

# Inspection report for Hillbrook Centre for Children and Families

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<b>Local authority</b>	Wandsworth Borough Council
<b>Inspection number</b>	365797
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 May 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joan Lindsay

<b>Centre governance</b>	Hillbrook Primary School Governing Body
<b>Centre leader</b>	Juliette Lloyd
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	N/A
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Hillbrook Primary School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	N/A

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.

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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.

An inspection of the co-located/partner primary school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

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

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager and staff, representatives of the local authority and members of the advisory board as well as the headteacher of Hillbrook Primary School. They met with representatives of partner agencies, including health services and family welfare services. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation including key policies, the centre's development plan, user surveys and the centre's evaluation of its services.

## Inspection judgements

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

### Information about the centre

The centre was designated in 2008 as a Phase One centre managed by the governing body of Hillbrook Primary School on behalf of the local authority. However, services only started to be delivered two years ago. There are four members of staff, including a full-time centre manager, an outreach worker, an early years professional and a part-time administrative support worker.

The small two-room centre is located in Upper Tooting, in the grounds of Hillbrook Primary School. Adjacent to the centre is an independently run neighbourhood nursery, and as part of the school, an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) resource base and four Early Years Foundation Stage classes. There are 880 children under five living in the reach area, with approximately 105 children living in workless households. The area is very culturally and economically diverse with a high proportion from Black and ethnic minority groups. Thirty-five per cent of the children speak English as an additional language with the main languages spoken being Urdu (26%) and Somali (20%). Base-line entry data for children's entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage show that they are below the levels expected for their age with particularly low communication, language and literacy skills. Nine per cent of the under fives are considered obese. Breastfeeding initiation and sustained rates are very high compared to national figures. The local authority does not collect data in relation to the number of smokers in the area.

The range of services and support provided by the centre is limited by its size. The focus is on families of young children through working with partners, such as NHS Boost, to support parenting, early years education and healthy living. There are several other children's centres in close proximity and users are signposted there for other specific services such as those targeted at teenage parents. The centre is open all year round apart from a short period in August.

### 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

Hillbrook Centre for Children and Families is providing a good service. In the two years since it has been fully established it has had a strong, positive impact on many of the users due to the commitment and vision of the centre manager and her staff. It has assessed the needs of specific groups in the area well through a clear understanding of cultural differences. It has focused its services effectively on specific areas making the best use of expertise especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and in safeguarding. There is a very strong awareness of safeguarding issues including where there may be domestic abuse and the centre works closely with partners such as Wandsworth Women's Aid to support and safeguard users. A particular strength is the way those who come to the centre feel welcomed and their views listened to and valued. One user, reflecting the views of many, stated: 'From the moment we enter the centre, my daughter and I are made to feel welcome.' The weekly Parents' Group meetings are a strength of the centre. They give parents and carers a platform to air their views and also to learn and discuss different topics while their children receive high quality crèche care. Diversity is celebrated and all are treated equally and are expected to treat others the same way. Contact with the centre for many has, in the words of one user, '...been life-changing' because of the high quality care, guidance and support of all the staff and the highly effective partnerships.

There is strong evidence through data and anecdotally that the centre has had a positive impact on children's personal, social and emotional development, and outcomes are good overall. However, the centre has become a victim of its own success in some ways as it is occasionally unable to cater for all those who would like to attend activities and classes. This is because the timetable is still being developed to accommodate longer courses and the centre has not yet made consistent and creative use of the school premises. The centre knows its users well. However, neither it nor the local authority captures some information that would allow it to target other specific groups and measure its impact, such as on those who smoke.

Governance of the centre is good at all levels and, although relatively newly formed, the advisory board is actively involved in the management of the centre. Several members are parents and feel empowered through their role on the board. One stated, 'This is the only time I have sat on a board and felt effective.' However, there is scope for the advisory board to become more involved in the centre's development plan and in setting targets that are more specific and measurable. There is nevertheless a strong understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for development and, although at an early stage of its development, the centre has already had discernible influence on the outcomes for many. Combined with a clear vision and desire to continue to improve, there is good capacity for sustained improvement.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop the programme of activities and workshops to ensure that those which are most popular are available to more users by:
  - reworking the timetable to make best use of the time when long-term programmes are not running
  - making more creative use of the school premises.
- Improve the centre's development plan so that targets are more specific and measurable by:
  - capturing more detailed information about the users so that impact can be measured in more aspects
  - increase the involvement of the advisory board in the setting of targets.

