

Inspection report for Woodside Children's Centre

Local authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	383473
Inspection dates	7—8 March 2012
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Woodside School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	The Woodside School Children's Centre (day care)

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: March 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.

An inspection of the co-located/partner primary school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre manager and staff, and representatives from the local authority and the advisory board. They also spoke to partner agencies, such as the school, health services and parents. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centre's action plan.

Information about the centre

The Woodside Children's Centre opened in April 2006 as a phase one centre, and is part of Woodside School. It meets the full core offer by providing a range of health, midwifery, outreach, family support, return to work and childcare services. The centre's registered day care offers 8.00am to 6.00pm wrap-around care for 47 children, from six months to five years, for 48 weeks of the year. The headteacher of the school is overall head of the centre and a centre manager is in charge of the day-to-day running of the family centre. The governing body manages the centre through a children's centre committee who act as the advisory board. There are three parents on this committee.

The centre serves the Wood Street ward which is situated in East Walthamstow; it is surrounded by a number of housing estates which are predominately social housing. The area covers eight local super output areas. One of these areas is in the highest band of deprivation (5%). A further two are in the less than 10% band, two further in the less than 15% band and the remainder are in the 30% to 37% band. The area has a high crime rate, housing is often poor and income low. Within the reach area there are 815 families with 1219 children aged between nought and four years.

There are 107 lone parents and 580 households dependent on workless benefits. School admission policies and proximity to the centre mean that an increasing number of families attending the centre are from outside the ward.

Current data show that the ethnic breakdown of the ward is 16% White British and 15% White Other. Nearly 20% of the ward is of Pakistani heritage. A quarter is of mixed heritage with nearly a further quarter not wishing to share ethnicity at registration. The African and Caribbean and Eastern European population is growing quite rapidly. There are a total of 32 different languages in the community. Most children enter early years provision with a much narrower range of skills and abilities than those typically expected for their age especially in language and communication.

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 Woodside Children's Centre provides a good service which is having a positive impact on the lives of families and children in the area. The warmth of the welcome and the well-targeted, coordinated support and guidance they receive has resulted in a year-on-year increase in the percentage of families from the reach area accessing the centre. In 2010/11, 85% of families in the area accessed the centre. Current data show that the centre is on track to exceed this high success rate in 2011/12. Analysis of data relating to ethnicity has been helpful in enabling the centre to concentrate on areas of need and as a result this increase is reflected across all ethnic groups, teenage parents, fathers, lone parents and parents and disabled children.

The headteacher's clear vision and focus on improvement is shared by staff, senior leaders, governors and members of the children's centre committee. The strong leadership of the centre manager galvanises her team into concerted, effective action to overcome any weaknesses and gaps in provision. The centre has rigorous systems and procedures in place to monitor and evaluate its work. These ensure that the

centre has an accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement and promote motivation to improve services further. Good use of available data ensures that the centre promotes services that are well matched to the needs of the families in the area. However, the use of data to fully evidence the centre's impact on improving outcomes is not as well developed. The centre's development plan provides an effective tool for improvement; however, it is not as challenging as it could be and targets to show progress are not always quantifiable. An undoubted strength of the centre is the work carried out by well-trained outreach workers who have a significant impact on outcomes for whole families and their children. Help with breastfeeding encourages mothers to persevere and benefits advice ensures families access financial support. Families know that the centre will always take any concern raised to them seriously and will work with them to resolve issues.

New projects have led to the formation of a group for teenage mothers, an opportunity for fathers to air their concerns and points of view in the 'Father's Forum' and a popular course to increase parents' skills in information and communication technology (ICT). The centre works well with key partners to deliver effective, cohesive services, which lead to good outcomes for the very large majority of families. It makes sure that those who are in most need of intervention and support are given the advice and guidance that enables them to take charge of their own lives and make life-enhancing decisions. Good partnerships with the special needs department in the school ensure early identification of special needs and intervention for children before they enter school. This, together with the expertise of the centre's speech and language therapist and good quality childcare, has had a positive impact on the improving trend in the proportion of children who reach expected levels of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. This has risen from 54% in 2009 to 69% in 2011. Parents feel that they have a say in all that goes on. Most contribute to the evaluation of each project and make useful suggestions that are used to improve services. They contribute to the strategic planning of the centre through membership of the children's centre committee. All of this shows that the centre has good capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop the use of data to provide more evidence of the impact of the centre's work.
- Use data to make sure targets in the development plan are more ambitious and are measurable.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Parents endorse the positive impact of employing a dedicated outreach worker for families with a nought to 18 month old child and having a trained breastfeeding worker to give them confidence and talk over any issues they may have. The centre

does analyse the data that it has on rates of improvement in both breastfeeding and obesity despite difficulties in obtaining local data from the health authority. Healthy food served at the centre and the opportunity for mothers to discuss weaning and for children to taste new, healthy foods ensure that families are developing a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy. Partnership with a specialist health visitor has raised rates of immunisation to 92.5% at 12 months of age , 94.7% at 2 years of age and 90% of those eligible for measles mumps and rubella immunisation. Good partnership work has also improved the number of pre-school booster immunisations given where take-up rates have increased from 80% to 84%.

A keen focus on improving parenting skills and reducing domestic violence, together with staff who are skilled in early identification of need and systematic use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), helps to prioritise services and secure the well-being of looked after children and those who are the most vulnerable. Most parents say that they are happy that their children are safe and well cared for in the centre. Help and advice on safety, particularly in the home, has helped all parents including those from target groups such as lone parents, teenage parents and those in most need of support, to gain a good understanding of how to keep themselves and their families safe.

