

# Inspection report for Bishops House Children's Centre

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| Local authority     | Southwark         |
| Inspection number   | 362445            |
| Inspection dates    | 3-4 November 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Jackie Krafft HMI |

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| Centre governance           | Local authority                           |
| Centre leader               | Trudy Harlow                              |
| Date of previous inspection | N/A                                       |
| Centre address              | 5 Kennington Place Park, London, SE11 4AS |
|                             |   |
| Telephone number            | 020 7525 1194                             |
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| Linked school if applicable                     | N/A  |
| Linked early years and childcare, if applicable | Bishops House Children's Centre<br>EY 159947 |

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.

An inspection of the registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 3 of the Childcare Act 2006. 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 of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Early Years Inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, senior leadership team, staff, and representatives from the local authority. They also spoke with partner agencies, including the health service, parents, carers and other users of the centre. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documentation, including key policies, the centre's action plans and evaluations of services.

## Information about the centre

Bishops House Children's Centre is managed by the local authority and was designated as a phase 1 centre in 2004. It serves a culturally diverse community with over 60 different home languages spoken by families in the area. The largest groups are those of Black Caribbean and Nigerian heritage. The centre is in an inner city locality identified as amongst the 30% most disadvantaged areas in the country. There are high levels of unemployment and dependency on benefits. Over a third of children under the age of five in the area are estimated to be living in poverty. The centre provides 49 full-time childcare and early learning places in its nursery. It works with partners to provide some adult learning, health and family support services. The day-to-day running of the centre is undertaken by the centre manager. Advice and assistance are provided by an advisory board of partner, provider and community representatives. There is a parent forum and parent representation on the advisory board. The centre's services have been subject to recent changes as a result of an ongoing local authority phased restructuring programme. Services are provided in a Grade 2 listed building for 49 weeks a year from 07.45 – 18.00 daily.

## 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

Bishops House makes a satisfactory contribution to improving outcomes for children, families and other users of its services. The recent inspection of the established nursery provision provided by the centre judged that good early learning opportunities are enjoyed by children who attend and it is valued by their parents. There are effective links with social services and some health professionals to support children and families in need and those who might be at risk of harm. Appropriate 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. However, the quality, variety and level of engagement in the centre's services are variable. As a consequence, provision and outcomes for users are satisfactory.

Diversity is celebrated appropriately through displays, resources and events such as Black History Month. Satisfactory steps are taken to ensure equality of opportunity for some groups of users identified with specific needs, for example Bengali mothers who speak English as an additional language and children in the nursery with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The centre's draft plan for improvement includes actions to increase the equality of opportunity for more diverse groups in the area. However, this has not yet been implemented.

The needs of individual families and children who are accessing services, particularly in the nursery, are 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. Crèche facilities are provided to enable parents with young children to access training and activities.

Whilst there is some collection 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 activities. A system has recently been introduced to capture the information and the centre's managers are waiting for training in how to use this.

Leadership and management overall are satisfactory. There is a clear understanding of the centre's strengths and areas which require improvement. Appropriate priorities are included in the draft action plan and systems are being put in place to secure more effective monitoring and evaluation of the service provided.

A period of change has resulted in a vacancy to support the centre's outreach work and gaps in the effectiveness of communication between the wider community, operational managers and strategic leaders. Consequently, there is a lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities in the management of the centre's provision beyond the nursery. There is also a lack of clarity about the relationship between the advisory board and the parent forum. Recent staffing changes have limited the outreach work to engage more parents, hard to reach groups and the wider community with the centre's services. Plans are in place to fill the vacancy but currently these two aspects of the centre's leadership and management are inadequate.

