

# Inspection report for Muschamp Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	London Borough of Sutton
<b>Inspection number</b>	365819
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29–30 June 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joan Lindsay

<b>Centre governance</b>	Governing body of Muschamp Primary School on behalf of the local authority
<b>Centre leader</b>	Heidi Westley
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Muschamp Primary School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Not Applicable

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 web-site: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

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

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager and staff, a representative from the local authority and a member of the extended schools committee. They also held meetings or had telephone contact with partner agencies, including the health services, parents and other users of the centre.

They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documents, including key policies, the centre's action 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 March 2008 as a phase two centre, located on the site of Muschamp Primary School. It is managed by the extended schools committee of the school's governing body on behalf of the local authority. Members of staff include a head of centre, centre manager, early years practitioner, an administrator, a bursar and a site manager. The centre is situated in the Northern Wards area of the local authority of Sutton, although many of the attending families come from a neighbouring locality. The reach area is very mixed with regard to social, economic and ethnic background. Over half of the locality is within the top 20% most deprived in England and 4% of the working age population are unemployed. In 2010, 20.4% of children aged 0-4 lived in workless households and 20.4% of eligible families benefited from the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. The ethnic mix is largely White, including British, Polish, Portuguese and Russian. A large number of families are of Indian and Asian heritage, and there are also some Black African and Black Caribbean families. There are 766 children under five in the reach area, of whom just under half are registered with the centre. Children's attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage is below that expected for their age.

The centre is open on weekdays for 48 weeks of the year. It offers play and learning activities for parents and children, as well as parenting skills courses. Ante- and post-natal clinics as well as baby weighing sessions are held there. It does not offer day care or adult learning.

### Overall effectiveness

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

**3**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**3**

## Main findings

Muschamp Children's Centre is providing a satisfactory service. It has had a good impact on many of those who use the centre, especially in relation to early childhood development and in providing support in times of need. One user summed up the views of many by stating, 'The staff are lovely, they really care and you can call them any time.' The strong, well-planned focus on early years development helps children to achieve positive relationships, evident in all the activities seen during the inspection. Parents also feel more confident in how to manage and educate their children because of the non-judgemental guidance they are given. As a result, there has been a positive impact on the levels children reach at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, this good work does not yet extend to all sections of the community, and too few lone parents, disabled children and workless households are currently benefiting from the centre's services. In addition, the level of support given to users to access training and employment is limited.

There is a good emphasis on healthy lifestyles and the centre has been especially successful in contributing to the reduction of childhood obesity levels, which are below the national average in the reach area. There is also a strong focus on keeping users safe, not only when in the centre through having safeguarding as a high priority, but also through the proactive work done with other agencies when there are causes for concern. Staff are fully involved in Common Assessment Framework plans and well trained in their use. This has had a positive outcome for many individuals. Centre staff know those who use the centre very well and assess their needs accurately, enabling tailored support packages to be put in place. As a result, the centre provides good levels of care, guidance and support. Users have a lot of confidence in centre staff and feel welcomed there as the centre is highly inclusive and diversity is celebrated well. 'They treat you as a person so I really feel part of it,' was a common view expressed during the inspection.

The day-to-day management of the centre is good and the administrative staff are instrumental in this as well as in making everyone feel welcome. However, the governing body is not yet fully involved in development planning and in challenging the centre, as the extended schools committee is newly formed. As a result, although managers have a clear understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for development, the action plan does not set targets that are specific or measurable. In addition, although users are frequently consulted informally and their views are used to shape the services, there is no parents' forum at present and there is a low level of user representation on the extended schools committee.

The impact of the centre's work is good in some aspects, notably in the development of children's knowledge and skills, but the centre recognises that there are some sections of the community it is still not reaching. There is a strong commitment to continue to improve, based on accurate self-evaluation and a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses. This, combined with the active involvement of the local authority, means that there is a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the percentage of those in the reach area who use the centre by:
  - developing a more systematic outreach programme, delivered by centre staff, to target the hard-to-reach groups such as lone parents, disabled children and those in workless households
  - developing links with agencies such as Jobcentre Plus to extend the work the centre does to help more users return to work.
- Improve the centre's development plan so that targets are measurable, specific and challenging by:
  - strengthening the involvement of the extended schools committee in the centre's self-evaluation and the setting of targets
  - using the data that is available to measure the centre's impact, for example in helping users return to work.
- Involve more users in the strategic management and governance of the centre so that their views are fully taken into account by:
  - setting up a parents' forum
  - ensuring users are more involved in the extended schools committee.

