

Inspection report for Ann Bernadt Children's Centre

Local authority	London Borough of Southwark
Inspection number	362427
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Centre governance	London Borough of Southwark
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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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.

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 two additional inspectors. The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, centre staff, a local authority representative, health professionals, parents and a representative from the centre's governing body. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

The Ann Bernadt Children's Centre was designated as a phase one children's centre in 2006. Between 2006 and 2008 the present centre manager ran the nursery school and the after school care, with a separate manager running the under-threes day care unit and the children's centre. The centre manager was appointed in overall charge of the children's centre in 2009, following a period of consultation and amalgamation. The centre became fully operational in September 2009 but has experienced accommodation difficulties, rendering some rooms and the lift unusable. The centre is directly managed by the London Borough of Southwark and governed by the governing body of the Ann Bernadt Nursery School. An advisory board has recently been established.

The centre is situated in Peckham, one of the most deprived wards in the London Borough of Southwark, which experiences high levels of domestic violence, teenage pregnancy and crime. The area is characterised by high levels of social deprivation. Data indicate that 45% of children under five years of age in the reach area are living in poverty, compared to 31% in London and 24% nationally. Significant numbers of children live in temporary accommodation.

The centre serves a diverse community both culturally and linguistically. Ninety two per cent of children aged four and five in the reach area are from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds. There are over 23 different languages spoken within the centre's reach and over 90% of children have a first language other than English. Families using the centre's facilities are mainly of African origin and the majority are employed in low-wage shift work.

The centre is open from 8am to 6pm for 49 weeks of the year. There are currently 24 children aged under three registered in the day care provision and 79 children registered across four nursery classes.

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 users and the wider community

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

The centre makes a satisfactory contribution to improving outcomes for children, families and other users of its services. The recent inspection of the established nursery provision and early years childcare provided by the centre judged that good early learning opportunities are enjoyed by children who attend and it is valued by their parents. Good procedures are in place to safeguard users, who say they feel safe at the centre and that their children are well cared for. Information and activities provided help parents and carers develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves and their children free from harm. There are effective links with social services and health professionals to support children and families in need and those who might be at risk of harm. Some rooms at the centre are unable to be used because of long-term problems with damp, but where the centre has been unable to accommodate users, different venues locally have been found or users have been signposted to such provision in the locality. As a consequence, provision and outcomes for users are satisfactory.

The needs of individual families and children who are accessing services, particularly in the nursery, are satisfactorily understood. Appropriate steps are taken to work with partners and other agencies in meeting their needs, including those children and their families who are experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties and families in crisis.

Whilst there is some collation and use of centre-specific data, users' evaluations of activities and other local information, it is not yet systematic or comprehensive. For example, there is currently limited monitoring of which users are accessing different services and evaluation of how effective these are. A system has recently been introduced to capture this information and the centre's senior leaders have now been trained in the system's use, but the impact of this is not yet being used effectively by the centre to understand how successfully it is meeting its users' needs.

Leadership and management overall are satisfactory. There is a shared commitment by the centre's leadership team to revive and extend provision. For example, firm arrangements have been made for activities that have had to re-locate, such as baby massage sessions, to return to the centre. Not all users, particularly parents and carers of children in the nursery, are aware of the range of services available to them currently. An advisory board has been recently established but has not yet had time to fully develop its role.

Despite difficulties caused by changes in leadership and building works, the centre's leadership demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve. For example, the accurate identification of strengths and areas for development has contributed to an appropriate plan for improvement. In addition, there is secure multi-agency working which is helping to keep vulnerable children safe and good provision for children of early years age that is making a positive contribution to narrowing the achievement gap by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Strengthen governance and leadership and management by:
 - developing leaders' skills in assessing the needs of the community served by the centre and in monitoring and evaluating the impact of the centre's provision on children and families in the reach area
 - providing training for members of the advisory board, clarifying its relationship between the centre's management and parent forum.
- Publicise the centre to raise its profile locally and in the wider community so that parents, carers and other users know what services are available to them.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

The centre is at an early stage of evaluating the impact of its work beyond that in the nursery provision. As a result, the evidence is limited. But where it is available, such as evaluations of sessions by users, it demonstrates that outcomes overall are satisfactory. The inspection of the nursery judged that children who attend make good progress in their learning and development. Data show that this is making a positive contribution to narrowing the achievement gap in the area.

