

# Inspection report for The Grove Children and Family Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	London Borough of Southwark
<b>Inspection number</b>	383348
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 March 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joan Lindsay

<b>Centre leader</b>	Kay Beckwith
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	The Grove Nursery School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	The Grove Children and Family Centre

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.

An inspection of the maintained nursery 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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

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

The inspectors held meetings with the centre leader and staff, senior leaders of the school, representatives from the local authority, the governing body and the advisory board. They also spoke to partner agencies, such as the health services, and parents and other users of the centre. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centre's development plan.

## Information about the centre

This phase one centre was designated in March 2006 and delivers the full core offer of services. It is managed directly by the governing body of The Grove Nursery School on behalf of the local authority. The current centre leader has been in post since July 2011 following a lengthy period where there were significant changes in leadership.

The centre is open 48 weeks of the year on weekdays from 8.00am until 6.00pm and on Saturday mornings. The reach area covers a large proportion of Camberwell and some parts of Peckham, with seven Lower Super Output Areas all of which are in the lowest 30% most deprived. Thirty nine percent of children are classed as living in poverty. Housing ranges from private, street level properties to high rise flats. Regeneration of the area has led to high mobility in the population.

There are 1045 children under five in the reach area. The area is culturally diverse. The proportion of White British families is 20% and the largest other groups are of Nigerian and Black Caribbean origin. The percentage of children aged nought to four

living in households dependent on workless benefits is more than twice the national average and the number of eligible families benefiting from the childcare element of Working Tax Credit is slightly higher than that seen nationally. Children’s levels on entry to early years provision across the reach area are well below those expected for their age.

## 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 Grove Children and Family Centre provides a good service to families. There are outstanding levels of care, guidance and support because staff are very well trained, knowledgeable and have the welfare and safety of families at the heart of all they do. This is particularly so for the families whose circumstances make them most vulnerable in the community and who are often facing critical situations in their lives. As a result of the warm, enthusiastic welcome everyone receives, there is a very strong community feel to this highly inclusive centre and many of those who have been supported are now giving their time to helping the centre in different and valuable ways. Consequently, all of those who use the centre feel safe there and the contribution they make is excellent. ‘The community at The Grove is an absolute joy’ was how one parent summed up the views of the majority.

Families are also supported very effectively through the highly productive partnerships that are in place across a wide range of private and voluntary groups and particularly through the strong links with the health services. This means that outcomes for families using the centre are good or outstanding and continue to improve. The centre has good systems in place to show the impact of its work in many areas. However, it is not yet tracking the longer-term benefits, for example when children move on to other schools and if adults progress on to work or training in the future.

The numbers accessing the services are growing rapidly thanks to very effective outreach work, and they accurately reflect the community it serves. The centre has been particularly successful in engaging young parents, children with disabilities and those from minority ethnic groups. However, while a satisfactory number of fathers

access the activities, there is no specific group for them to encourage more to attend.

Leadership and management at all levels are good and all staff have a clear understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for development. This is highlighted in the excellent development plan that sets out ambitious targets that everyone involved with the centre is committed to achieve. Despite a prolonged period of uncertainty in the senior leadership roles, the centre has continued to move forward enabling more families in the community to benefit from the high quality services. There is a very strong commitment from staff and partners as well as those who use the centre to see it progress even further. The good and outstanding outcomes reflect this and combined with a clear understanding of the needs of the community, especially of the most vulnerable groups, show there is a good capacity to continue to improve.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the number of fathers who use the centre by developing a range of services or activities to meet their specific needs.
- Develop a consistent method to track the progress of children and adults who have accessed the centre by:
  - liaising with all schools in the reach area to agree a consistent approach
  - recording the longer-term progress and achievements of adults who have accessed courses at or through the centre.

## How good are outcomes for families?

<b>2</b>
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Childhood obesity levels in the reach area are slightly above national averages but fell by over 8% from 2010 to 2011. Sustained breastfeeding rates at 82% have improved very significantly. Immunisation rates are marginally below average. A large majority of families feel the centre helps them understand how to be healthy, and promoting healthy lifestyles permeates the work of the centre. Cooking sessions, weekly breastfeeding cafes, and the chance to buy excellent healthy meals all contribute to the good health outcomes. Parents also get involved to encourage healthy eating with the 'Healthy Heroes' selling small bags of fruit and vegetables at low cost. Physical exercise is promoted well through access to the well-resourced outdoor area and through physical activities such as the very popular 'Diddi Dance'. The highly effective links with midwives, co-located health visitors and adult mental health service mean that there are good outcomes for families with more specific health needs such as postnatal depression.

