

# Inspection report for Maples Children's Centre

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Local authority	The London Borough of Ealing
Inspection number	362522
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2010
Reporting inspector	David Scott

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Mia Ospovat-Stockton
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	N/A
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Maples Children's Centre Nursery

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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 one additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, local authority officers, outreach workers, health professionals and front line staff. They met parents and carers, observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Maples Children's Centre is located in an urban area in west London. The reach area includes seven primary and two secondary schools. The centre operates on an attractive site so that there is ready access for targeted families and their children. The locality in which the centre works is very diverse culturally and economically, and includes significant pockets of deprivation in what is a generally affluent area. Some families earn below average incomes and one in five children live in workless households who claim out-of-work benefits. Although parts of the target population are very stable, there is also evidence of high mobility, in particular, new families from Eastern European countries, such as Poland. Many of these children have little exposure to English outside of the centre. Attainment on entry of learners to the centre is below average.

The centre has developed around the maintained nursery school and provides a range of services such as education for children, adult learning, childcare 'Stay and Play' programmes, support for lone and teenage parents, carer support and community-based health services. There are just under a thousand targeted children under five years of age within the catchment area. The centre also provides for children with physical disabilities, or for those whose parents have physical

disabilities, but the need and take-up is small. Outreach provision is coordinated by a voluntary organisation commissioned by the local authority.

Maples Children's Centre is directly managed by the local authority, as are all children's centres in Ealing. It was designated as a phase 1 children's centre in March 2006 with the full core offer being available from August 2009.

## 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**

**2**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**2**

## Main findings

Maples is a good children's centre which serves the needs of its community very well. This is because those in charge are demonstrating a clear vision and have an accurate understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for improvement. There are exceptional relationships with key partners and, together, they are taking steps to improve already good outcomes for users and reach more families. As one parent commented, 'Maples is a sanctuary where every child is special.' This common view expressed by an ethnically mixed group of parents and carers not only supports the judgement but confirms that the centre has good capacity to improve further.

Outcomes for users are good and improving. Many users are responding very well to the 'Grow, cook and eat' projects where children, parents and carers experience the process from growing food to cooking with it. The centre openly encourages parents and carers to provide fresh fruit for snack times as a means of widening children's dietary tastes and the importance of eating a balanced diet. Users and their children feel the centre provides a welcoming and extremely safe and secure family environment. Those using the centre thoroughly enjoy and are very appreciative of the varied range of services on offer. They feel it is extremely responsive to their needs and cite many examples of how it has had a positive impact on their children and their own lives.

Children make good progress in their communication and language skills as a result of the input from speech and language workers during 'Stay and Play' sessions and the 'Language and Play' programme. As one parent reported, 'My child has gained in confidence from meeting new friends - it has been such a joyful way to learn.' Users benefit from many other courses, which builds their confidence and self-esteem. For the majority of users, this has resulted in access to further training and gaining employment.

The centre collects a wide range of data. This includes data related to events, courses, and visitors to the centre, referrals from health and outreach workers, as

well as data from the local authority. Monitoring information is used regularly and analysed with increasing accuracy to identify what the centre does well and to plan for improvement. Criteria against which to judge the impact of any changes are not always measurable, and as a result, not all potential users are reached. Some centre staff are new to their responsibilities and additional training will be needed to help everyone become more effective in improving the outcomes for users.

The highly effective care, guidance and support is reflected in one user's comment, 'This is a great place - a gift from God.' It has an excellent understanding of individual user's needs, and takes every opportunity to promote and support their interests. Vulnerable children and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported. The centre has established very strong links with other professionals such as health visitors and speech therapists to target specific support to those users who need it the most. Staff strive to eradicate any differences between groups within the community by ensuring each user is valued. The centre has good procedures for safeguarding and risk assessment. These meet all government guidelines and include high quality checks on adults and a carefully planned approach to managing the safety of children.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Sharpen the impact of leaders and managers at all levels on continuing improvement by:
  - ensuring that tracking and monitoring information is analysed robustly by setting quantifiable measures against which to evaluate success
  - increasing participation rates among target populations
  - distributing the leadership of the centre even more widely by extending the capacity of leaders at all levels to manage their areas of responsibility even more effectively.