The centre is promoting healthy outcomes through its good links with other agencies. For example, support was given to help temporarily relocate a group to help mothers wean infants. Additionally, parents are signposted to a drop-in breastfeeding café at Peckham Library and to baby massage classes. Children eat nutritious, freshly cooked meals and healthy snacks during nursery and childcare sessions. Care is taken to accommodate cultural and medical needs when meal planning. Mealtimes are social occasions when staff sit with the children, modelling good speaking and listening skills. Parents have been consulted on children's individual likes and dislikes.

Prior to the relocation of some of its outreach work, local health services were active in the centre, giving talks to parents and carers on issues such as oral health, nutrition and meal planning. Although there is no significant evidence as to the impact of this, parents spoken to during the inspection said that they were more confident in trying to cook more healthy meals at home and that their children were more willing to try new foods since attending the nursery and childcare sessions.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that the emotional well-being of mothers and babies is improved by learning baby massage techniques and take-up rates of this service are good. The emotional well-being and physical safety of vulnerable families and children at risk of harm is prioritised well so relationships with these families are positive, including at times of crisis or particular difficulty. Staff are trained in the Common Assessment Framework and there is sound evidence of early identification and multi-agency support of children in need or subject to child protection plans.

Children in the centre behave well. Some parents benefit from courses and activities such as maths workshops and 'Schemas', which help parents understand their children's behavioural patterns. One mother said, 'It has shown me different ways to play with my child.' The outreach worker helps parents to form fill when applying for college courses when required and one parent spoken to had been grateful to the centre for giving her a work placement which had enabled her to complete accredited childcare courses. As one parent wrote in her evaluation of a parent/child music making course, 'My child is happier for the whole day afterwards.' Another wrote, 'My child has learnt to be much more sociable and it has been good for me to meet other parents.'

Data indicate that there has been an increase in the take up of childcare by low income families. Childminders in the reach area have been helped to develop their knowledge and understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum in literacy and numeracy through attendance at workshops in the children's centre.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	3
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 users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	3
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	3
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	3

How good is the provision?

3

The recent inspection of the nursery school judged that the needs of children in the nursery are assessed effectively and there is a good focus on providing an inclusive environment. Good partnership working with key agencies, such as social services and the speech and language therapy service, ensures that the needs of some users, particularly the most vulnerable, are understood well. As a result, some services are targeted appropriately for specific groups, for example providing a secure environment for families to have supervised contact with their children and providing translators for parents and carers who do not speak English.

Some information of needs in the wider community comes from the outreach worker's links to groups in the locality, but the needs of different groups in the wider community are not always assessed systematically. Some parents who use the childcare and nursery facilities were not aware of any other services open to them and were under the impression that the nursery and childcare was all that the centre provided. Consequently, although the range of services and activities meets the needs of some users effectively, particularly in the nursery and childcare provision, there is limited evidence of any increase in participation rates of children and families from the wider community.

The promotion of purposeful learning, development and enjoyment of users is variable and stronger in the nursery and childcare provision. Outdoor learning, play and physical development are enhanced through the use of the centre's excellent outdoor area. In addition, a large, well-equipped covered outdoor classroom area enables children to enjoy exciting learning opportunities and improve their physical development by climbing and riding bikes, whatever the weather.

Evening childminder courses provide good advice and guidance from specialists such as health and educational professionals. Appropriate guidance and support are provided through leaflets and signposting to specialist services in the locality. As well as leaflets in languages other than English and a translation service, there is also signing available for parents and carers with a hearing disability.

Individual case studies show that the well-being of children and parents benefit from effective, tailored and integrated support. In times of crisis, families feel well supported by the centre. For example, one parent said, 'When I think who can I turn to, I think of the centre and go and talk to someone there.' The centre strives to provide relevant guidance for its users, for example a monthly drop-in session with a solicitor and other professionals to give advice on benefits and housing issues, and a three-monthly visit from Thames Reach to support vulnerable families, for example those with issues such as alcohol abuse or at risk of being evicted from their homes.

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	3

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Leaders satisfactorily understand the strengths and weaknesses of the centre's work. Data only recently made available from the local authority, and the completion of some of the building work, have given fresh impetus to existing planning in place and leaders are determined to bring about further improvements. The centre provides satisfactory value for money.

