

Inspection report for Dulwich Wood Nursery School and Children's Centre

Local authority	Southwark
Inspection number	367791
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Reporting inspector	Joan Lindsay

Centre governance	Governing body of Dulwich Wood Nursery School on behalf of the local authority
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Dulwich Wood Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Dulwich Wood Nursery School and Children's Centre [EY339998]

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 registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

An inspection of the maintained nursery 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.

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

The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher (centre manager) and staff, a representative of the local authority and members of the advisory board. They also held meetings with representatives from partner agencies including health and advisory services and the childminder network coordinator. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documents, including key policies, the centre's development plan, user surveys and the centre's evaluation of its services.

Information about the centre

The centre was designated in March 2007 as a Phase One centre. It is managed by the governing body of Dulwich Wood Nursery School on behalf of the local authority. The headteacher oversees the management of both the nursery school and the centre. Other members of staff include an outreach worker, deputy head of centre and administrative support for two days per week. The centre accommodation consists of training and consultation rooms, a crèche room with an outdoor area, office facilities and a contact suite.

The centre is situated in a pocket of deprivation where according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation in 2008, 28.5% of dependent children were living in poverty. In the immediate area of the centre is a less densely populated area of owner-occupied

housing. One third of the users are from housing with two parents in relatively stable employment with 27% of children under five living in a workless household. The total figure for families on benefits is not currently available. Two thirds of children in the reach area come from local authority social housing or from isolated tower blocks. Twenty-five per cent of children in the nursery receive free school meals. There are 840 children under five in the reach area with approximately 300 registered with the centre. The number of under-fives has increased by 20% in the last four years. The population is 45% White/White British heritage, 35% Black/Black British, 11% mixed heritage and 9% Asian/Asian British. Fifteen languages are spoken as an additional language to English by users of the centre and 30% of children speak English as an additional language. The rate of childhood obesity is high in the reach area at 17.6% compared to 10% nationally. Children's skill, knowledge and understanding on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are below that expected for their age with 30% requiring speech and language therapy. A total of 76.5% of the children in the area reach the expected level at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the percentage gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the average is 23.5%.

The centre works in partnership with other agencies to prioritise the services it offers users, specifically in Early Years development, parenting skills and in tackling under-five obesity. The centre is open 48 weeks per year.

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

Dulwich Wood Children's Centre is providing a good service. In the four years since it has been established, it has had a strong, positive impact on many of the users due to the commitment of the headteacher and all who work there. One user reflected the views of many when she stated 'The staff put 110% into delivering the services.' Staff have assessed the needs of specific groups and individuals extremely well so that well-targeted support can be delivered to the most vulnerable such as those with mental health issues. Outstanding levels of care, guidance and support and excellent partnership work with a wide range of services have led to demonstrable benefits for many users. The centre was described as being a 'lifesaver' by one user, a view shared by many. Another stated 'I'm so grateful it is here.' As a result, children develop very positive relationships, parents are more confident in their ability to care for and educate their children, and also to contribute to the centre and be involved in its development. There has been a positive impact on children's Early Years development in relation to their literacy and personal development. Many users spoke of how the centre had given them confidence to read with their children. However, the gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the average has not narrowed because there are still pockets of the community not availing themselves of the services. This is an aspect the centre is aware of and is focusing on.

The centre is highly inclusive, reflecting a strong commitment to equality and diversity, and those who use it feel welcomed and have a high level of confidence in the staff. 'Such a warm welcome' was a common description of the centre. The activities are obviously enjoyed by all the participants. Adults and children feel safe there, as seen by the way children happily part from parents in the crèche. Safeguarding procedures are good, and staff are alert to any concerns and are effective in involving other agencies when necessary to safeguard children. The centre is aware of the need to extend the good work it does to other, hard-to-reach groups in the community who do not, as yet, benefit from the services on offer. Some of the information available to the centre to enable it to identify those groups is relatively new and consequently the centre's development plan is not yet making enough use of this data to set targets that are specific and measurable. In addition, the children's centre development plan is combined with that of the nursery school, which limits the scope for the advisory board to be involved in the setting of challenging targets.

The impact of the work the centre has done so far is positive in many areas. There is a strong commitment to continue to improve with a clear recognition of strengths and weaknesses based on robust and accurate self-evaluation. This, combined with good governance, means that there is good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Narrow the achievement gap by making better use of the data that is now available to target the hard-to-reach groups.
- Improve the centre's development plan so that targets are more specific and measurable by
 - capturing more detailed information about the users so that the impact can be measured in more aspects
 - increasing the involvement of the advisory board in the setting of targets that are specific to the children's centre.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

The centre has a strong focus on healthy eating as it is aware of the high levels of childhood obesity in the reach area. There is always fresh fruit available at activities and meetings, and courses have been held to help users understand how to eat healthily on a budget. Health professionals have been involved in giving support and guidance with breastfeeding and weaning as the latter is seen as a key area in childhood obesity. The centre has had a discernible impact on this aspect with a drop of almost 8% in under-fives who are obese. However, staff are aware that with more training this figure could be improved even further. Immunisation rates in the reach area are above that for England and the borough. The emotional health of users has been a strong focus and the centre has been highly effective improving the lives of those with mental health problems. Activities such as Little Kickers and pilates as well as Get Walking sessions have had positive outcomes on physical fitness. The centre does not have information on smoking rates of users and, as yet, this is not a target group.

