

Inspection report for 1st Place Children and Parents' Centre

Local authority	Southwark
Inspection number	367684
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Wendy Simmons

Centre governance	1 st Place Children and Parents' Centre Board of Trustees
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Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school if applicable	NA
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	1 st Place Nursery EY311475 1 st Place Children and Parents' Centre

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and one early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the centre leader, the senior leadership team, staff, representatives from the local authority and many partner agencies, including a wide range of health service workers and linked charitable organisations. Meetings were held with members of the Board of Trustees and the Advisory Board. Inspectors met with parents and other users of the centre. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documentation, including evaluations of services, safeguarding policies and procedures, case studies, other records, development plans and the centre's annual review report.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Information about the centre

The centre is a registered charity managed by the 1st Place Board of Trustees, who work closely with the Advisory Board. The management of the centre includes a high proportion of parents, medical professionals, leaders with business management expertise and others with suitable skills.. Some services are provided under a service level agreement with the local authority. The centre manager runs 1st Place on a day-to-day basis and is a member of the senior leadership team.

The centre operates for 50 weeks of the year from 08.00 to 18.00 from Monday to Friday and is also open on Saturdays from 11.00 to 13.00 and some Sundays. Additional activities are provided in school holiday times, in which older children can join. Prospective parents and those with new born and older children may attend the centre as well as other family members, such as grandparents. Local childminders are also welcomed. Children are admitted to the child care crèche from the age of

three months. The centre meets all elements of the core offer, which include integrated childcare, health services, family support and outreach along with a wide range of other services including, such activities as:

- family drop-in and fathers’ drop-in sessions and a range of parenting courses.
- Childminder drop-in and training courses.
- Family support, which also links to housing and debt advice.
- Many projects linked to the arts and early education for children.
- Domestic violence support and help for lone parents and teenage parents.
- English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).
- Back to work support, such as ‘Kick Start Your Life’ course.
- ‘Best Start for Babies’ course and a range of ante-natal and post-natal services including breastfeeding support.

A few families come from more affluent areas but overall the centre’s reach area covers an extremely wide range of deprivation. There are high proportions of lone parents, teenage mothers and families not in work. The vast majority of families live on the Aylesbury estate. Over one third of all families receive child benefit and close to 40% of children under five are classified as living in poverty. Over 65% of families are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion speaking English as an additional language is very high, with 38 different languages being spoken. When children join the centre their levels of development are often much lower than would normally be expected. The centre benefits from purpose built accommodation. The centre’s philosophy is based on early intervention and learning for families which is heavily influenced by the approach to learning used in Reggio Emilio in Italy. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision in the Nursery was inspected on 3 September 2010 and the findings in that report were used to support this inspection evidence on the provision for Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children’s centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for users and the wider community

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

The centre is outstanding. This is because it is very well run and is improving the outcomes for its families exceptionally well.

From the moment of arrival a warm welcome awaits all. The centre is highly inclusive; equality of access and diversity are central to the ethos of the centre. The centre has staff who can speak 16 languages; this contributes much to the welcome and feeling of inclusion. The centre is consequently making a very significant

contribution to community cohesion as well as the emotional, social and educational well being of the families that it serves.

The outreach to different families is excellent and is constantly improving. This is due to leaders' incisive evaluation of the services provided. For many families the centre is an oasis of calm, where the exemplary high quality care and range of activities leads to outstanding learning, fun and enjoyment for children and their families. Ultimately the centre helps parents to feel more confident and successful. As one explained, 'Most of all I am finding me again'. Staff make a real difference to families in times of crisis by taking action and by being a willing listener. Parents speak most highly of all staff. Recent surveys show that 95% of all users feel that the centre is meeting their needs very well and many said this was outstanding and inspectors agree.

Opportunities for adults to improve their education and skills, through courses that lead to accreditation, are very good. This is especially so for those who are learning to speak English as an additional language, for lone parents and teenage mothers.