Diversity is celebrated appropriately through displays, resources and celebrating different religious festivals and events, such as Black History Month. Good steps are taken to ensure equality of opportunity for some groups of users identified with specific needs, for example children in the nursery with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The outdoor play area has been adapted to accommodate wheelchair users.

Staff have undertaken relevant training and have appropriate qualifications to support families and keep them safe. Appropriate recruitment and vetting checks are made on staff and safeguarding procedures and policies are good. Senior staff have undertaken enhanced training in child protection and induction procedures for new staff in safeguarding are good. There is effective multi-agency cooperation to safeguard children in need and issues are followed up appropriately. Record keeping of attendance at inter-agency meetings and Common Assessment Framework paperwork are good. Partnerships with other agencies is improving, for example developing outreach work to fathers, and health professionals, including those from mental health services, are planning to resume outreach in the renovated building.

Members of the governing body have benefited from governance training and know the areas for improvement of the centre well. They have been proactive in expediting building works, but are aware that it has taken a long time to set up the advisory board. A service level agreement between the local authority and the children's centre has been drawn up and shared. Governors have been involved in the centre's self-evaluation, some of which is accurate. Although the parents' forum has lapsed over time, plans are in place to revive it and relationships between centre staff and its users are very positive.

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	3
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider	3

community	
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	3
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	3
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 evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	3
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	3
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community 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 inspection of the early years and childcare provision and the nursery school carried out on 9 December 2010 judged both to be good overall. It judged all outcomes for children as good. Findings from this inspection have contributed to the children's centre report and judgements on outcomes for users and the effectiveness of provision.

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 Ann Bernadt Children's Centre on 15 and 16 December 2010. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

During the inspection we held meetings with the centre's staff, representatives from the local authority and from the centre's governing body, health professionals and parents. We looked at the centre's policies and information about who uses the centre. We were especially pleased to speak with some of you to find out what you think about the centre and the services it provides.

Some of you we spoke to told us that you value what your children's centre offers, particularly in the nursery. Some of you explained how the centre is helping you to gain more confidence, for example in communicating with your children and helping you to understand how they learn and develop. It was clear from reading evaluations of courses, such as 'Whippersnappers', that you and your children really enjoyed these music sessions. By providing childcare, you told us that the centre has enabled some of you to return to work. Everyone we spoke to told us that they feel welcome and safe and that your children are safe when they are in the centre.

The nursery is more established than some other services that the centre provides. Some of you who use the nursery and childcare provision were unclear about other services available at the centre, so we have asked centre leaders to publicise the centre's activities better. However, the centre has helped some of you to gain new skills, for example in how to develop your child's speech and language skills through participation in 'Schemas' and some parents have been helped by the outreach worker in completing application forms for training or further education courses. One parent valued the work experience she was offered at the centre which helped her achieve an accredited childcare qualification.

The centre works well with different organisations to make sure that those of you who need extra support get what you need. For example, those of you who need help and support about housing and welfare benefits are able to get that from monthly drop-in sessions offered at the centre. There are regular drop-in sessions for childminders at your centre. These provide advice and guidance on subjects such as helping young children with their maths and literacy skills.

The centre has undergone some changes to staffing since it opened. Difficulties with floors which needed replacing in the nursery and childcare rooms and flooding on the first floor has meant that children have had to be moved to different classrooms. The lift does not work and offices and rooms, such as the sensory room, cannot yet be used. You have had to attend some activities in nearby locations and you have told us that you did not always like the new venue. You will be pleased to hear that most activities which were relocated are returning to the centre in January 2011 as the ground floor of the centre is now fit for use and the nursery and childcare classroom floors have been repaired or replaced.

This has meant that the centre has not been able to fully meet your needs as well as it planned to, but leaders have plans to help improve this. We agree with those of you who felt that this has taken too long.

The local authority has now provided the advisory group and the centre's leaders with all the information they need to make sure all the services are what you need and the best they can be. We have also asked the local authority to help the centre leaders use the information effectively to make sure equally good services are provided to even more families in the community who might need them. You can help by joining the parents' forum which wants to help make sure your views and the views of your community are taken into account. The advisory board, which is responsible for advising the centre about how to improve, is made up of a wide range of people, including representatives from the local authority and parents' forum. Both these groups have not yet had many meetings and so how they all work together is not clear to them all. We have asked the local authority to improve this.

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