Adults and children feel safe and secure in the centre not only because of the good physical arrangements for entry but also because of the warm, welcoming staff. This encourages those who may be reluctant to come to the centre to return. The centre has run several paediatric first aid courses for parents and they say this has given them confidence in caring for their children. The reach area has a low rate of emergency hospital admissions for children. The centre staff are adept at recognising signs of domestic abuse and/or child protection concerns. It has been instrumental in instigating and managing multi-agency support through Common Assessment Framework meetings and child protection plans, improving the safety of children as a result. Centre staff were described by one partner agency as being 'passionate about the work they do' in this field.

Children and adults show high levels of enjoyment of the activity sessions. At a Bumps and Babes session, children and babies were encouraged to play with a wide range of kitchen utensils, developing their inquisitive skills as a result. The childminder drop-in session was used as a valuable time to discuss mutual concerns/problems and for the children to develop their personal, social and emotional skills in a safe and secure environment. As a result of the high levels of enjoyment, parents report that their children settle quickly when they join the nursery school, which has a positive impact on their progress there. Adults who

attend the courses designed to help them develop key skills such as literacy and information technology skills state that their confidence levels are much enhanced and this has had a positive impact on their self-esteem.

The very high number of users who wanted to make a contribution to the inspection is indicative of the outstanding positive contribution the centre encourages. They feel wholly involved in the decision making and their views are taken into account. For example, the time of the fortnightly Time Out with Dad sessions was adjusted and the content was planned after consultation with the users. The advisory board has a high proportion of users as members and they feel their contribution is valued. There are high levels of mutual respect amongst those who use the centre and many praised the way the staff have made the centre part of the community, which, because of its geographic location, can feel somewhat isolated.

With a strong focus on Early Years development in the centre, children are making good progress in enhancing their skills for the future. This is especially the case in relation to the high numbers who have speech and language problems. Users welcome how quickly and smoothly referrals can be made to specialists, which has had a positive impact on their children's communication skills. Adult training is highly effective in developing literacy and English language skills through excellent partnerships. Consequently, users are given confidence and skills which, in some cases has led to further education and employment. However, the centre is not regularly supported by Jobcentre Plus despite its efforts to establish a strong partnership.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

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, and 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	2
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 and employment	2

How good is the provision?

2

Those who use the centre are extremely well known to staff and their needs are assessed very sensitively. This ensures that highly individual, well-tailored services are deployed to give them support. The centre facilitates counselling sessions held on the premises to help with diverse problems such as mental health issues,

domestic abuse, speech and language therapy, legal advice for housing and/or benefits problems. 'This is something the centre does very well' was the view of one agency representative. Users are supported in their return to work with help in applying for jobs and increasing their skills. All of this has led to demonstrable improvement for those who use the centre in many aspects of the lives of themselves and their children.

Purposeful learning and development are at the heart of the centre's rationale. Many activities are focused around the Early Years Foundation Stage and improving parenting skills. Children have benefited particularly in their literacy skills with many families attending Bookstart sessions, and Stay and Play sessions also help parents understand how to interact with their children. A parent reflected the views of many with the comment 'My child is different now, not angry. Dulwich Wood has given me a bond with him.' The centre is aware that the skills of the Early Years practitioners in the nursery school could be used to even greater effect in some sessions. Children's and adults' personal development is improved greatly through contact with the centre and as a result of the celebration of personal achievement. Adults benefit from a wide range of courses that are educational and/or social such as pilates. These have led to many achieving beyond their own expectations and the forming of new friendships and support networks.

The range of services offered is good and meets the needs of those who use the centre well. However, staff are aware that there are still some pockets of the community who are not yet accessing the centre despite the high-quality outreach work. This is because some of the information about the make-up of the reach area is not specific or recent enough to clarify the main groups not yet using the resources.