Dedicated and forward thinking leadership at all levels has enabled the centre to work step by step to very successfully meet its aims. The centre manager, senior management team and the Board of Trustees embrace parents' view and ideas exceptionally well and empower them to become involved in all aspects of the centre's work. In the words of one parent, 'The centre is part of my family'. The Board of Trustees ask challenging questions of the manager to identify priorities for development. They make very effective use of the Advisory Board to seek help with and ideas for their development plans. All leaders and users are involved in analysing the effectiveness of the work of the centre. Leaders carefully target finances to the changing needs of its users, which reflects their very rigorous and perceptive self evaluation. All these factors underpin the centre's outstanding capacity for continued improvement.

Notable strengths of the centre's work include the successful way in which staff are helping families to be happier, seek employment and overcome barriers to learning and worries in their lives. The very good support helps to alleviate financial worries, emotional difficulties and depression. As one parent put it, 'There are no words that can express the gratitude I have. The centre has helped me to realise my potential in all ways. They always have faith in me, giving me help when I most needed it'.

Families are doing well because education, care, family support and health services are delivered together in a highly sensitive and personalised way. These follow on from perceptive and detailed initial assessment of the needs of each family. As a result, children have a greatly improved start to their lives in terms of their health and an outstanding start in terms of their learning and personal development. Outcomes for children at the end of their time in Nursery were described in the Early Years report as outstanding. Data for Southwark shows that achievement by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved very well in the reach area, with 1st Place contributing most successfully in helping children to reach the target

expected. The centre is very successful in narrowing the achievement gap between different groups of children and helping to promote high quality skills, such as children's behaviour.

Especially productive partnerships with a wide range of external agencies, other schools and different charities and specialist services, contribute significantly to the centre's impressively cohesive support of children and their families. Many parents commented that they can cope more with their children and they have a better understanding of their needs as well as a deeper knowledge of how they learn. The views of one parent summed up those of many when saying, 'I am coping better, I am under control and happier. The help is fantastic. I smile now and am happier with my children'. The centre is constantly alert to making contact with the 'harder-to-reach' families and is doing this very successfully, while being ever ambitious to continue extending this provision. Teenage parents highly value the outstanding support that they receive. As one noted, 'The centre turned my life around at a very bad time'.

In many ways the centre is helping families to lead healthy lifestyles and parents enjoy and value the activities and advice given because it is done in an encouraging way. The centre is contributing well to a falling rate of obesity in the local authority. Leaders know that this needs to be a continuing priority of their work because obesity in the area is much higher than average. Good attention to safeguarding ensures that children, parents and other centre users are secure and well cared for.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Build on the work already started with all other health agencies and the local authority on developing targets and activities for promoting healthy eating so reducing the levels of obesity within the area.

How good are outcomes for users?

1

The centres' work is very effective in helping families and their children to understand how to develop healthy lifestyles. The thriving partnership with health services has had a very positive impact on the number of families accessing services. In particular, through ante and post-natal support with Guys and St Thomas' Hospital Trust, including community midwife support, the proportion of mothers who are continuing with breastfeeding is much higher than the national average. Equally the take up of immunisations is higher than that seen nationally and increasing but opportunities for parents to learn more about maintaining children's healthy diet when they start to move on to solid food is not quite as effective. Support from health visitor clinics and parenting classes are helping parents to manage children's eating better. They receive useful guidance on how to help with fussy eating habits. The 'Shop, Cook, Eat' workshops run by 'Home-Start', are very popular, much

enjoyed and heavily oversubscribed. Parents are helped to enjoy cooking; they learn about nutrition and portion sizes. Everyone enjoys the shopping trips to places such as 'East Street Market' to snap up healthy bargains, which they cook for the family.

The work of the osteopath was also highly valued by parents in helping to improve children's sleeping, asthma and behaviour. This in turn reduces stress in family homes very well. Emotional and mental health are very well supported so that individuals can manage family demands more effectively.

