

Inspection report for McMillan Early Childhood Centre

Local authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	363525
Inspection dates	22–23 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Denise Blackwell HMI

Centre governance	School governing body
Centre leaders	Ludmila Morris/Rose Worrton
Date of previous inspection	NA
Centre address	McMillan Early Childhood Centre Judge Heath Lane Hayes Middlesex UB3 2PD
Telephone number	020 8573 4427
Fax number	020 8569 0486
Email address	lmorris@hillingdongrid.org

Linked school if applicable	McMillan Early Childhood Centre (Nursery School)
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	McMillan Early Childhood Centre (Under 3's unit EY280910)

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.

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
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No.100080

© 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 senior leaders, members of staff and partner professionals from other agencies. Discussions were held with members of the advisory board, parents and service users and representatives from the local authority. Inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

McMillan Early Childhood Centre opened as a children's centre in 2007 and was developed from an Early Excellence Centre. McMillan Early Childhood Centre is a Phase 2 children's centre providing the full core offer of services. The nursery school building was extended as part of the Early Excellence programme and the centre operates as a 'one-stop-shop' model. The centre also has links with two other children's centres close by and parents are signposted to these centres for some services not available on site. The centre is located in the south of Hillingdon, serving a community which is in one of the 30% most deprived wards in the country. The centre provides a range of integrated services that include health, family support, adult training and early years care and education. The centre serves a socially and culturally diverse community. A high proportion of families are from the Somali and Asian communities with a smaller number from White British heritage backgrounds.

The proportion of children attending schools in the area who are known to be entitled to free school meals is above the national average, as is the proportion of children under four years of age who are living in households where no one is working. Most children enter childcare and early education with a much narrower range of experiences and skills than that expected for their age. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is above average.

The centre is governed by the nursery school governing body and has an advisory board consisting of professionals and parents. The nursery school provides early years education and wrap-around care with the under threes unit providing full day care from 8.00 am to 6.00 pm.

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

‘This centre doesn’t have problems, it only has challenges’ was the comment from one member of staff. This attitude and approach to the work of the children’s centre can be seen in the range of services and activities available at the centre and in the committed senior leadership team. Inspectors agree with the centre’s evaluation that it provides good support for children and families in the area and is increasingly effective and popular. Some of its features are outstanding.

While senior leaders evaluate the quality of provision regularly, and have a clear vision for improving the centre, they are fully aware that a dedicated centre manager will help to fulfil their vision, and take future plans forward. They are currently in the process of recruiting a manager to ensure the centre continues to develop to meet increasing needs and demands for its high-quality activities and services.

The outcomes for users are outstanding overall. This is because of the whole-centre ethos and dedication that ensure that families, particularly those who are vulnerable, benefit from a range of good-quality services that are carefully tailored to meet their particular needs. Consequently, the centre has successfully improved the health, safety, enjoyment and achievement of vulnerable and disadvantaged families and their children who take advantage of its services. One parent reported, ‘This is a lovely place. I don’t know what I would have done without their help.’ Procedures for safeguarding are comprehensive and robust. The centre is rightly recognised by users and professionals as a place of safety. The centre recognises the need to develop services for expectant mothers and fathers and has plans for antenatal support to start in the new year. Identified staff have already attended training to prepare for their involvement.

Parents feel very welcome in the centre. They value the opportunities provided by sessions such as 'stay and play'. Evaluations of activities in the centre are very positive. However, the work of the centre in engaging the wider community is restricted by the lack of information about newborn children, or young children who are new to the area, from the Primary Care Trust. In the absence of this information, the centre looks for any opportunity to advertise its services, such as attending local festivals and play days. Despite several attempts to engage with Jobcentre Plus, the centre still has no direct input from them. However, centre staff do as much as they can to support parents seeking benefits and employment advice. The advisory board is still in the early stages of development. Although there is parent representation, the absence of a parents' forum, or other clear way for parents to contribute to decision making, means that the centre cannot gather the views of users in a formal way and this restricts opportunities for users to decide on the services that they need.