## How good are outcomes for users?

2
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The centre has a strong focus on healthy eating and in educating parents and carers, in particular about dental health. It has been awarded Healthy Wandsworth accreditation. This has led to parents and carers having a clear understanding about what snacks and drinks are best for their children. For example, language difficulties have led to misunderstandings about 'fruit drinks' which can have very little fruit in them. The emotional health of users has been a strong focus with an awareness of the prevalence of mental health issues leading to workshops and a willingness to discuss concerns among users. Consequently, users have been helped to improve their lives and especially those of their children. The centre does not have information on smoking rates of users and, as yet, this is not a target group.

All those who use the centre are kept safe and users report that they and their children feel safe there. Children behave well and do not mistreat the toys and other equipment. The centre has run several courses to raise awareness of safety in the home such as with a Child Accident Prevention week, and to equip users with first aid skills. At the time of the inspection there were no children on child protection plans or subject to Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes in the centre's reach area, testament in part to the centre's proactive approach to highlighting and dealing with concerns. The centre is especially adept at recognising where domestic abuse is impacting on the lives of users and their children and has had a very positive impact on improving their safety.

Children thoroughly enjoy the activities such as the Messy Play Session and Boogie Time. Centre staff, with high levels of expertise in the Early Years Foundation Stage, ensure that parents and carers are helped to become actively involved in their children's play and development. The introduction of Learning Journeys and parents' and carers' involvement with them has been particularly effective in making a difference to children's independent skills and personal development. Anecdotal evidence is that children's behaviour has improved and they settle well when they

move on to nursery and school. One parent stated, 'Small adjustments make a huge difference' after a parenting course. There is evidence that children are entering the Early Years Foundation Stage at levels that are improving year on year and that the gap between expected levels and the lowest achieving is reducing. The centre is now putting in a system to track specific children on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage so that the impact of contact with the centre can be more finely gauged.

All staff involved in the centre are excellent role models for developing strong relationships and showing respect for each other. The centre has done much to include the Somali community as well as Urdu speakers and both groups now make good use of the services. Users make a good contribution to the decision-making and there is a high level of user representation on the advisory board which is chaired by a parent.

With a strong focus on Early Years' development in the centre, children are making good progress in enhancing their skills for the future. Toddlers are confident with adults and mix naturally with each other. Users are being equipped well with specific skills especially those who volunteer in the centre and who access the English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and information and communication technology (ICT) courses. They report a greater degree of confidence which in some cases has led to further education and work. Users are given adequate support in returning to work but the centre is not supported regularly by JobCentre Plus despite its efforts to establish a partnership.

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

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

**2**

Those who use the centre are known very well by staff and their needs are met well, especially in relation to improving their language skills and in helping their children learn and develop. Strong partnerships mean that effective support can be put in place where needed. However, the locality registration form does not capture all the

information the centre requires to assess the needs of specific groups such as teenage parents and smokers.

Purposeful learning and enjoyment is at the heart of the centre's rationale. Most of the activities are focused around the Early Years Foundation Stage and improving parenting skills. The involvement of the locality early years teacher and a member of staff working towards the early years professional qualification have had a very positive impact on how well children learn through play. This has had a discernible impact on the outcomes for users. The achievements of workshop participants are celebrated, for example through a congratulatory meal and certificates for those who complete a parenting skills course. This enhances participants' confidence and self-esteem. The quality of the services offered is high but the centre is limited in what it can offer due to its small size and therefore has rightly focused on specific areas and signposting to other centres and partners. There is often great demand for the activities and so occasionally users are not able to attend where they would like. The centre has tried to adapt some activities to get round this, for example by making a Stay and Play session referral only. However, there are some gaps in the timetable that could accommodate more sessions through creative planning and more use of the school premises.

The quality of care, guidance and support is high and enhanced by the productive partnerships and good outreach work. The outreach worker goes out regularly into the community to target groups by visiting places such as clinics, the library and shopping centres to access those, for example, young parents, who may not be aware of the centre's services. There is much sharing of information between integrated services, such as social work support, and Contact a Family (support for children with additional needs), that can lead to joint home visits, additional targeted support and signposting to other centres. A strong proactive approach to identifying problems, often reacting at times of crisis, means that the centre has built up high levels of trust and respect from those they come into contact with. There were several examples from case studies and from centre users spoken to during the inspection of where staff have supported them through highly difficult and sensitive times with very positive outcomes. One such testimonial, typical of many, stated 'Hillbrook is a life-line, providing support and sanity to new parents/families.'