Despite these weaknesses, the centre's leadership has demonstrated 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 keeping children in need safe, satisfactory provision which is making a positive contribution to narrowing the achievement gap by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and targeted activities which are developing the skills and confidence of mothers who speak English as an additional language.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- The local authority should strengthen governance and build the leadership's capacity to improve by:
  - ensuring the centre's leaders have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities
  - clarifying the relationship between the advisory board, centre's management and parent forum
  - linking performance management and supervision to a clear children's centre manager job description
  - ensuring leaders have support to develop their monitoring and evaluation skills
  - providing leaders with timely challenge so that they can use these skills to demonstrate the impact of services on improving outcomes for all groups.
- Increase the centre's outreach work to engage more parents, those who are hard to reach and the wider community in its service.
- Collect and use centre-specific data and other local information systematically

to:

- accurately assess the needs of users and those not yet engaged
- rigorously evaluate the impact of services, taking account of the views of users and the wider community
- develop the centre's provision to ensure it is well matched to the needs of all groups and the wider community.

## How good are outcomes for users?

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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, it demonstrates that outcomes overall are satisfactory but variable.

Discussions with parents and carers indicate that they are developing a better understanding of healthy eating. They say they know how to prepare balanced meals through workshops such as 'Cook and Eat'. They know about the importance of healthy snacks, fruit and water because this is promoted through the crèche and information leaflets. Data indicate that breast feeding rates have increased but obesity levels for children in the area remain high. Children in the nursery develop good hygiene habits through clear routines, including cleaning their teeth. One parent explained how they no longer gave their child sweets because they understood how this can contribute to tooth decay. They now take their children to the dentist regularly. Data for the area indicate that there has been a fall in the number of children having pre-school booster injections and there is limited evidence of improvement in other health outcomes, such as smoking cessation. Case studies indicate that targeted support is having a positive impact on the emotional well-being of vulnerable parents and children, for example those experiencing family breakdown and those with child protection plans.

Parents and carers say that they feel safe and are confident that their children are safe too. They have an increased understanding of first aid, road safety, safety in the home and food safety. The emotional well-being and physical safety of vulnerable families and children at risk of harm, including those with a child protection plan, is prioritised well so relationships with these families are positive, including at times of crisis or particular difficulty. Data indicate that the rate of emergency hospital admissions caused by injury to children in the area is lower than the local authority average.

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. Some parents benefit from courses and activities which help them to gain English language skills, for example mothers from the Bengali community. Parents also enjoy developing skills which help them to support their children's learning and early language development.

As one parent wrote in their evaluation of a course, 'This has opened a window into communication with my children – I can now make stories more exciting for them'. Another wrote, 'We have fun together and I feel more confident'. However, the number of adults from different groups benefiting from these courses and activities is low and the centre has limited evidence about its impact on their longer term educational goals and achievement. Responses to an annual parental satisfaction survey were low and although parents who responded were generally satisfied with the services, some indicate that their contact with the centre has not been enjoyable or welcoming.

Children in the crèche and nursery develop positive relationships with each other and adults. Parents whose children attend the nursery make a positive contribution to planning for their children's learning and development, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. There is some evidence that parents and users can contribute their views of other services and activities through evaluations and a parent forum but how these are used to shape services beyond the nursery is not yet evident.

Data indicate that there has been an increase in the take up of childcare by low income families. Some users are developing their literacy, numeracy and language skills and working towards additional qualifications. These are contributing to securing their future economic well-being and employability but the evidence of this across the wider community is limited.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for users*

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| <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, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>                            | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>  | <b>3</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>3</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</b>     | <b>3</b> |

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

**3**

The recent inspection of the nursery 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 some key agencies such as Social

Services and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) 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, a secure environment is provided for families to have supervised contact with their children. This makes a particular contribution to helping these groups feel safe. However, the needs of different groups in the wider community are not assessed systematically or routinely informed by effective outreach work. Consequently, although the range of services and activities meets the needs of some users effectively, including in the nursery and crèche, there is little reliable evidence of any increase in participation rates of children and families from the wider community. Whilst evaluations of activities and the parent survey are generally positive, comments such as, 'I would like more activities for children at weekends', indicate that some parents feel there could be more on offer. Other parents comment that they would like more information about the things that are happening and have suggested better ways of advertising services.

