

# Inspection report for Woodberry Down Children's Centre

Local authority	London Borough of Hackney
Inspection number	366547
Inspection dates	9–10 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Paul Armitage

Centre governance	The Learning Trust
Centre leader	Colleen Sterling
Date of previous inspection	This is the first inspection
Centre address	The Lilliput Building Spring Park Drive London N4 2NP
Telephone number	020 8815 3250/1
Fax number	020 8815 3250/1
Email address	Colleen.sterling@learningtrust.co.uk

Linked school, if applicable	
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Woodberry Down Early Years Centre

The inspection of this Sure Start Children's Centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

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

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

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

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

No. 100024

© Crown copyright 2010



## Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

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

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

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

Inspectors held meetings with centre staff and users, the chair of the advisory board, professionals involved in the delivery of services including outreach staff, representatives of link organisations, and with the local authority. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Woodberry Down Children's Centre delivers services to about 3,000 children under five and their families. It offers tiers one and two services. It is at the centre of a cluster of locations where its provision is delivered. The centre refers to this as a 'hub and spoke' model and is the only such model in the borough. The hub is in the Lilliput Centre; the spoke is the centre's services delivered in seven other locations – Woodberry Down Early Years Centre on the same site as the Lilliput Building; the John Scott Health Centre; Barton House Health Centre; Clissold Park One O'clock Club; Hillside Children's Centre; and the Factory. A mobile means of service delivery is the Hackney Playbus. In addition, the centre delivers services, many commissioned, at other outreach locations in its reach area. The centre also has links with a wide range of other organisations offering mutual support.

The area served by the centre is very diverse in all aspects. The centre is situated within an area of social housing. Elsewhere in the reach area, there is a considerable amount of owner-occupier housing. Around 8.5% of the population is aged 0–5. The reach area is ethnically diverse. White British predominate but Black African and Black Caribbean, Asian and other ethnic groups are well represented. The rate of people on benefits varies considerably in different wards but on average is about 16% and it is rising. Unemployment is about 10%. Children's ability levels on entry to early years provision are average. The centre is governed on a day-to-day basis by an advisory board made up of representatives of service providers and other organisations such as the Manor House Development Trust. The Learning Trust is a not-for-profit company which runs all the education services for the London Borough of Hackney; it has overall responsibility for the centre.

# 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**

**1**

## Main findings

The Learning Trust which has overall responsibility for Woodberry Down sets clear targets, the principal aim of which is to lessen the gap between rich and poor families. This target, which has as its core, reaching those families that are vulnerable due their circumstances, is being addressed well by the centre and the outreach locations in its cluster.

Provision is based on a good understanding of the needs of the community; the centre’s knowledge and understanding of the community it serves is outstanding. A great deal of numerical data is available to support evaluation and is well used by managers. However, the prime intelligence comes from the work of its professionals and commissioned organisations as they engage with the community. At the current time, the centre works with 14 locally commissioned services, five centrally funded services and five other services. These cover a wide range of effective support.

As a result of this sensitive provision, the centre’s users – children and adults – achieve well. Examples of the wide range of this achievement includes mothers and fathers understanding better how to stay healthy; disabled children being given opportunities to swim; single mothers given confidence to handle their child’s behaviour problems; complex family problems involving depression, abuse and social deprivation being addressed and solved by professionals.

Management is effective. The range of services provided in Woodberry Down’s cluster is wide, and that it is organised well is a tribute to all those involved. Governance, including the role of the Learning Trust, is questioning, supportive and effective. Safeguarding arrangements are good. The centre itself is secure and the children and adults are safe. Equality and diversity are well served. Users and staff from different backgrounds are very comfortable together and are respectful of this diversity. At the same time, they work to common aims and ideals around the agenda set by the Learning Trust in collaboration with the centre.

There is much the centre does well, including a lot that is outstanding, such as the way it supports those families that are most vulnerable due to their circumstances and the way it uses assessment information to drive improvement. However, there are a few areas where the centre can do better. Provision to support users in developing necessary knowledge and skills for finding work is not as extensive and robust as it should be; the same can be said for education opportunities, particularly more advanced ones, often provided by linked colleges. There are also no centre users on the Advisory Board. These are the points for improvement.