Equality and diversity are outstanding features of this centre because centre leaders and staff have an excellent knowledge of the local community and have a deep understanding of the needs of the families who live within it. The effective bilingual support assistants enable users who do not speak English as their first language to access information and provision at the centre. The extremely effective support for children and parents with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensures this is a fully inclusive provision.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the contribution of users to the governance of the centre by identifying how to increase their engagement and influence in the centre's work.
- Develop provision for expectant mothers and fathers, either independently or in partnership with other centres in the cluster, to ensure women and families are supported and encouraged to benefit from the full range of antenatal care.
- Ensure the local authority, Jobcentre Plus and the Primary Care Trust work together to facilitate access to early childhood services and maximise the benefits of those services to parents, prospective parents and children, by ensuring the centre receives the information and input it needs to deliver appropriate services to the most vulnerable and the wider community.

How good are outcomes for users?

1

Evidence through case studies and discussions with partners and parents indicates the very positive impact of partnership working to promote children's and families' emotional well-being and their physical health. The Triple P parenting programme and baby massage supports parents and improves their general well-being and that of their children, helping parents to bond with their children and understand their needs. Parents' evaluations of this provision are extremely positive. The Community

Engagement Programme is used well to promote awareness of good health and evaluation shows users have an improving awareness of keeping healthy and the value of exercise. One parent commented, 'Thank you for alerting me to my health status. I have now lost two stone. You have supported me on the road to good health.'

There are improved opportunities for outdoor play at the centre. The nursery school, the under threes unit, the parent and toddler group and the childminder group all have easy access to safe and interesting outdoor areas and children can be seen playing happily outside in all weathers. The centre is aware that obesity in young children in the area is higher than the national average and ensures that children who attend the early years provision receive a balanced and nutritious diet. There is a 'no sweets' policy at the centre with fruit provided for all children who attend.

Concerns about obesity are managed on an individual basis to ensure parents and children do not feel uncomfortable or singled out. Sessions for parents on healthy eating and oral health have been very well received and have led to parents changing their children's intake of sweets and sugary food and drinks. The specialist health visitor works with marginalised families to address inequalities across the borough and has set up a Tamil mothers group at the centre. The bilingual support assistants promote an integrated approach by attending sessions with non-English speakers. Breastfeeding rates in the ward are improving, as are immunisation rates. However, although teenage pregnancy rates are falling, they are still higher than the national average.

The centre makes an outstanding contribution to the safety and welfare of its users. The centre itself provides a safe and welcoming environment, with robust systems for risk assessment and security in the building. This ensures parents and children remain safe when attending activities. As a result of the very good relationships between centre staff, parents and children, parents have the confidence to speak out about any issues that concern them at home, in the centre or the local community. The centre offers a range of activities and programmes aimed at raising parents' awareness of how to keep their children safe, including talks on home safety which were very well received. Internet safety is a priority in the centre and computer users are given clear guidance to ensure they are aware of issues that might arise.

Case studies on domestic violence show a real impact on families and have resulted in support for individuals to change their circumstances. Many of these show how women have been helped to gain independent living. The Self-Esteem Course, also provided in minority ethnic languages, has often been the starting point for women who go on to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and other courses. There are good links with social services that ensures looked after children and children with child protection plans are well supported. Centre staff contribute to case meetings and reviews, which are sometimes held at the centre. The centre makes very good use of the Comprehensive Assessment Framework to ensure appropriate support is provided to children with complex needs.

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scores for children in the local primary school are improving, though still below the national average. The on-entry Hillingdon baselines show that the centre is adding value to, and having a positive impact on, these profile scores. The achievement gap is also narrowing. Good tracking is in place and clearly shows improvements in children's attainment while at the centre. Case studies show where children who were well below expectations on entry have now moved on to school and are in line with their peers because of the excellent start to their learning. Good use is made of the toy library in consolidating children's learning. The centre has also developed Learning Bags, which are used as an excellent resource for supporting parents when playing with their children, and shows parents that they do not have to spend a lot of money on equipment and toys for their children to enjoy playing with them.

Parents and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are extremely well supported in accessing services and improving their circumstances. The Attention Hillingdon sessions offer excellent support to children on the autistic spectrum or who find it difficult to concentrate on activities. Triple P courses have shown clear improvement in parenting based on feedback. One parent who was concerned she would be reported to social services as a bad parent if she attended the course was ably supported by a bilingual assistant who explained its purpose in the parent's home language. The parent has since gone on to attend other courses.