The promotion of purposeful learning, development and enjoyment of users is variable and stronger in the nursery and some targeted activities. Outdoor learning, play and physical development are promoted through the use of the centre's good outdoor area, including by children in the care of childminders. Weekly childminder drop-ins provide good advice and guidance from specialists such as health professionals and the Family Information Service. Appropriate guidance and support are provided through leaflets and signposting to specialist services in the locality. A translation service is available if necessary, although some parents who speak English as an additional language said it would help them if more information was available in their mother tongue.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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| <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>3</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>3</b> |

## How effective are the leadership and management?

**3**

Leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses of the centre's work and have appropriate plans in place to bring about improvements. Staff have undertaken relevant training and have appropriate qualifications to support families and keep

them safe. This helps to secure satisfactory outcomes for users. Consequently the centre provides satisfactory value for money.

Policies and procedures to safeguard children and families are in place and meet requirements, including those on recruiting and vetting staff. Appropriate attention is paid to health and safety issues, although some risk assessments are in need of updating. Induction is provided on safe practices for those working at the centre. There is effective multi-agency co-operation to safeguard children in need and issues are followed up appropriately.

Leaders celebrate diversity and promote inclusive practices appropriately, including for those children in the nursery with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The plan for improvement includes further actions to include more diverse groups in the wider community.

Leadership structures and management systems are being put in place but are relatively new and not yet embedded. A service level agreement between the local authority and children's centre has been drawn up but has only recently been shared, despite being more than half way through its specified term. Job descriptions and performance management are related to the nursery and have not been updated to include wider children's centre responsibilities. As a consequence, there is a lack of clarity about roles, responsibilities and decision making processes between the parent forum, centre's management and advisory board. Governance and wider community engagement are inadequate.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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| <b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>                     | <b>4</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>3</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>3</b> |



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| <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>4</b> |
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## **Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection**

The inspection of the early years and childcare provision in the nursery carried out on 2 November 2010 judged it to be satisfactory overall. It judged outcomes for enjoying and achieving 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](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 Bishops House Children's Centre on 3 and 4 November 2010. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

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 it is helping you to gain more confidence, for example in speaking English, communicating with your children and helping them with their homework. Some of you told us, and we could see from evaluations of courses some of you have written, how much you have enjoyed some of the activities that the centre has provided. You told us that you are made to feel safe and are confident that your children are safe too when they are in the nursery or crèche.

Some of you however said that you were not always made to feel welcome and you have told the centre's leader this too. You have also told them that you would like more activities and more information so that you know what is happening. Some of you have offered suggestions about how the centre could better advertise what it does because you don't think as many people know about the centre as might benefit from its services. We agree that the centre does not do enough yet to involve as many people from the community who might benefit as it should. We have asked them to improve this.

The nursery is more established than some other services that the centre provides. However, the centre has helped some of you to gain new skills, for example in how to manage your child's behaviour, first aid and food hygiene. Some of you are also

studying English language and are hoping to gain a qualification in this. Some of you have let the centre know how much you have enjoyed some activities which have helped you to play and learn with your children.

Your centre works with different organisations to make sure those of you who need extra support get what you need. For example, those of you who need some advice and support on managing your child's behaviour are able to get that from the Family and Child Counselling offered at the centre. There are drop-in sessions for childminders every week at your centre. These provide advice and guidance on a range of subjects, from specialists such as speech and language therapists. Appropriate leaflets, information sheets and displays are available in the centre too.

The centre has undergone some changes to staffing and how it is organised recently. This has meant there has been some confusion about exactly how decisions are to be made and how the centre is going to make sure it is meeting your needs as well as it can. Leaders have a plan to help them improve but it is still very new. There is a parent forum which wants to help make sure your views and the views of your community are taken into account. The group 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 parent forum. These different 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 advisory group and the centre's managers do not yet have all the information they need to make sure all the service are what you need and the best they can be. So we have asked the local authority to provide them with this. We have also asked the local authority to help the centre's managers use the information effectively to make sure equally good services are provided to even more families in the community who might need them.

Thank you for contributing to the inspection by talking to us and sharing your views.

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