Inspectors met the centre's management and also managers elsewhere in the cluster. They are dedicated and talented people and self-evaluation at all levels is grounded in sophisticated and robust analysis. Processes for managing the performance of staff and for their professional development are used exceptionally well. Together with staff from the Learning Trust and the centre's active Advisory Board, they have the ability both to sustain and improve the work of the centre building on previously outstanding performance. They are very well aware of the present economic climate and its likely implications and in this context, they have the ability to target resources exceptionally well through proactive strategic planning. Hence the capacity of the centre to improve is outstanding.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Encourage centre users to join the Advisory Board.
- Provide more robust provision to help users find work and to improve education opportunities.

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

**2**

Children and their families who use the centre are developing healthy lifestyles. The extent of this development is often very striking. Examples range from the simple to the more complex. For example, young children learn new habits through the provision of fruit and water at sessions and circle time is used well to establish expectations in all aspects of well-being. Immunisation and breastfeeding rates are high. Sessions such as 'Henry's', when mothers lacking knowledge and understanding of healthy eating and exercise combined with healthy lifestyle come together under the leadership of a well-trained professional to explore their concerns and share solutions, are all impressive. One focus of 'Henry' is the reduction in obesity. One mother wrote in a letter to inspectors: 'I have also participated in the 'Henry' course and this has helped in thinking about having a healthier lifestyle for my family. The practical and step by step advice has been very helpful. The lovely gifts have been much appreciated and we have used the cookbook and utensils.' More complex help is given through the successful multi-agency meeting and by family support professionals, where the focus is on support for vulnerable families in all aspects of

health and well-being. Likewise, the support given by 'First Steps' is aimed at children with mental health and behavioural difficulties, and the 'post-natal group' is aimed at the emotional health of new mothers. 'Step by Step' is run by a local Jewish Orthodox group and funded by the centre. It supports disabled children by running weekly activities such as swimming and ice skating to help them be active. The speech and language service which works in all of the borough's centres supports well children with communication delays and difficulties.

Much of the work of the multi-agency meetings, family support and indeed, all centre and linked agency staff is focused on safety. This leads to significant and sustained evidence of improved outcomes for those families who are most vulnerable due to their circumstances. A key feature of the centre is the way in which it seeks to work with families before they need formal protection. The use of the Common Assessment Framework, the monitoring of Family Support Plans and the interests of looked-after children are very thorough, with safety paramount in discussions and decisions. At another level, the centre subscribes to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) scheme to ensure the safety of equipment used by families at home.

Users of the centre and its outreach centre clearly enjoy activities. This was clearly evident when an inspector visited the early years centre to watch children from the children's centre enjoying outside activities. Likewise, children in the One O'clock club very much enjoy playing and doing other things together and the results of all this are plainly visible on walls in writing and drawing and in what children said to inspectors. Children's behaviour is outstanding; they work well together and it is excellent to see the way in which children from such different backgrounds are happy together. They are sensitive to each other, for example in free-flow play.

Amongst adults, the activities of the centre are very much appreciated. Many comments were offered to inspectors. For example, 'All people are friendly and welcoming'; 'Excellent teacher'; 'I really like coming to this class because it makes me feel more confident.' However, one interesting comment with both positive and negative overtones was, 'Could be bigger as people are turned away'. This relates both to the centre's popularity and the limitations on its resources. Inspectors also met a mixed group of users who also spoke very positively of the centre in terms of helping them achieve, develop in confidence and generally overcome very difficult circumstances. They and some other adults and children in the cluster still have some way to go in terms of confidence and understanding themselves. However, the progress many have made with the centre's help is clearly seen in the data held by the centre and the comments made by the centre users to inspectors.