## How good are outcomes for users?

<b>3</b>
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The centre has a good focus on being healthy, promoting healthy eating through cooking courses such as 'Big Cook, Little Cook' and providing healthy snacks at activities. As a result, there has been a significant drop in the number of under-fives who are obese in the reach area. Breastfeeding rates, though still relatively low, are improving as a result of guidance given during centre activities such as the breastfeeding drop-in session. The emotional health of users has been a strong focus and the centre is quick to recognise where there may be mental health issues, such as post-natal depression. The help and support that have been put in place have been effective in improving the lives of users. The centre does not yet have specific information about the number of smokers or the immunisation rates in the reach area as this information is only available borough-wide. Therefore its impact in these aspects is difficult to measure, although smoking cessation advice and guidance on childhood vaccinations are available at the centre.

All those who use the centre feel safe and secure, not only because of the physical site security but also because they know staff have their well-being at the core of what they do. This encourages some who may be reluctant to attend to come into the centre. Children behave very well because of the subtle guidance given by staff to parents. Staff are adept at recognising signs of domestic abuse and child protection concerns. They are proactive in instigating and managing Common Assessment Framework plans and in participating in multi-agency meetings for child protection plans. This has led to improvements in children's safety. Domestic violence

workshops and 'Taming the Temper Dragon' sessions have been effective in supporting and empowering victims and children.

Children and adults who use the centre show high levels of enjoyment in the very popular activities such as 'Mini Movers' and 'Messy Play'. Centre staff who have high levels of expertise in early learning help parents to become actively involved in their children's development. This is enhanced by courses run locally to which users are signposted, such as the 'Incredible Years Parenting Programme'. In addition, specialist knowledge from the link school's Language Opportunity Base helps those with specific speech and language needs. Consequently the number of children who are reaching age-expected levels at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage in the reach area is improving and the gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest is narrowing and is better than the national average. One parent's view reflected many when she said, 'I'm amazed at what my child is capable of' after attending sessions in the centre.

Users feel confident that their views are listened to and that there have been changes to some of the services and activities as result. However, their more formal contribution to governance and decision-making, and in taking voluntary roles, is limited at present. This is something of which the centre is aware and is trying to develop but users have been reluctant to become more involved, for example through parents' forum meetings. There are high levels of respect amongst users of the centre, modelled well by the staff, and users relate well to each other.

Children are making good progress in enhancing their skills for the future because of the strong emphasis on their learning and development. They become confident and independent, and anecdotal evidence shows that they settle quickly when they move on to nursery. This was explained by a parent who said, 'She used to hang on to my leg if I tried to leave her but now she goes off quite happily.' However, the centre has had only limited success so far in helping adults access training and development to improve their own education. This is partly due to the small size of the centre and the amount of time staff have to devote to this aspect, coupled with only limited involvement of Jobcentre Plus, despite the best efforts of the centre and local authority. Nevertheless, when users are directed elsewhere for courses, the outcomes are not always evaluated. The centre is not having sufficient impact on helping adults return to work and the percentage of workless users being reached has not met the borough target.

<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>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop</b>	<b>3</b>

<b>positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</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>3</b>

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

**3**

Those who use the centre are known very well by staff, who are adept at assessing their individual needs. This ensures that individual well-tailored support is put in place, made possible by some strong partnerships, for example with the Early Intervention Prevention service and health workers. This has been especially beneficial where there have been causes of concern about a child's welfare and the centre has been involved in multi-agency working. As a result, the well-being of adults and children who use the centre has been enhanced. The centre managers have clearly identified those groups within the reach area whose needs are not yet being met well enough.