Families are helped to keep their children safe. Leaders place a very high priority on providing workshops about first aid and being safe in the home and in the wider environment. The impact of this, together with highly effective mental health support and training in managing children's behaviour, has led to a significant fall in admissions to accident and emergency in the reach area. Dental health is improving well due to the focused support from specialist at King's College hospital.

Children are well protected. As a result of transformed links with the outreach teams, who often work directly with families in their homes, the centre has been able to support more families. This has had a very significant impact on the promotion of good safeguarding arrangements. There are highly effective ways that all agencies are involved with families as part in the Common Assessment Framework process, when this is needed to safeguard children and vulnerable people. High quality case studies feed well into good child protection plans. Child protection procedures and systems are good.

Leaders make sure that parents have every opportunity to understand how and why children play in different ways. For example, why messy play is important. The highly effective 'Every Child a Talker' (ECAT) project has had a significant impact on the way that parents are being helped to communicate with their children. As one father explained, 'It helps parents when talking to their children, it's fun! I learn about body language and it helps me to build a relationship'. 'Book Start' and early intervention speech therapy is leading to very positive outcomes on children's basic skills. Parents who have attended these projects are now acting as mentors for other parents, to help them to develop an understanding about play and how to promote their children's independent learning. Children, parents, childminders and other members of the family are all encouraged to develop creativity and communication skills as part of the an art project work led by the Atelierista (art specialist). This also supports families to understand how their children learn through play and to offer practical ideas and resources for parents to use at home. The innovative photographic project has been similarly effective and enriches social and communication skills. The project on light and shadow is a superb example that demonstrates how children develop their descriptive language.

The support given for children and parents with special educational needs and/or disabilities is especially good so that parents can access additional financial help and benefit from practical support. This enables them to feel less isolated as they now get about more in the community. This is very good for their emotional well-being

and for children’s wider developmental needs.

The centre plays a key role in promoting respect within the local community and in celebrating diversity. For example, by sharing festivals and through some of the superb work with the Board of Trustees. For example, the 2010 Annual General Meeting was set up to celebrate cultural traditions across all seven continents and was organised to ensure a high uptake and a seamless link with the preceding annual report meeting for users of the centre.

Childcare provision contributes significantly to why the centre is successfully helping parents to learn new skills to enable them to return to work and come off benefits. The centre has trained more than 30 adults to become qualified childminders in recent times and this has spread the support that these people give in the Aylesbury estate very well. They regularly contact centre staff to share resources, ideas and training. Parents who speak English as an additional language make great progress in acquiring their qualifications for speaking English, which is helping many of them to find work. For example, Just over 100 parents have attended courses and 77% gained qualifications.

The very high quality joined-up support between all professionals is having an especially positive effect on children’s behaviour and social development. For example, five years ago a high proportion of boys were being excluded in local Reception classes due to poor behaviour. As a result of highly effective assessment and increased opportunities to intervene earlier with families it became apparent that these children came from homes where parents were either suffering from mental-health issues or lacked the skills needed to manage their child’s behaviour. Sensitive support, increased opportunities for energetic play, ‘Learn and Play’ sessions and parenting courses, when allied to help for depression, have helped to significantly reduce exclusion rates in school.

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	2
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	1
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	1

How good is the provision?

1

Very strong partnerships with health visitors, midwives and the local doctor's surgery are having a very beneficial impact on increasing the centre's outreach and attracting more parents to use the full range of services on offer. A highly comprehensive range of weekly activities is provided. These are well attended and meet the needs of children of all ages and families.

Assessments of users needs are very comprehensive and well documented, often with individual plans for their support and regular evaluation of how well they are getting on. The case studies seen reflect some exemplary practice.