Adults are given plenty of opportunity to express their views about the quality of the service they receive from the centre; for example, inspectors were provided with pie charts showing the results of surveys into users' views of 'Messy Play'; 'Movers and Shakers'; 'Music and Movement'; 'Playbus'; the 'Toy Library'; the 'One O'clock Club' and more. As an example, 75% of users were completely satisfied with 'Baby Massage' and the rest were very satisfied. However, the one weakness in adult participation is that currently, none of the centre users have volunteered to become members of the Advisory Board and thus none take part directly in strategic decision

making.

Compared with their starting points children's knowledge and skills are developed. They show independence, inquisitiveness, the ability to work with each other, draw, write, produce learning journals, demonstrate physical free-flow and motor skills. For adults, there are also excellent opportunities provided that result in good or better outcomes for those that attend. One such example is the provision of an English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) course, which is very popular and highly effective. Another is the 'Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities' course aimed at developing positive parenting. Aimed specifically at vulnerable families, it raises self-esteem and parent-child relationships. One user commented, 'There wasn't any part of the course that wasn't useful. Every week I took something new away with me.'

One problem the centre faces, however, is the recent closure of the Jobcentre Plus facility at Hillside children's centre which, as part of the cluster, was accessed by Woodberry Down users. Alternatives are accessed by users; for example, the Citizens Advice Bureau and Turkish, Jewish and Muslim link organisations provide a range of support including advice on benefits. In addition, some users are known to attend courses and use facilities provided by the Manor House Development Trust as well as 'Genesis' but at the moment, there is no regularly available centre-initiated provision. One other issue is that there is currently no regularly available levels 2 and 3 provision for learning English and numeracy, raising the broader issue of the quality of provision for encouraging access to further education and other advanced courses. The centre has plans for developing more formal links with Hackney College but these have not yet come to fruition and these all limit the possibilities for adults to progress in this area as well as their children.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for users*

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</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>1</b>
<b>The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training</b>	<b>2</b>

## How good is the provision?

2

Statistically, data from the last three years shows that the centre is successful at reaching its population, and that it assesses needs very well. That the centre has such extensive outreach and links with commissioned bodies improves the quality of intelligence. In addition, professionals visiting centres and families in homes get a very good idea of need. Links with Children's Social Care and the Health Visiting team also lead to appropriate targeting of families. As a result of this intelligence, the range of provision is wide. A list for the last quarter listed 62 events or courses taking place in the cluster.

The multi-agency meeting attended by inspectors indicated that the different professionals present had an extremely clear picture of issues facing their clients and how to address them. The Common Assessment Framework was being used highly effectively to support the needs of the most vulnerable and Family Support Plans were discussed and followed-up. The effective recording of actions taken and planned is a critical aspect of the success of the centre's provision.

The provision to promote purposeful learning and enjoyment is outstanding. This was very clear when observing children playing together, in the displays of their work and in a 'graduation' ceremony when children leave the centre. For adults, purposeful learning is recognised and celebrated by a similar graduation for ESOL students at the end of their course, and during the inspection there was a reunion meeting of parents and carers to celebrate and enjoy their achievements. Comments from users about the provision are almost universally positive; for example, 'excellent teacher'; 'I'm very happy as it is; keep it here please'. The few negative comments often have positive twists such as 'could be bigger as sometimes people are hurried away'.

One important aspect of provision has been the concerted effort to attract hard-to-reach groups, resulting, for example, in links to Jewish, Muslim, Turkish and other groups and to share with them purposeful development; for example, the North London Muslim Community Centre delivers a range of services. It also provides services to non-Muslims in the locality. An area of significant development has been a successful attempt to attract fathers to activities. Some are specifically male-orientated, such as the 'Male Carers' Group' and the 'Fathers' Forum' but in other instances, fathers are now encouraged to attend other events, and the centre monitors this. Thus, in the third quarter of 2010, a good number of fathers attended 'Stay and Play' and were present at new birth visits. One father inspectors spoke to commented how comfortable he felt in the centre. A small but significant thing has been the alteration of application forms to make them gender neutral. The centre realises there is more to be done but has made a good start.