Emergency hospital admissions in the reach area are relatively low at seven per 1000 children, and decreasing year on year. Regular paediatric first aid courses, events such as Road Safety Week and numerous parenting courses all add to families'

excellent understanding of how to keep their children safe. Families feel extremely secure in the centre and for many, especially those who have no entitlement to benefits, it is a haven where they are always welcome. 'They always remember you and your children' was a common comment from parents. Everyone spoken to during the inspection has total trust in the staff, who in turn are very quick to pick up any safeguarding issues. As a result, the centre's full involvement in supporting those subject to child protection plans and the instigation of and participation in the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) has led to positive outcomes for many children. In several cases, the support of the centre at CAF level, and the excellent partnership working have prevented the need to escalate the level of care.

Early Years Foundation Stage results have increased significantly since 2009 and at 56.9% are now only slightly below the national figure. The achievement gap between the lowest 20% and the rest, at 30%, is slightly below the national figure and has narrowed substantially, by 8%, since 2010. Excellent links with the co-located nursery school, a strong focus on early years development in centre activities and high levels of support for parents to help their children learn such as through the Parents in Partnership with Early Learning course mean that children are well prepared for transition to school. Initial tracking of children when they move on shows they make good progress but systems to track children in the longer term and in other schools are not in place. Very high levels of enjoyment are seen at all activities, such as 'Toddle Time', by children and adults. 'Children get very excited when they see the building' summed up the children's levels of enjoyment.

Adult learning courses such as 'Family Maths and Literacy', and language classes that meet the needs of the many diverse ethnic groups, have had a positive impact on participants' achievement and their economic well-being. Most noticeable are those who have gone on to train to deliver courses or set up enterprising groups as a result of the work and encouragement of the centre. This has had a particular impact on those who have no entitlement to benefits, lone parents and those from minority ethnic groups. The number of children living in poverty has fallen from 48% in 2008 to 39% in 2010. Welfare advice drop-in sessions, support in getting prepared to return to work and legal advice have all had a positive impact on many families' circumstances. However, the centre is not tracking this impact in the longer term.

Children behave very well in the centre and develop positive relationships, excellently modelled by staff. The parents' forum, 'Groovy Grovers', meets regularly and parents, accurately reflecting the target groups, successfully fundraise for the centre, and are actively involved in the advisory board, sit on the governing body and are very willing to volunteer in a formal and informal way. As such, they not only make an excellent contribution to the decision-making and governance of the centre but they gain personally through greater confidence which has led many to improve their circumstances. Requests for donations of food at the 'Food Bank' for the neediest were met with overwhelming generosity adding to the strong sense of community.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for families*

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are</b>	<b>2</b>
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<b>physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</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>1</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>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>1</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>2</b>

## **How good is the provision?**

<b>2</b>
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Centre staff have a very good knowledge of families using the services and of the community as a whole. The numbers from all target groups, including those deemed most in need of support such as those without benefits, have increased substantially in recent months as a result of active and often tenacious outreach work and a more settled period in relation to staffing. A large percentage of children with disabilities in the community access the centre as do young mothers, thanks to the successful 'Young Parents Group'. Minority ethnic groups are very well represented, with 79% of all families living in the reach area registered. There are very high participation and retention rates because courses and activities are often set up in response to the specific needs of local families. Consequently, there has been a positive impact across all outcome areas.

Achievement is celebrated well with celebration lunches and certificates which encourage families to aspire to even more, such as training to facilitate courses they have participated in. Children's early learning and development are at the heart of all the well-planned activities and courses, such as 'Bringing up Boys', set up as a result of recognising the relative underachievement of boys in the nursery. Specialist speech and language input and specific support for children with disabilities and those with special educational needs help the most vulnerable children learn and develop well.

Families who use the centre are unanimous in the feeling that they receive excellent levels of care, guidance and support. This is especially so in times of crisis, such as when there is the threat of eviction or when there is no money for food. In these situations, staff make excellent use of the many strong partnerships to give specialist help and advice such as through the Cambridge House Law Centre or the health services. The way that support for families is planned for and followed up through excellent case studies and regular multiagency reviews such as The Grove Partnership meetings, is highly effective.

*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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>1</b>

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

<b>2</b>
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The governing body and the advisory board are fully involved in the management and strategic development of the centre and their roles are clearly understood. Both bodies play an effective role in evaluating the centre's performance aided by the excellent development plan which clearly sets out key priorities, and has ambitious, measurable and time-related targets. The local authority provides good levels of support and effective monitoring. All partners understand their roles in supporting and developing the centre although some have a much greater input and involvement than others. The day-to-day management of the centre is good and professional supervision and development is having an increasingly positive impact on outcomes.