The range of resources and activities are diverse and very interesting. During the inspection, parents had great fun watching and learning how to make play fun. Helpful guidance in the 'Being a Parent' group enabled parents to: learn how to establish positive bonds with their child; how to listen to children and manage any attention seeking behaviour. Very high quality support also aids early identification of children who are on the Autistic Spectrum. Parents greatly value the impressive care, guidance and support given to them, which helps them to enjoy being a family more.

The needs of one-parent families are very carefully planned for; this includes fathers, mothers, carers and childminders. Many families have spoken about being sad and overwhelmed by parenthood when they first join the centre. They soon blossom into happy individuals who are either given the support they need at the centre or are signposted effectively to other services. Home visits are numerous and include such things as toy loans and sessions that sensitively help teenage parents and parents who are bereaved or lonely. This enables them to access the services that they need to thrive.

There is confidential guidance in a wide range of venues to help those who have suffered domestic violence. Support from 'Blackfriars Advice' helps with housing needs and the centre guides parents with JobCentre and employment advice. Many parents say that the combination of sensitive staff, child care facilities and making new friends helps them immensely. As one parent noted, 'Using the crèche helps me to have time to look for work.' The crèche is highly effective in nurturing children and in helping them to learn skills, such as those needed for toilet training. Teenage mothers value the 12 hour education programme and agree it helps them to become more confident and ready to return to work. They confidently leave their children because they are very well cared for. Children enjoy exploring different sensory experiences, including plenty of messy play and creative activities at the crèche. At breakfast, lunch and tea, children enjoyed selecting healthy meals as well being helped to behave socially using suitable cutlery. Staff work hard to model how to promote children's speaking skills well and provide extensive support for parents with this. 'Best Start for Babies', 'Being a Parent' and the music session 'Whippersnappers' all help parents to bond with their children and have fun.

Staff listen informally to feedback on the services provided and a wide range of surveys are carried out more formally. For example, feedback from teenage parents has flagged up that there are still more teenage parents in the community who need support. Leaders are working on expanding services as a result of listening to these comments. There are exciting plans in place to expand the part-time day care provision and to continue the extension of outreach to the most vulnerable groups. In a focus group one parent said, 'I enjoy being involved in the life of the centre. It has made me want to work locally and give something back'.

The centre has offered a variety of accreditation courses and signposted parents to university courses where appropriate. During a 'Kick Start Your Life' session, parents were helped very well to feel good about themselves, showing self confidence as they talked and wrote about ideas for a personal statement in readiness for a curriculum vitae (CV) for work.

Every family is treated with dignity and confidential matters are handled with great sensitivity. For example, parents with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) are very well supported. , Staff readily support families in times of crisis. As one explained, 'Before I came I felt so scared, now I feel a lot more confident'.

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	1
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	1
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?

1

Very effective leadership and management ensure that the centre provides outstanding value for money. Leaders have worked with the 'Daycare Trust' who have advised on the new business plan, which reflects the leaders' vision to continue generating income, to ensure the financial sustainability, while meeting users needs in the very best possible way. The centre manager, Trustees, Advisory Board, and senior leadership team share a vision for excellence for the children and families. Plans are underway to provide consultancy and training to other centres and providers as it is recognised locally that there are many elements of the centre's work that are exemplary and inspectors agree. Leaders often show visionary practice and have high expectations. Target setting is good and focused on national initiatives. For example, the development plan correctly identifies further work on

promoting healthy lifestyles to reduce obesity. Although this is already good, the centre has set challenging targets which they want to meet. Leaders are ambitious for families to lead lifestyles that will enable them to thrive throughout their entire lives.

The centre is highly proactive in seeking funds from a wide range of sources. For example, plans are underway to provide 50 more full and part-time places in another local building. The cost to parents will be kept low by generating income through use of the centre's buildings when not used by the children's centre services. This will mean that more parents in the area can benefit from the provision. Those who have lost benefits due to returning to work will still be able to access the vital child care facilities that enable them to work.