The bilingual assistants support parents and children when accessing activities and also help children to settle. They translate information for parents and support them in other areas such as completing housing forms or with passport issues. The staffing reflects the community, which helps to engage parents who are often hard to reach. Reception staff are also very good at signposting and informing parents about what is available. It is recognised by professionals that in many cases parents would not attend unless there was someone to communicate with in their own language. Celebration of the diverse community can be seen all around the centre. Parents sit on the advisory board and engage with other parents outside school. The head of centre also explains to parents about the role of the advisory board during the welcome and introduction to the centre, though is aware that not all the messages are immediately taken on board. However, although all parents spoken to said how approachable staff were if they had any concerns or ideas, the majority did not know about the role of the advisory board or how to be involved in the decision making about the centre.

Parents are keen to access training, with several who have gone on to work in the centre due to the support and signposting provided. Information in the lobby with regard to training opportunities is very accessible. Parents record their interests when they first attend the centre and are then contacted when suitable courses are running. Courses have a crèche facility to support parents' access. The centre signposts parents to other areas if what they are looking for is not available in-house. This has resulted in some parents gaining qualifications and improving their job prospects. There is access to computers at the centre and parents are able to see a vacancy list of local jobs. The Family Information Service and centre staff help

parents to fill in forms, which supports them in accessing the benefits they are entitled to. However, the lack of involvement from Jobcentre Plus has meant that the centre has not been able to provide the kind of support it would like to for parents looking for training and employment.

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	1
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
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.	2

How good is the provision?

2

The care, guidance and support for users are outstanding because of the extremely safe and nurturing environment created in the centre that is successfully fostering improvements in the well-being of users. All staff are very aware of their contribution to this work, including the well-informed reception staff. They ensure that all users receive a very warm welcome, because of their awareness of the crucial importance of this first contact. The very positive attitude of centre staff to the concerns and achievements of users resulted in one parent talking about her experiences. She described how the centre had supported her to a very large gathering of professionals in the area. Case studies clearly show how the centre has supported parents in times of crisis.

Rigorous assessment of children's starting points informs the comprehensive entry profiles that are based on observations of children in their first six weeks. All children are offered home visits before they start in the provision with the bilingual support assistants ably engaging parents by communicating in their home language. The centre is aware that many of these parents would not attend without this initial welcoming contact. Focused questionnaires for parents and strong partnership working ensure families' needs are identified. Because staff are knowledgeable and well trained, they are able to spot when families and children may need additional support. For example, the head of centre identified that one family who attended the stay and play session would benefit from additional support. She organised funding for the family, who have benefited significantly from accessing various activities provided by the children's centre programme.

There is very good cross-referral between the centre and health workers to meet users' needs. The Speech and Language Therapy Service has seen a real improvement in attendance at appointments since the service has been offered at the centre. This good working relationship also ensures much earlier identification of speech and language needs. One parent explained she had started to come to the centre because she was concerned about her child's speech and she saw the speech and language therapist was available on site. Staff from other centres and early years settings come to McMillan to pick up ideas and good practice. Following these visits, professionals are asked if there is anything the centre can improve, with one professional commenting 'How do you improve on perfection!'

The centre follows up on non-attendance at activities or the early years provision by carrying out home visits to ensure families are not in difficulty. The success of the baby massage has resulted in the health worker being keen to extend the session to all parents, as it is currently for referred parents only. The centre leadership are looking into how this can be included in the future. The centre signposts users to Bara Hall Children's Centre for breastfeeding support.

Adult education provides courses for parents such as computer training, with many other opportunities for parents and children to be engaged in purposeful learning and development, often delivered by staff who work in the nursery school and under threes unit. Literature and information are very parent-friendly and available in a number of languages. One parent commented about the information board, 'the information is very helpful; you can see who in the centre speaks other languages and what everyone's role is.' The stimulating learning environment is inviting to children and adults. ESOL classes for parents run regularly due to the high number of parents who speak English as an additional language. Case studies show that several parents have moved on to further training and work.