The centre is used very well and is open to the community throughout the day, with excellent healthy food available at lunchtime. This ensures that those most in need of support can access staff easily and effectively and the numbers who do so are increasing rapidly. The full timetable of events ensures the building and outdoor resources are used well.

The centre is highly inclusive and reflects the community it serves to a great degree. The purpose-built building is fully accessible to those with disabilities and links with KIDS (portage support) ensures disabled children's needs are met well. The provision of a crèche has had a very positive impact, not only on increased numbers accessing courses but also on children's early development as they learn to become independent and also benefit from the high quality care and resources. As a result of specific targeted work, such as welfare drop-in sessions and courses preparing for a return to work, the centre has been effective in narrowing the achievement gap as families are given confidence to improve their lives by returning to work or volunteering, and in supporting their children to learn.

Safeguarding policies and procedures are very strong and staff are highly trained in specific aspects such as in recognising and dealing with domestic violence or in spotting possible child protection issues. All appropriate Criminal Records Bureau checks are carried out and risk assessments are routine and robust. The Parent Outreach Worker is highly proficient in instigating and managing CAFs and the work



done with other agencies ensures that children’s interests are safeguarded extremely well and the number of children subject to child protection plans in the reach area is low.

The centre has been proactive in developing wide-ranging and highly effective partnerships that make a very valuable contribution to all outcomes. These include childminders, midwives, health visitors, nutritionists and speech and language therapists who effectively meet the needs of all target groups in the area but specifically those who are most vulnerable and where children are potentially at risk. A particularly strong partnership exists with parents who play an important and highly valued role in improving outcomes for many in the community. Families are very satisfied with the services offered and feel they have very good opportunities to become involved in shaping the services and in the development of the centre as a whole. However, there are no specific methods to capture the views of children other than through observation and asking the parents.

*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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>1</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>2</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>2</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>1</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>1</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>2</b>

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

Findings from the concurrent nursery 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.

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected The Grove Children and Family Centre on 14 and 15 March 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

There are several aspects of the centre's work that are outstanding, such as the care, guidance and support that are provided by the staff, the excellent partnerships that are in place, and the safeguarding arrangements that ensure you all feel extremely secure and trusting of staff. The positive contribution that many of you make in various ways, including your involvement in the management of the centre, and the way the centre plans for further improvement are also outstanding. 'The community at The Grove is an absolute joy' was a statement that summed up the views of a great many parents.

During our visit, we looked at your centre's development plan and numerous other documents. We spoke to a wide range of partner agencies working with the centre as well as staff, members of the governing body and the advisory board, and a representative from the local authority. We also visited all the centre activities taking place during the inspection, such as 'Toddle Time', 'Best Start for Babies' and 'Diddi Dance' and spoke to a substantial number of families using the centre.

Thank you for your participation in the inspection. It was very helpful to have your input and to hear how positive you all feel about the centre and especially the commitment of the staff and how well your children have learned and developed. Many of you say your children 'Talk more and socialise more', and 'are confident to speak to adults and air their views'. You also feel that the centre has helped you to improve many aspects of your own lives by giving you the confidence to volunteer or to train to run your own courses. Views that summed up those of many we spoke to were: 'I've got bags and bags and bags of things out of it!' and 'I'm always here to learn more'.

It is clear that the centre is highly inclusive and more and more families are using it as it is a very welcoming and safe environment. 'It's like an extended family...children call the staff "auntie"' was one description voiced by many. Consequently, families are reaping the benefits such as in how to lead healthy lives and how to keep children safe. Although a satisfactory number of fathers attend activities, the numbers who do so are relatively small so we have asked the centre to address this by organising specific activities to encourage more to attend. The centre is having a positive impact across all outcome areas as can be seen from the many well-documented case studies and the statistical information available. However, it is not yet tracking that impact in the longer term, such as to check how

many of you return to work at a future date or how well children who have accessed the centre progress when they move on to other schools. This is something we have asked the centre to improve.

Everyone, including families and partners who work with the centre, are committed to continue to improve the outcomes and increase the numbers who benefit from the services. There is a very clear understanding of all the strengths and the areas for development and there has already been a positive impact on the lives of many, despite a prolonged period of disruption to the senior leadership of the centre. As a result, the centre is well placed to continue to improve.

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