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

<b>2</b>
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Outcomes for the children and families who use the centre are good. For example, parents and carers are responding well to healthy cooking courses that are encouraging them to provide healthy meals for their families. Analysis of data indicates that the numbers of children under five who are obese are generally falling, and the centre is starting to have an impact on smoking cessation, but numbers are small. Take-up of support for mothers at the parenting classes is good and improving. Children and families feel extremely safe when accessing services at the centre. Parents confidently discuss and share their issues, as they feel secure in groups such as 'Family Links'. Regular home visits ensure that users and their children are fully aware of how to stay safe in the home and community. Courses available are valued by parents. They give them confidence, help them with parenting skills, supporting their children's learning, and prepare them for the world of work by gaining recognised qualifications in numeracy. The group for English for

speakers of other languages (ESOL) is well supported and has seen accelerated progress in adults' use of English language skills.

Ensuring the emotional well-being of users is a high priority for the centre, particularly those with children with special educational needs and/or disabilities or subject to child protection plans. Strong inter-agency working and dedicated centre staff ensure that children supported by the Common Assessment Framework are well cared for. Outreach workers are key when working with such families and build trusting relationships so they feel able to engage with other professionals to access the required help. This is highly valued by users, for example, in the words of one parent, 'The personal support offered to me at a time of emotional crisis was invaluable.'

'Stay and Play' sessions are popular and well attended. A focus on language and communication has seen positive benefits in improving children's speech and by increasing parents' understanding of how they can encourage their children's language development. Initiatives such as the 'creative play' have worked well by encouraging parents and carers to take an active role in their child's learning and development. Evidence is building that, where children and families have benefited from contact with the centre, children have a better start to school life. The children's centre teachers work well with the nursery staff and this is reflected within the recent good Ofsted inspection judgement.

Children's behaviour is excellent in the children's centre. They have positive relationships with adults and develop confidence to separate from their parents and carers as a result. Users' views are taken into account regularly and have an influence on provision. For example, a group of volunteers designed and created an attractive garden within the centre. Similarly, following consultation, the timing of the centre day was adjusted to fit in with users' work and care patterns.

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, and their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which all users 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 users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment.</b>	<b>2</b>

## How good is the provision?

2

The centre is effective at assessing the needs of the children and families who use its services. Assessments cover the whole range of needs, including those who are most vulnerable. Excellent relationships are in place with a range of key partners including social care, health, speech and language therapy, other Early Years Foundation Stage providers and the safeguarding team. The centre follows clear processes to involve these partnerships in targeting services for individual children and families. The crèche and outreach workers use their knowledge and influence to help families engage with other professionals ensuring the well-being of children and their parents.

The children's centre is increasingly effective in engaging some harder-to-reach families and are working with partners to gain the information they need to target these families. For example, those who are subject to domestic violence are referred speedily to therapeutic services. Senior leaders and staff constantly seek ways to identify the needs of specific groups and to tailor activities accordingly, for example by designing a course for mothers on managing and understanding their son's play and behaviour. The crèche and 'Stay and Play' facilities ensure equality of access to all users and particularly those from groups that are more vulnerable. Trips to local places of interest and visits to central London provide specifically tailored support for those who need it most. These provide a fantastic opportunity for families to have fun and engage in outdoor pursuits, while building confidence, relationships and parenting skills. There are highly effective transition arrangements as children progress into school.

Despite the centre's website being at an early stage of development, its services are well advertised in the local community through 'word of mouth', and are tailored to meet the needs of its users. The quality of advice and guidance for those accessing benefits and those seeking to gain employment is excellent. Users are supported very well to improve both their educational and personal development. The use of volunteers within the centre is a strong example of the commitment to developing users' confidence and to support them to move into further training, education or employment.