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



## How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The day-to-day management of the centre is good and the local authority is instrumental in ensuring there is support and challenge through regular meetings of the reference and locality groups. Self-evaluation is generally accurate and there is a clear understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for development. All the activities and workshops are evaluated with users' views taken into account and used to adapt and improve future groups. The advisory board, which includes representatives from the governing body of Hillbrook Primary School, meets regularly and already has had an impact on the services offered. Members of the board, as well as those who work in the centre, have high expectations in relation to the services they offer and the development plan has appropriate priorities for development. However, the advisory board plays a limited role in formulating the centre's development plan which is not yet highlighting measurable targets for improvement in all relevant areas.

The attractive purpose-built centre is well resourced, welcoming and very safe. Staff are highly trained and their specialist skills are used effectively with positive benefits to users. The centre gives good value for money as it has been particularly effective in engaging specific members of the community, such as different cultural groups and also fathers, and outcomes are good overall. However, there is scope to use the resources and those of the school to even greater effect so that more users can avail themselves of the activities on offer.

The centre promotes equality and diversity well and celebrates other cultures' festivals such as Chinese New Year, as well as Black History Month. A map of the world, with families linking their picture to their country of origin, celebrates the diversity and highlights the range of different nationalities accessing the centre. One user commented, 'Interaction with other parents is extremely helpful.' It has been successful in integrating different communities through understanding their specific needs such as supplying Halal jelly during Messy Play sessions. It has also seen great success in including fathers in their children's development through monthly Saturday sessions that have seen numbers rise significantly. Fathers are also given guidance in how to play effectively with their children and how to enhance their development through Learning Journeys. While the centre does much to make information accessible to those who speak English as an additional language, it recognises that much of the information on display and the Learning Journeys are in English.

The centre meets all its statutory safeguarding duties and all the appropriate Criminal Records Bureau checks are carried out effectively. Staff (including volunteers) are clear about child protection procedures and are well trained. The centre manager has also been trained in mental health first aid. Staff are quick to identify any concerns in relation to users' safety, for example if there are signs of domestic abuse, and to put in appropriate levels of support. Where necessary a CAF will be instigated and led by the centre and the strong partnerships that are in place have shown that these instruments are effective in supporting and improving the lives of users. The locality's

emphasis on multi-agency working has meant that the centre has close working relationships with other agencies including health visitors and social services, to the benefit of users. Work with other partners such as the adjacent ASD unit means that more specialised expertise can be called upon in specific cases such as to support users with children with special educational needs, disabilities or behaviour problems.

Those who use the centre are unanimous in feeling that they are listened to and have a voice in shaping services. They can give these views formally through locality surveys and through representation on the advisory board. However, the centre does not yet have a means of collecting the views of children.

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>2</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>2</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>2</b>

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

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Hillbrook Centre for Children and Families on 11 and 12 May 2011. We judged your centre as good overall.

During our visit we looked at your centre's plans for development and numerous other documents. We spoke to a wide range of partners working with the centre as well as all the staff, members of the Advisory Board and representatives from the local authority. We also visited all of the activities taking place during the inspection and spoke to a range of users of the centre.

Thank you for your participation in the inspection. Those of you we spoke to were unanimous in your praise for all the centre staff have done for you and your children. Many of you told us directly how the centre had given you confidence and in some instances changed your lives considerably for the better. The centre listens to your views very well, for example through the weekly parents' group and through your representation on the advisory board. The centre is particularly safe and secure but still very welcoming so that everyone feels at home when they are there, whatever their culture. In some ways, however, the centre is a victim of its own success as there are occasions when the activities are full and so some are disappointed that they cannot access more. We have asked the centre to look at ways of reworking the timetable and perhaps using more of the school facilities to ensure that as many activities and sessions can be run so that even more of you can benefit from the high quality resources and staff.

The centre is well run and managed and the advisory board, although still fairly new, is becoming increasingly involved in shaping what goes on in the centre. However, there is not yet enough involvement in the centre's development plan and especially in setting targets that are measurable and more specific. In order to do this we have asked the centre to collect more specific data and to 'drill down' into the local data that is available so that there is more specific information available by which to judge the centre's impact. Where that information is currently available, it is evident that the centre has already had a considerable impact on outcomes for users. This is especially so for children because of the focus on developing their Early Years Foundation Stage skills and in helping parents and carers to understand how to help their children learn and behave. The centre has also been successful in encouraging specific groups to attend, such as fathers and those from the Somali and Urdu speaking communities. As a result, because language and other skills have improved there have been some notable achievements and improvements in some of your lives.

Overall, the centre has made good progress in the relatively short time it has been fully operational and with a strong committed staff, who are well aware of the centre's strengths and areas for development, the centre is well placed to continue to improve.

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