

# Inspection report for Temple Hill Children's Centre

---

Local authority	Dartford
Inspection number	362596
Inspection dates	24–25 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Michael Kubiak HMI

Centre governance	The Local Authority
Centre leader	Alison Cutts
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	St Edmund's Church, Living Well, St Edmund's Road, Dartford, Kent DA1 5ND
Telephone number	01322 223979
Fax number	01322 223979
Email address	Alison.cutts@kent.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	N/A
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Out of Mischief Nursery EY275616

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.

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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

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

Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

No. 100024

© Crown copyright 2010



## 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 centre managers, senior leadership team, representatives from the advisory board, including the chairperson, steering committee members, representatives from partner organisations, volunteer coordinator and the children's centre managers with lead responsibilities for social care and data. They held meetings with health-related professionals, including the public health nurse team leader, public health midwife, healthy living coordinator, and the speech and language therapy team leader. They had formal and informal discussions with parents, children and staff, visited the 'Mini Melodies', 'Teenies and Tinies', childminding, and 'Story Sacks' groups, the 'Well Baby Clinic' and the nursery. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation including key policies, the centre's self-evaluation documents, business plan, data about the centre, case study information and external evaluation of services from independent consultants.

## Information about the centre

Temple Hill Children's Centre was designated in April 2005 and provides the full core offer, governed by Kent County Council. Centre staff are employed directly by the county council or through host employers. Health visiting and speech and language support services are co-located at the children's centre. Also within the same building is a Healthy Living Centre, general practitioners' surgery, a community café and a Church of England worship centre.

The centre's catchment area is one of the 30 per cent most deprived areas in the country. The centre serves an area which is changing significantly with the development of 1,500 new houses, a primary school, health centre and new business space. The local population is mostly White British, with smaller percentages of other minority ethnic groups, including Eastern Europeans. Around 30 per cent of children under five in the area are living in workless households, which is significantly higher

than the national average. Attainment on entry to nursery is below average. At the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, around 45 per cent of children achieve at least 78 points across the Foundation Stage Profile, with personal, social and emotional development the weaker element.

The centre is open on weekdays from 8.00am to 5.00pm and on some Saturdays. It is open for 51 weeks of the year. Although new to the role, the centre manager has good knowledge of the centre, having already been based there, albeit in a different role. The Out of Mischief Nursery, run by the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), operates from a building within the school grounds next to the children's centre. Out of Mischief Nursery has been subject to its own inspection and the report can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). A qualified teacher is based at the site, supporting the centre and the nursery. The centre commissions crèche services from North West Kent College Childcare Services.

## 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 overall effectiveness of the centre is satisfactory. The good care, guidance and support offered to users contribute to the overall enjoyment users feel from attending the centre and this supports their achievements and allows them to make positive contributions. The effective joint working between the children’s centre staff and other agencies provides opportunities for parents to engage in a range of services that are provided directly at the centre, at other children’s centres locally and within the community. Parents and users value the safe and welcoming environment at the centre. They make use of the community café and health services. Security at the centre is good and risk assessments are undertaken across its activities. Recruitment procedures for staff employed at the centre are rigorous and robust. Commissioned services such as the crèche workers and nursery have their own recruitment procedures. Some of the information provided by commissioned services with regards to checks and safeguarding training for staff is not always accurate or up to date. Safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and are understood by staff. This information ensures that users are adequately safeguarded.

Recent changes in the management team of the centre are still embedding. Those in charge have an understanding of the centre’s strengths and areas where further improvement is needed. Data are available from a number of sources and the centre is starting to use it to shape the service; for example, until recently, the majority of the services have been offered on a universal basis but these are becoming more targeted. Limitations in the data mean that they do not always effectively feed in to the centre’s planning and data are not sufficiently broken down to be specific to the individual centre. Staff do not always fully understand the data and rigorous monitoring is not in place. The advisory board, which covers a number of children’s centres in the locality, meets on a regular basis. These meetings do not set sufficiently challenging targets for the centre to bring about improved outcomes for the centre users.

The centre has good links with other key professionals, such as colleagues in social

care. Links with health professionals are very good and this is further supported by the co-location of children's centre staff and health visitors in the same building. The targeted early intervention work with children and families in most need by the Family Support Workers, Community Involvement Workers and Speech and Language Assistant is making a difference. Parents value the support they receive.