Most children enter early years provision with a much narrower range of skills and abilities than those typically expected for their age especially in language and communication. Over the last three years, levels on exit from the Early Years Foundation Stage have risen and the gap has narrowed between the lowest 20% and the rest. This is because the centre provides a rich learning environment and staff provide good role models to support parents to help their children’s development at home. ‘Rhyme Time’ led by the speech and language therapist gives parents and children alike an enjoyable time developing their speech, language and communication skills and gives them examples to practise at home. Signing contributes to ensuring that disabled children and their parents are fully included in the centre and its activities. Sharing, singing together and taking turns also have a good impact on children’s personal and social development.

An introduction to ICT for parents has proved popular and raised interest in attending accredited courses. The centre works to support and empower parents to secure work and improve their prospects and those of their family. Work experience in the centre and school helps them to get acclimatised to the work place and establish the type of work they wish to pursue. Many of these parents have successfully moved into paid work as crèche workers, midday and teaching assistants and nursery nurses.

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	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	2

How good is the provision?

2

The centre provides effective, personalised support for all families including those who have most need. They know that the centre is somewhere to turn to in times of crisis and to help them turn their lives around. The centre knows its families well and uses this knowledge effectively to shape its provision so that outcomes for all groups are at least good. Careful assessment of families, especially those in most need, on a one-to-one basis ensures high quality, tailor-made support and accurate signposting to the most appropriate agencies.

Provision to help children learn is good. The centre is a rich learning environment both inside and outdoors. Children enjoy engaging in activities based on their own interests such as making elephant masks before retelling the story of 'Elmer the Elephant'. Well-trained staff ensure that parents learn alongside their children, for example when singing and participating in action songs during 'Toy Library'. Parents who have disabled children appreciate the opportunities for their children to socialise in a safe, friendly environment.

Staff are skilled at signposting parents to adult learning courses leading to qualifications and employment. Outreach workers provide support and information for learning, training and employment for parents. One-to-one interviews and personalised plans for return to work and support with filling in application forms and curriculum vitae (CV) writing help parents to apply for training, gain qualifications and seek employment. Focus groups such as teenage parents and lone parents are given priority and respite childcare is provided to help them access training. For example, one parent, speaking no English and with three small children, who was supported with childcare while she attended English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes is now carrying out her National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 2 work experience at the centre and has been elected as a school-parent governor.

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

The headteacher provides clear strategic direction. Staff have clear roles and lines of responsibility. The centre is led and managed successfully on a day-to-day basis by the centre manager. Current job uncertainties related to the reorganisation of the centre mean that morale is not as high as it normally is but this has not swayed the centre's total commitment to making improvements for most families. The centre manager provides regular and effective supervision and supports the personal and professional development of staff who say they feel valued and supported in their role. Opportunities for training are carefully focused not only on meeting the development needs of the centre, but also on improving the qualifications and expertise of staff. Parents play an important role in the work of the centre through their membership on the children's centre committee and the governing body. As the children's centre committee is part of the governing body there is a clear a flow of information and focus on improvement. Governance and accountability arrangements are well defined.

The centre is rigorous in monitoring and evaluating all that it does. Activities are evaluated at the end by group leaders and parents, providing vital information for future plans. However, the use of data to evidence the centre's impact on improving outcomes is an area for improvement. In addition, the centre's development plan is not as challenging as it could be and targets to show progress are not always quantifiable. Children's achievements are effectively tracked and used for forward planning. Outcomes are good for most families because the centre is committed to ensuring that all provision is of good quality. Families are united in their view that the centre has an unblemished track record which meets their needs successfully and provides good value for money. Effective partnerships, particularly with the school, enhance opportunities for families in the area and have a positive impact in securing good outcomes.

The centre is an inclusive, welcoming setting where relationships are positive and productive. It promotes inclusive practice for all families including those with disabled children or children who have special educational needs. Resources are managed well, for example special equipment has been provided to ensure all children who attend can access all of the outdoor facilities. All staff understand, value and promote equality and diversity in all its forms, and recognise the need to reach out to all

groups especially if they are in the minority. Staff are effective in removing barriers like low self-esteem, gaps in knowledge and understanding, low levels of education and poor parenting skills.

Procedures for safeguarding are good and together with the centre's effective early intervention and multi-agency cooperation ensure that families feel safe and that their emotional and social needs are effectively met. Checks on the suitability of adults to work with children are thorough and child protection arrangements are secure and updated regularly. Robust risk assessments are undertaken regularly and good records are kept. Staff training is regularly updated.

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	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	2

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

Findings from the concurrent school inspection in relation to children's skills and abilities on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage, leadership and management, and safeguarding were taken into consideration and contributed to the children's centre report and judgements.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Woodside Children's Centre on 7 and 8 March 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you for your participation in the inspection of your children's centre. Those of you we spoke to were unanimous in your praise for all the centre staff have done for you and your children. Several spoke of the dedication of the staff who go beyond what is expected of them to ensure help for specific problems is offered. Many of you told us directly how the centre has given you confidence in various aspects of your life and in some instances has been a 'lifesaver' and changed your lives considerably for the better. The support the centre has given in helping your children learn and develop has also been positive because you are more confident in the ways that you can help your children. The care, guidance and support provided for you are good because the staff know everyone well and therefore can target support and call upon the effective partners to give specialist help. As a result, relationships are very positive and this helps towards the good outcomes that are achieved by the centre. The centre listens to your views carefully and you are well represented on the children's centre committee.

The centre is well run and managed and the children's centre committee works hard and is involved in shaping what goes on in the centre. The centre is rigorous in its monitoring and evaluation but has yet to develop the way that it uses data to provide more evidence of the impact of the centre's work. We have asked it to make sure that this is done and to make sure that data are also used to ensure the targets in the development plan are more ambitious and are measurable.

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