The forward thinking involvement of the charity 'The Place 2 Be' is a new initiative, which reflects leaders' vision to take the one-to-one support to the very highest levels of excellence. Projects such as this focus on the emotional well being of the whole family and contribute to why the centre has an outstanding capacity to improve. It also demonstrates the effectiveness of leaders' self-evaluation in meeting the needs of the groups that use the centre.

Centre leaders, the Trustees and advisors work very well in collaboration. They are reflective, energetic and care passionately about the families. They work closely with the local authority to provide the services that are expected in an impressive way. Leaders have an extremely good understanding of the issues faced by the centre and carefully monitor the quality and impact of the services offered.

Plans are well underway to further strengthen the way that the local authority collects data about all reach areas, so that this can be shared as effectively as possible with all outreach areas to further aid the good target setting process already in place. The introduction of a borough-wide 'Synergy Connect' Children's Centre database is quite new but is intended to help this.

The centre has effective policies and procedures for safeguarding children and for ensuring the security of the premises. All staff are well trained in child protection arrangements and there are rigorous procedures for vetting staff and volunteers. There are clear systems for sharing important information with the relevant agencies in order to keep children from harm. Risk assessment procedures are thorough. The centre works hard to make sure that all parents understand about safeguarding and is looking toward to producing more guidance booklets/ posters written in a very wide range of community languages.

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood	1
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider	2

community	
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	2
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	1
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	1
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	1

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

The inspection of 1st Place Nursery, 3 September 2010.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected 1st Place Children and Parent' Centre on 10–11 February 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall and we know that almost all of you agree with this. All of the senior leaders work very well together and this is a significant feature in why the centre is so successful in meeting your needs.

Your contributions to the inspection were greatly appreciated and we would like to thank those of you who took the time to meet with us and share your thoughts about the centre. We were delighted to hear from the manager that many of you really enjoyed this opportunity. From talking to you and from looking at the surveys it is clear that you enjoy all the activities. You agree that the centre is very successfully providing the support that you need. Notably, you spoke about having very good child care at affordable prices, which helps you to have time for yourselves and time to learn how to improve your parenting skills. Many of you commented about the excellent crèche and child care. You greatly value these

facilities because they are helping you to return to work or overcome personal difficulties.

Several of you told us that the staff support you especially well in times of difficulty. We agree that they provide outstanding care, guidance and support for you and your children. If they are unable to help you themselves they put you in touch with other agencies or organisations that are better qualified to help you.

Your children do very well here, making outstanding progress in their learning and development. Like many of you, they grow in confidence and skills. You greatly benefit from the many services which the centre provides, including sessions run by health visitors and midwives. You value the free swimming, osteopathy sessions, Bookstart and many highly inspiring arts, photography and gardening projects. The Centre helps many of you with your English speaking and writing skills in a most impressive way and you confirmed this. Staff really help you to learn how to play with your children and engage in purposeful discussions with them. You value the 'Drop in' and parenting classes especially, often these are helping you to develop useful skills to help your children to behave well. Many of you commented that the work of the centre reduces loneliness and depression and helps you to make new friends and have fun. The centre works very successfully with many partners to make health services more accessible for you and to put you at your ease in welcoming surroundings.

Being healthy is a particular priority for the centre and they are well on the way with this, but they would like to make this aspect of their work as outstanding as other elements and we agree that this is an aspect that can be further improved. For example, we noted that many of you would like more cookery classes. You and your children benefit from the breastfeeding support and events such as first aid courses. It is encouraging to see how many of you have maintained breastfeeding. The centre provides many very good opportunities for you to further your own education and gain additional qualifications. It is impressive to see how many of you volunteer to work at the centre and contribute to the work of the Board of Trustees.

The centre listens to what you have to say about the services it offers and takes account of your suggestions when planning for the future. We were very pleased to see that staff also respond to your ideas.

Thank you again for taking the time to speak with us during our visit. We much appreciated your willingness to talk with us about some of your personal experiences and we wish you and your families all the best for the future.

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