It was encouraging to see harmonious relationships between families using the centre, including those from target groups. You treat each other with respect and value opportunities to celebrate different festivals, such as Chinese New Year. Staff use informal opportunities to seek your views, for example through satisfaction surveys and questionnaires at the end of the six-week baby massage course. You told us that you feel able to share your views with staff and provided suggestions about how you could be more involved in shaping services at the centre, such as helping out at stay and play sessions and raising money by holding cake sales. We have asked the centre to look at ways to involve you in the governance of the centre.

The centre has undergone significant change in recent months with the transition from being a Sure Start centre to the Academy Gardens Children's Centre. This has resulted in some reorganisation of services provided. For example, health partners are no longer based at the centre, but partnership links remain strong. Staff and key partners remain enthusiastic and passionate about their work. This is because those in charge demonstrate a clear vision and inspire continued improvement.

Leaders are focused on promoting high-quality services and undertake a range of monitoring activities. Self-evaluation is accurate and supported by evidence of how services are making a difference to your lives. However, the current evaluation and monitoring system does not include all available information from partners. For example, the centre is not including the success data for families who access adult learning at the West London Academy to show the full impact of such opportunities.

We are confident that the centre will continue to get better and better. Thanks again for all your help with the inspection.

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