Many activities are provided with a crèche and, as a result, this enables parents and carers with children under five can attend. The large number of outreach locations results in ease of access to services, something which is very much appreciated by users. There is strong evidence of the considerable care and sensitivity which centre and other staff display in their relations with clients of all ages. The only weaknesses in the range of services have already been reported in the outcomes section; namely work- and education-related provision for adults.



*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

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

**2**

The centre and its cluster run very smoothly. Governance is clear. The advisory board's members understand their role and provide effective management. Board minutes indicate they have effective oversight of the centre's affairs. The only weakness is the absence of centre users on the Advisory Board.

The centre manager leads the centre and its cluster arrangements well. It is complex provision and thus her achievement is no mean feat. In doing this she is ably supported by efficient senior managers and the helpfully critical eye of the Learning Trust at regular evaluation meetings. The centre's administrators are efficient and caring. Day-to-day administration runs effectively. Appraisal arrangements are efficient. The centre manager has expressed a wish to be more involved in the appraisal of staff in commissioned bodies in the cluster; there is sense in this.

Ambitious targets are set by the Learning Trust in discussion with the centre management to ensure that local issues are taken into account. They are well understood by staff. The centre knows itself and its cluster well; its self-evaluation document is of good quality. Evaluation is thorough. The journey from targets through to deciding on provision to evaluation of success is clear to staff, the advisory board and the Learning Trust. The documentation held by the centre is extensive. There are missed opportunities for it to be able to provide succinct information to celebrate its success and identify for others areas for development. There is also scope for improving the development plan by better linkage to evaluation and resource availability.

Resources are very well used and considerable thought is now being given to the better use what are likely to be reduced resources in the future. Equality and respect for diversity are exceptionally well promoted. They are at the heart of the centre; respect is reflected in the way that staff work with users and users relate to each other. This includes provision for children with disabilities. No better example was a meeting attended by inspectors when people of different faiths and cultural backgrounds from commissioned bodies in the cluster spoke in harmony around

shared ideals and objectives.

The centre's safeguarding arrangements are outstanding. All staff have been appropriately checked and the information kept on a single central register. The centre's work in seeking and supporting vulnerable families with safeguarding issues is thorough and effective. Risk assessments are conducted regularly and with care.

In relation to the value for money judgement, much of what the centre does is of outstanding value; in other areas it is good. Three key areas; work and education – related provision, and representation of users on the Advisory Board are areas for development. Taken as a whole, this leads to an overall judgement that the centre offers good value for money.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>1</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>1</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>1</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision</b>	<b>1</b>

## **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](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 Woodberry Down Children's Centre on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> February 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank all of you – children and adults – for talking to us, writing to us and for letting us come to some of your meetings and other activities. Because you are the users of the centre, the things you told us have been very important in helping us to reach our judgements.

Your centre and all the other places where activities are held are managed very well. You have told us that you are very pleased with the range of activities, their easy access and the help that you are given by the staff who run them. Those of you who have difficult problems have told us how much you have been helped.

Some of the sessions we attended were great fun. It is really nice to see children and adults from very different backgrounds getting on well together. Those families who are vulnerable due to their circumstances, particularly those with members who have a disability, appreciate the highly effective support that they get from the centre. There is a strong emphasis on being healthy; and we thought sessions covering sensitive issues such as how to manage the behaviour of your children or overcoming breastfeeding and weaning problems were handled very well both by staff and you. We like the emphasis the centre has been putting on encouraging fathers to become more involved and the way in which the centre is being successful in engaging harder-to-reach groups. The work with Muslim, Orthodox Jewish and Turkish communities is successful and growing.

We have graded your centre as 'good'. Much of what it does is outstanding but the reason we have said 'good' and not 'outstanding' is that managers, with the help of the Advisory Board and the Learning Trust, need to do more to help people with work-related issues, in particular to help you find work if you need to do this. We also think that more needs to be done to provide more advanced education opportunities. Lastly, we want to encourage more of you to consider joining the Advisory Board. At the moment there are no centre users on the board. Boards are expected to have users on them to help with the important decisions that have to be made. It is a good thing to do and helpful to the wider community as well as yourselves. These are the points for development that we have reported.

Once again, thank you for your help.

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