Data provided by the local authority about the make-up of the area is complemented by the centre staff's knowledge of the local area. However, the lack of complete data about new births in the area, or families with young children moving to the area, that is held by health visitors means the centre cannot be sure whether the range of services and activities meets the needs of the wider community. The centre is now engaging well with fathers and has started a monthly dads' group on Saturday mornings. Fathers also attend the Triple P parenting programme and the centre has provided supervised contact and support for parents referred by the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Services. They have held an evening Triple P session for working parents, which was very well received. As a result the centre has included one late evening opening a week in the centre manager's job description so that working parents' needs can be catered for.

Family outreach and support is an important aspect of the centre's work. Outreach services are managed creatively and adapted to meet users' needs. The home visits to parents whose children will attend the early years provision ensures they feel valued and encourages high participation rates by users. The effective use of bilingual support assistants ensures this first contact with parents who speak little or

no English provides them with a positive and reassuring experience. They are then encouraged to access other appropriate services in the centre. Inspectors agree with centre staff that there is more they can do to develop their outreach work and this will be one of the priorities for the new manager when in post.

The weekly childminding group is well attended and enables childminders to share good practice and learn new things together. For example, they have asked for a session on the Learning Bags that the centre provides. Childminders in turn are able to provide a complementary service to support the work of the centre. For example, if children are left behind at the centre after 6.00pm, and parents cannot be contacted or have not informed the centre they are unavoidably delayed, children can be placed with a childminder until parents are able to pick them up. This ensures children are secure and well cared for in a child friendly environment until parents arrive.

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

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The senior leadership team demonstrates a passion and relentless determination to improve the life chances of families in the local community. They are very ably supported by a very strong team who work extremely effectively together and with their partners. Staff morale is extremely high and everyone involved in the centre believes in their success and continuing improvement. This can be seen in the training and professional development of staff to enable them to extend their roles in the early years provision to support the wider needs of children and families.

Partnerships are of a high quality because a strong belief in collaborative working is at the heart of the centre's ethos. All agencies speak highly of the centre and demonstrate a commitment to working together. However, the centre needs to build on current partnerships to better support the wider community with some partnerships being less well developed than they would like them to be. The centre has tried to overcome the lack of involvement by Jobcentre Plus by establishing a strong link with the local college and the Family Information Service, and by staff attending training to provide sessions themselves, for example on debt counselling.

The centre knows itself and its community very well and demonstrates its success through regular evaluations by users, partners and centre staff. However, it is not

always immediately evident to parents how they can contribute to the centre's evaluation. The Head of School and one of the Deputy Heads have very ably led the centre so far, but recognise that there is more that they could, and want, to do. They know their priorities for the future but are mainly prevented from speedier improvement, enabling them to build on their current success and further develop and enhance services and partnerships, by the lack of a dedicated children's centre manager. This is because the other commitments of the senior leadership team limit the time available to concentrate on the children's centre provision. The centre uses statistics provided by the local authority, as well as local knowledge, to identify priorities, and recognise that sometimes what children and families need to improve outcomes is not always what they want. They are able to challenge local authority information where they have more recent knowledge of the area; for example, they were able to identify that there had been an influx of Polish-speaking families who were not included in the local authority data.

Safeguarding is given a high priority by all staff. All required policies and procedures are in place to safeguard users and are reviewed annually. Clear and detailed risk assessments ensure the centre provides a very safe environment that is appreciated by all users and partner agencies. All staff, including reception staff, have attended safeguarding training and it is always a part of the induction process for new staff and the many students who work at the centre.

Senior leaders regularly review what they are doing so that they are targeting funding appropriately. There is very good uptake for training sessions and 'stay and play'. To some degree the centre has become a victim of its own success as parents often want more sessions than they can access. Currently, because of demand, parents are only able to attend one 'stay and play' session a week. However, several parents commented that if they could, they would like to attend even more. There are plans to add another room to the existing building which would enable the centre to provide more activities for parents on site as parents in the area are often reluctant to go elsewhere. The centre also provides free places for children in the holiday playscheme and makes very good use of two-year-old funding to support younger children. Services are sustainable as the centre encourages training and develops staff expertise to enable them to deliver activities instead of needing external trainers and support.