Outcomes for users of the centre are satisfactory, with some good aspects. Parents report that they enjoy attending the centre and value the positive relationships that staff build with them. One parent commented, 'It was my lifeline.' The groups offered at the centre encourage parents to build up good relationships with their children and give children the opportunity to interact with their peers. Parents have the opportunity to sit on the advisory panel. Parents are able to contribute to the work of the centre through a regular parents' forum. Parental satisfaction surveys are completed and parents are actively involved in these surveys. Survey results show high satisfaction rates from parents. Users have the opportunity to participate in a range of training, including parenting courses, paediatric first aid, healthy eating and English as a second language. The centre has good links with Adult Education and works closely on providing a number of courses. Until recently, the centre has offered courses to all users but is beginning to develop strategies to ensure that courses effectively meet the needs of the local community. These are targeted at users with most need and where they will bring about the most significant improved outcomes for children. Users report that the centre has raised their aspirations and one parent commented, 'The centre has really helped me with my training and getting back into work.' Centre users often train to become volunteers as they want to give something back to the centre. The volunteer scheme ensures that users' roles are best matched to their skills and a mentor system is in place to support them. There is a clear progression of centre users, with some becoming volunteers and being successful in accessing paid employment. Parents value highly the crèche facilities which are provided during training courses. The steering committee meetings are an opportunity for staff from different agencies to share information in relation to their particular area. Specific centre staff now attend the meetings to explain their role in order that different agencies are better informed about the work of the children's centre.

Parents and children are able to access a range of services both at Temple Hill and other children's centres locally. Parents report that they make new friends and are more confident in their ability to manage their children's behaviour. Parents feel supported by staff and that they can trust the staff. The centre encourages feedback from parents and users of the centre and parents feel that their views and opinions are taken into account. Following feedback from parents and observations by centre staff, they established a group specifically for parents of children with 'additional needs'. Due to the inclusive nature of the centre, parents of children with additional needs are also integrated into and encouraged to attend other groups offered.

A strong sense of team work exists and staff know the community well and the range of services and support available. The senior leadership team are aware that the self-evaluation and business plans for the centre are not sufficiently detailed in identifying

measurable targets and are not always linked to improving outcomes. As a result, the centre's capacity to improve further is satisfactory.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the accuracy and availability of data, specific to the reach area, that clearly informs planning and is rigorously monitored to demonstrate the impact of the centre's work.
- Ensure that the advisory board fully understands the work of the centre and contributes to setting ambitious targets.
- Ensure that services are increasingly targeted where they will have the most impact.

## How good are outcomes for users?

<b>3</b>
----------

The outcomes for users of the centre are satisfactory overall, with some good aspects in the enjoyment and achievement of users and the positive contribution children and users make. Parent survey results and formal and informal discussions with users show that satisfaction levels are good and that parents and their children benefit from the range of services offered by the centre. The centre promotes a healthy diet through the provision of fruit and drinks within the groups offered at the centre. The community café provides healthy snacks and meals. Groups such as 'Mini Melodies' provide children with a range of physical exercise. The 'Dads' group' which runs on a Saturday is well attended and health outcomes are promoted through growing vegetables at the allotment. These initiatives contribute to a declining trend in obesity levels over the past few years; however, up-to-date data are not yet available. The centre's data indicate that the percentage of parents who chose breastfeeding has declined recently, despite a range of initiatives and strategies implemented by the centre. Anecdotal information from parents and local knowledge indicate that the number of mothers who are breastfeeding has increased and this conflicts with the data and highlights the need for accurate information.

A universal contact schedule through which information is shared with all parents registered at the centre ensures that the services available to all users are well publicised. Regular meetings with other partner agencies ensure that up-to-date information about the centre is provided. Due to the number of children's centres in the locality and good transport links, some activities are only offered at specific centres and this ensures that resources are not duplicated unnecessarily. Users have a range of ways to make a positive contribution to the work of the centre, including being part of the parents' forum, through the advisory board and participating in parent satisfaction survey work, including interviewing other parents as part of the survey. Users are encouraged to become volunteers at the centre and the volunteer coordinator provides induction training. Regular support is also available from a mentor within the centre and through reviews from the volunteer coordinator.

Volunteers also have the opportunity to access training courses alongside centre staff, subject to availability. Parents speak highly about the courses available to them. The parents value highly the crèches which are provided during training courses, as it allows them to focus on their learning in the knowledge that their children are safe and being well cared for nearby. The close accessibility of the crèche is important to parents as this may often be the first time that they have left their children away from the family home.