<b>The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community</b>	<b>1</b>



## How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The headteacher's commitment and determination to improve the children's centre are impressive. As one parent commented, echoing the views of many, 'The headteacher is always approachable and accessible.' She has a clear vision for the children's centre, and is passionately committed to serving the local community and improving the life chances of all children. These intentions have been shared effectively with all staff, who embrace and deliver them wholeheartedly.

Self-evaluation is honest and accurate. Members of the governing body are fully supportive of the centre's aims and fulfil all their statutory duties well. They have a very intuitive understanding of the needs of the community the centre serves and ways in which they can be met. They know the centre well and have an accurate view of its performance.

Staff and volunteers undertake relevant training to enable them to support families effectively and keep them safe. All policies and procedures are clear and meet requirements. The centre has good procedures for safeguarding and risk assessment. These meet all government guidelines and include high quality checks on adults and a carefully planned approach to managing the safety of children. Child-protection procedures are thorough and responsibilities are clear. Staff attend regular training on safeguarding. Staff know the community well and have developed excellent relationships with partners and professionals in social care, health and education. The centre has excellent links with the local community, particularly with its partner primary and high schools, teacher training universities and the multi-agency team Supportive Action for Families in Ealing (SAFE). As a result, the centre offers good value for money.

The centre has a strong commitment to inclusion and is highly effective at removing barriers to ensure that every child has an equal chance to learn. It works very effectively to eradicate any differences between groups within the community so that they are positively recognised and supported in the centre. They know their families well and quickly identify where additional support is needed. Staff are knowledgeable about the centre's vulnerable groups and take proactive steps to engage them in the centre's work, for example using volunteers as role models for others. They are establishing links with the police to quickly reach families subject to domestic violence and working to ensure the consistency of health referrals across the catchment area.

The centre deploys a number innovative ways to evaluate its services, ranging from questionnaires to one-to-one interviews with users and providers. As a result, the centre collects much useful data both from its own sources and the local authority. While the data supplied by local authority is helpful, it does not indicate the specific performance of the centre in relation to the local and national picture. There is evidence to show the good impact of the centre's work on outcomes, but the excellent work it does is not always accurately analysed.

<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 extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community</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>1</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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Maples Children's Centre on 1 and 2 December 2010. We judged the centre as good overall.

Under the good guidance of the headteacher, staff work very well as a team to provide outstanding levels of care, guidance and support for all its users. Staff are committed and keen to support both children's development and to develop adults' skills and levels of confidence. They have established some excellent partnerships with other professionals and organisations to ensure users have access to a full range of support and guidance. They are providing good guidance to parents on how to keep their families healthy and safe, and have placed efforts on increasing children's speech development through the 'Stay and Play' sessions and the 'Language and Play' groups. Some parents told us that they found the support of the centre 'a lifeline' when in times of crisis.

Maples Children's Centre is a very safe place for parents and carers to bring their children. The rooms are welcoming and allow children to play happily while they learn indoors or outside when attending the crèche. Parents said their children were happy in the crèche while they attended a variety of helpful courses, such as 'Family Links'.

The centre is a good place for users to meet other parents and people who can help them and their families. The centre regularly seeks the views of users on the quality of its activities and courses. For example, the timing of the centre day was adjusted to fit in with users' work and care patterns.

Members of the governing body meet regularly to ensure that the services the centre is providing meet the needs of the users. They provide an effective link between users of the centre and senior leaders, who listen to and take account of users' views. For example, users actively influence how the centre should use additional finances and identify which activities would be of most benefit to them. The staff at the centre look at ways of providing interesting activities and courses that will be of the most benefit to its users. They receive a lot of information from users and many others about how well they are doing, as well as information about other families in the local community who may benefit from the services at the centre. They are looking to use this information more precisely to ensure they reach more families and look to improve outcomes even more.

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