The advisory board is still developing its role in the centre and is made up of professionals and parents. Parent representation on the advisory board is drawn from the local community and centre users.

Equality and diversity are exceptionally well promoted in the centre. The support for minority ethnic families is excellent. Feedback from professionals acknowledges that this support has enabled them to gain access to families that are normally hard to reach. The centre is aware of the groups of children that are at risk of not achieving and track their progress to ensure targeted support is given. The bilingual support assistants not only help children to settle in the nursery, they also support families in crisis and have accompanied children on their visits to primary school. Children and

parents with special educational needs and/or disabilities are extremely well supported. Case studies show where support for parents with disabilities has prevented children from going into care. The support for children on the autistic spectrum is outstanding, for example through Attention Hillingdon sessions which have had a real impact on their concentration levels.

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	2
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	2

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

None

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 McMillan Early Childhood Centre on 22 and 23 September 2010. We judged the centre as good overall.

During our visit we looked at the centre's plans and documents, visited a number of activities and talked with a number of you and the professionals who work with you. Those of you who spoke to us all said that the McMillan Early Childhood Centre is a friendly and welcoming place, full of staff you can trust. We agree. We found the centre to be well organised with staff who have a high level of professional expertise and a supportive approach. The centre's leadership team does a good job in running the centre and responding to your requests and needs. They are currently trying to recruit a full-time centre manager to ensure you continue to receive high-quality services and activities and to further improve the centre to meet your needs.

Centre leaders regularly review the services they offer to see what more they can do, but some of you told us you are not sure how to give your views on services and activities or how to contribute to centre governance. We have asked the centre leaders to look at more ways for you to be able to let them know what you think about the centre and how you can be fully involved in decision making.

The friendly staff team always provide a listening ear for you and are passionate about creating an extremely warm and welcoming place where you feel at home and able to talk freely about things that matter to you or are causing you concern. The bilingual support assistants help those of you who do not speak English as your first language to have clear information and support at the centre. This, along with the outstanding support for children and parents with special educational needs and/or disabilities, ensures the centre fully includes your very diverse community in its services and activities.

Staff at the centre and professionals from different agencies are extremely good at working closely with you to find out exactly what help and support you and your family need and making sure this is provided. They successfully share important information with other agencies when they need to. This means you do not have to keep repeating your story and all those involved have a clear picture of how they can help. You have access to support, advice and guidance at the centre from a wide range of services. Many of you have found it very helpful to be able to see people such as the speech and language therapist at the centre rather than having to travel to clinics.

The centre is helping you to keep yourselves and your children healthy. For example by promoting healthy eating and helping you to learn good parenting skills. They provide you with advice on how you can prevent accidents in and around your home to keep your children safe. The centre also provides excellent resources, including high-quality staff, to help your children enjoy their learning through play and develop to their full potential. They also help you to support your child's learning and development at home exceptionally well, for example through the excellent Learning Bags and Toy Library. However, the centre knows that there is more they need to do for expectant mums and dads. They have plans for antenatal support to start next January but we have asked them to look at ways in which expectant parents can benefit from the full range of antenatal care.

You told us the centre has helped you gain more confidence and self-esteem and develop closer and more effective relationships with your children. This was very evident when we visited you. You have also been provided with opportunities to form friendships and support one another and this has helped you feel less isolated. We could see how much you enjoy the activities you access at the centre and the extremely positive impact these are having on you and your families. We also saw how the centre and services have helped you learn new skills and achieve qualifications. Many of you have been given opportunities to become volunteers at the centre and others have been successfully supported back into employment.

Centre leaders are seeking ways to offer more services to the wider community. However, they are prevented from doing more as they are not always told about new births or families with young children who move to the area, and have not been able to get Jobcentre Plus to run sessions for parents at the centre. We have asked the local authority, Jobcentre Plus and the Primary Care Trust to work together so that more families in the community can access services and to give you the guidance and support you need.

We would like to thank everyone who came to speak with us. We are very grateful for your help and we wish each of you every happiness and every success for the future.

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