Groups such as 'Mini Melodies' and 'Teenies and Tinies' are well attended and often health visitors direct parents to these groups. These groups enable centre staff to build good relationships with the parents and children. Parents report that they find staff friendly and approachable. Centre staff are selected to run the different groups based on their skills and knowledge.

Good partnership working and close working relationships ensure that services are offered to families most at risk. Monthly case discussion meetings take place where information is shared between professionals and decisions made. Records of these meetings are maintained on the relevant family's file; however, they do not show who was present at the meeting and involved in the decision making. There is evidence of this partnership working improving outcomes for the families. The common assessment framework is used to identify the range of services needed to support specific families and shows that outcomes are improving for children, although this is not yet fully embedded into the centre's practice.

The centre staff are knowledgeable about the range of services and provision in the area. There are strong links with an extensive range of other agencies and the links with health visitors and social care colleagues are a particular strength. Staff are easily able to seek advice and guidance from health professionals due to their accessibility in the same building. This enables effective sharing and gathering of information and joint files ensure that information is readily available and accessible.

Accommodation is of a good standard and is well maintained. The centre has a 'wing' of a modern multi-purpose building. It has its own separate entrance which is controlled by a key-coded door. Space is limited but is well used and often rooms are used for a number of different activities. The main hall has floor to ceiling partitions which can be used to divide the hall when necessary, for example to create a separate room for the crèche when courses are running. There is a large outside area directly off the main hall but this area is not always used effectively.

Children enjoy attending the centre and benefit from the range of activities available. They play cooperatively with one another and build positive relationships with each other and with centre staff. Staff set clear expectations of the children in order to keep them safe, for example encouraging them to sit down to eat fruit. Parents respond well to these clear boundaries and support the centre in setting them.



<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</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>3</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>3</b>

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

<b>2</b>
----------

The centre provides a good range of activities and integrated services. Due to the limited space at Temple Hill, and to ensure that services are cost effective, some groups are offered at other centres within the local area. Outreach services such as those offered by the Community Involvement Workers, Family Support Workers and Speech and Language therapist are well matched to the users of the centre, and allocation of resources is based on need. Wider services offered in the centre are not targeted at users with the most need and where they will have the most impact on improving outcomes for children. The centre lacks data which are up to date and specific to the area the centre covers. This impacts on the centre's ability to have a full understanding of the community it serves and its ability to target services at its hard to reach priority families and effectively assess the impact of its work. For the families who have access to the centre, there is a well-coordinated approach to meeting their needs from a range of professionals. Staff use their knowledge of services to best support the families.

Good quality information and guidance are provided at the centre and in the community. Electronic information is displayed on screens at the health centre and the children's centre staff are responsible for ensuring that this information is up to date. The website address is advertised in newsletters and on information boards at the centre. Effective signposting ensures that users are aware of the range of services available. Some information is available in languages other than English and more general information about the work of children's centres is available in a range of community languages. However, this is not always readily accessible.

Good links between the centre staff, Adult Learning and the volunteer coordinator support users in progressing in their learning. Users are encouraged to build on their achievements and progress to further training. Users are supported with application writing and preparation for job interviews and a number of them have been successful at securing paid employment. The courses also encourage parents to build networks and to develop their confidence and self-esteem.

All centre staff are committed to improving outcomes for the families. Analysis of case studies and other information demonstrates that the centre makes good progress in improving outcomes for a range of families. The centre is unable to fully assess the impact of its work more widely than through case studies and this limits its capacity to ensure that its work meets the changing needs of the community and is targeted where it will have the most impact.

The qualified teacher provides guidance and support to the centre and nursery. She is working with the centre to ensure that groups provided at the centre are of good quality and support the principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

<b>The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users</b>	<b>3</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>3</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>

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

<b>3</b>
----------

The new manager knows the centre well and is aware of some of its strengths and areas which need to be developed. The centre's leaders work as a team in setting targets and in contributing to wider area and local authority planning.

The centre does not ensure that its self-evaluation and business plan are up to date and regularly reviewed. Furthermore, neither the self-evaluation nor business plan set targets which are specific and measurable and this limits the centre's capacity to develop and improve outcomes for children.

The centre receives a significant amount of data. These data are not always specific to the area which the centre covers, are not always accurate and are often out of date. There are no effective systems for the rigorous monitoring of this data and the data are not yet sufficiently detailed to be able to demonstrate the overall effectiveness of the whole centre on improving outcomes for children.