The quality of the care, guidance and support offered by the centre is outstanding because of the highly effective and personalised outreach work and extremely productive partnerships. For example, dieticians will work with speech and language therapists and health visitors in delivering some programmes. A strong, proactive approach to identifying problems, often reacting at times of crisis, for example in relation to housing or immigration problems, means that staff have built up high levels of trust and respect from those they come into contact with. Many users gave examples of where staff had gone 'far and beyond' what was expected to enable them to come to the centre because they were very aware of, and sensitive to, their particular needs. There is much sharing of information between integrated services such as the health professionals and other agencies, including those providing specific support for domestic abuse victims. This results in improvements in many aspects of the lives of those who use the centre. 'I was completely lost' was how one user described her situation before the support of the centre. These are the grades for quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning,	2

development and enjoyment for all users	
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 day-to-day management of the centre, under the calm and highly effective headteacher, is excellent. Staff are enthusiastic, have high expectations of themselves and others, and clearly enjoy their work, gaining satisfaction from the difference they are making to the lives of many who use the centre. The local authority is instrumental in ensuring there is support and challenge through regular monitoring of the provision and through the Annual Review. There are clear governance arrangements and the advisory board (which is a committee within the nursery school's governing body) has representatives from most of the partner agencies, as well as high levels from parents and other users. There is a strong commitment and sense of cohesion from board members to continue to improve the integrated services offered.

Accurate self-evaluation has led to the correct identification of priorities such as in narrowing the achievement gap. However, the advisory board is only beginning to become involved in the development planning of the centre and in using data to enable more challenging, specific and measurable targets to be set.

The attractive purpose-built centre is resourced to a very high standard. This has a positive impact on outcomes, not least because users appreciate the quality of the resources, including the outdoor facilities that are especially beneficial to those living in flats. The centre gives good value for money as it has been successful in engaging specific members of the community such as fathers and male carers and in supporting many vulnerable individuals. However, it is aware that it now needs to enable even more users to benefit from the staff expertise and high-quality resources available.

The centre is highly inclusive and promotes equality and diversity very well through celebrations such as International Women's Day and Divali. All are made to feel welcome and the staff are excellent role models so that everyone who uses the centre shows a high level of respect for others. Timings of sessions and an awareness of the needs of specific groups, such as disabled adults and children, those who work, and fathers, are taken into account to enable them to access the activities and support. The centre has put in strategies such as a crèche facility to work towards narrowing the achievement gap by making courses more accessible. The building is fully accessible to those with disabilities and the centre meets its statutory duties in this aspect as it does in relation to safeguarding.

All the appropriate Criminal Records Bureau checks are carried out. Staff are clear about child protection procedures and are well trained. They are quick to identify any

concerns about users' safety, for example if there are signs of domestic abuse, and to put in appropriate levels of support. Where necessary, multi-agency meetings will be convened and the resultant plans, executed through excellent partnerships that are in place, have been effective in supporting and improving the lives of users.

The locality's emphasis on multi-agency working means that the centre has extremely close relationships with groups such as childminders, health visitors, and speech and language therapists. These highly cohesive partnerships and the cross-referrals that result have been very beneficial to users, especially those who are most vulnerable.

Those who use the centre are unanimous in feeling that they are listened to and have a voice in shaping services. A recent survey showed that 97% of users thought the services delivered by the centre were excellent/good. They have regular opportunities to give their views through formal surveys and also informal feedback after various courses and activities. In addition, there is high user representation on the advisory board. Although the centre does canvass the views of children, it does not have a formal method to do so.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
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	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	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	2

Any other information used to inform the judgements made

during this inspection

The inspection of the registered early years/childcare provision took place on 6 June 2011 and the inspection of the maintained nursery on 8–9 June 2011. The inspection team was aware of the provisional judgements for both of those inspections at the time of the inspection of the children's centre.

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 Dulwich Wood Nursery School and Children's Centre on 9–10 June 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 partner agencies working with the centre as well as staff, members of the advisory board and a representative of the local authority. We also visited all of the centre activities taking place during the inspection and spoke to a substantial number 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. Several spoke of the dedication of the staff who give '110%' and will go beyond what is expected of them to ensure help for specific problems is offered. Many of you told us directly how the centre had given you confidence in various aspects of your life and in some instances had been a 'lifesaver' and changed your lives considerably for the better. The support the centre has given in helping your children learn and develop has also been positive because you are more confident in helping your children read and write. The care, guidance and support provided for you is excellent. This is because the staff know everyone so well and therefore can target support and call upon the excellent, effective partners to give specialist help. As a result, relationships are very positive and this helps towards the good outcomes that are achieved by the centre. The centre listens to your views very well and you are well represented on the advisory board.

The centre is well run and managed and the advisory board is becoming increasingly involved in shaping what goes on in the centre. However, there is not yet enough involvement in the development plan, and especially in setting targets that are measurable and specific to the children's centre. In order to do this, we have asked the children's centre to make more effective use of the data that are now available to target the groups that are not yet accessing the good range of services on offer. In addition, we have asked that the centre focuses on narrowing the achievement gap

by using this information to improve outcomes even more for some groups of children.

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

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