The advisory board which is responsible for Temple Hill Children's Centre is also the advisory board for a number of other children's centres in the locality. Parental representation on the advisory board is good. Information is shared at the advisory board although this is not always sufficiently focused on the work of Temple Hill. The advisory group are supportive of the work of the centre and have an overview of its work but do not have sufficient information to be able to set challenging targets that

will improve outcomes for users.

The centre's leaders and staff work well together and management arrangements are secure. All staff have access to regular individual supervision. Outreach workers have additional group supervision. In addition to supervision sessions, case studies, team meetings and multi-agency meetings give staff the opportunity to evaluate their work with individual families and the wider work of the centre in improving outcomes. Team away-days for the centre staff allow them to focus on particular areas of their work and to feed in to the centre, area and wider county plans.

All policies and procedures are in place and meet requirements. Safeguarding employment practices for staff employed directly through the centre are robust and follow the local authority procedures, including that staff do not commence work until all their checks have been completed. Commissioned services by the centre are required to have rigorous and robust recruitment procedures and be suitably trained in safeguarding. The centre is not proactive in ensuring that information provided by commissioned services, in particular Criminal Records Bureau checks and safeguarding training, is up to date for all staff. Staff lists are not always up to date and monitoring processes are not in place.

Equality and diversity are promoted satisfactorily at the centre. Courses such as English for speakers of other languages support families developing their confidence and skills, alongside building up a network of friends. Users come from a range of cultures and backgrounds and they feel that they are welcomed and part of the centre. There are some missed opportunities for children and parents for whom English is not their first language to feel valued; for example, during 'Mini Melodies'; although the families who attended spoke a number of languages, they did not have the opportunity to sing songs in their own language. Information available at the centre is mainly in English although information signposting parents to staff is available in a range of languages. The 'Dads' group' that runs on a Saturday is popular and is well attended and there is a worker specifically for this group. Barriers to attending, for example the lack of suitable provision for fathers with young babies, are quickly overcome so that all children and their fathers can attend and benefit from the group.

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>3</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>3</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>3</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>3</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>3</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>2</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>

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

The inspection of the Out of Mischief Nursery was undertaken in November 2010 and was judged as good overall.

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](http://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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

### **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Temple Hill Children’s Centre on 24 and 25 November 2010. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

The centre is based in part of the St Edmunds Living Well. A doctor’s surgery and community café are also located in the same building. It provides you with a welcoming environment where you feel you are well cared for. Some groups are offered at Temple Hill but as space is limited, some groups are offered at nearby children’s centres and these are within walking distance or a short bus ride away.

Drop-in groups, such as ‘Mini Melodies’, ‘Teenies and Tinies’ and the childminding group are well attended. The centre provides you with an extensive range of information and you receive this in a number of different ways. The centre ensures that all potential users receive information about the centre through its universal contact schedule.

The centre staff are committed to improving outcomes for you and your families. Staff know you as individuals and work hard to build up positive relationships with you. They work effectively with colleagues from other agencies to ensure that you get the support when you most need it. As one parent commented, ‘Once all the agencies are involved, then you know you have the support.’ They make sure support is quickly available when you most need it. They use their knowledge of

resources that are available and signpost you to services that can help to overcome particular issues, for example debt management support or housing services.

You enjoy the range of short courses and training available and this helps you to develop your skills. The crèche facilities allow you to focus on the education you are being offered and you are confident that your children are being well looked after. For some of you, it may be the first time you have left your children and it is easy for you to pop into the crèche if you need to. Those of you who volunteer at the centre enjoy the experience and you receive good support both from centre staff and the volunteer coordinator.

The centre has its own self-evaluation and business plan. They identify where the centre is doing well and where it needs to develop and they base these decisions on information from a number of sources. We have asked the centre to use data more effectively to inform its planning and to monitor more closely the impact of the services to ensure that they are targeted where there is the most need.

The centre listens to your views and you are encouraged to take part in the parents' forum and surveys, including interviewing some parents. Your views are also well represented at the advisory board meetings and your views and suggestions are discussed at this meeting. The advisory board looks at a number of centres in the local area and looks at how effective they are. We have asked the advisory board to set challenges and targets for the centre and to link these to improving outcomes for users.

The staff work hard to ensure that the activities that you are involved in are well planned and enjoyable. The centre staff treat you as individuals and they have high expectations of you and want you and your children to do well.

Those of you who need it are given additional support in a range of ways through the Community Involvement Workers and the Family Support Workers. The workers receive a good range of professional guidance and support and this helps them meet your needs more effectively.

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