Most of the centre's activities are focused around the early years and improving parenting skills. Staff plan effectively across the six areas of learning and the introduction of children's 'learning journey' records, although at an early stage, is beginning to involve parents more in their children's development. Adults are much more confident in how they deal with their children's behaviour. Children's achievements are celebrated well but those of adults, especially where they have participated in external courses, are not yet recorded. In addition, the centre is aware that it is not having enough impact on promoting the learning and development of adults in the reach area to enable them to progress to further training or employment.

The range of services meets the needs of those who use the centre well and participation rates are high. Some groups, such as teenage mothers, have their needs met well as the centre hosts the local antenatal clinic for mothers under 20 years old. However, the centre's target groups of lone parents, workless households and disabled children are still under-represented. This is partly because there has not been a programme of outreach work delivered directly by the centre but also because there is a reliance on other children's centres in the area to deliver additional services, such as at those held at the weekend.

Users benefit from high levels of care, guidance and support that are enhanced by productive partnerships with some agencies. This is particularly so in relation to children in need cases, as there is much sharing of information between integrated services, such as the Early Intervention Prevention team, that leads to targeted support. Guidance is often delivered in a gentle manner so that users do not feel that they are being 'preached to' and this approach is much appreciated by them. 'They have been so helpful and kind and considerate' was a common view expressed during the inspection. This means that high levels of trust have been built up. Case



studies and anecdotal evidence show that this work results in significant improvements in the lives of some users, especially in relation to securing nursery placements for two-year olds and helping some parents manage the complex needs of their children.

<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>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</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?**

**3**

The head of centre and the centre manager are also headteacher and assistant headteacher respectively of the link primary school and therefore their time is inevitably stretched. Nevertheless, day-to-day management of the centre is good because all the children's centre staff are competent and skilled in their roles and are enthusiastic, with high expectations of themselves and others. The centre users also benefit from the expertise of staff, especially those with good knowledge of Early Years Foundation Stage provision. The local authority monitors the work of the centre effectively and is supportive. However, governance is not yet well established as the extended schools committee is not fully up and running. Most of the relevant partners are represented on this committee and they are supportive, but they are still at an early stage of understanding their role in relation to monitoring and self-evaluation. Consequently the extended schools committee plays a limited role in formulating the centre's development plan, which does not set sufficiently challenging targets to drive the centre's improvement. In addition, too few users are involved in determining the centre's strategic direction.

The purpose-built centre is bright and welcoming and the resources are of a high quality and much appreciated by users. Resources are used effectively to meet the needs of those who use the centre but as there are still some sections of the reach area not accessing these resources, it gives satisfactory value for money. Children benefit from a safe and attractive garden area that increases their independent skills as well as having health benefits. All are made to feel welcome in this inclusive centre, which one user described as being 'like a family', and it is notable that those who attend mix well together, regardless of ethnicity or background. Although few in the reach area speak English as an additional language, leaflets and translators are provided where this is required. However, at present there are no regular activities at weekends as the centre signposts elsewhere for those sessions. As a result, it is difficult for those who work and for some fathers to make use of this centre's facilities and services.

The building is fully accessible to those with disabilities and the centre meets its statutory requirements in this regard, as it does in relation to safeguarding. All the appropriate Criminal Record Bureau checks are carried out and the relevant assurances given by partner agencies. Staff are well trained in child protection procedures and quick to highlight any concerns. Where necessary, staff convene and attend multi-agency meetings. The resultant support, because of effective partnership working with specific agencies, has been instrumental in changing the lives of users. The most effective partnerships have been with the health agencies, the Early Intervention Prevention team, Family Information Services and the voluntary organisation, Homestart. These have brought tangible benefits to those who use the centre, especially in relation to improving the lives of children. Less effective have been the partnerships with agencies to support users in training and returning to work.

There are high levels of satisfaction from those who use the centre and they are confident that their views are listened to. After each session, participants complete a comments' book and staff evaluate all the activities and sessions. This information is used to shape services. Annual local authority surveys and those carried out by the centre itself show users are generally happy with what is offered. Some groups in the wider community are not sufficiently engaged with the centre's services.

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>3</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>3</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>3</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>3</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>3</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>3</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>3</b>

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

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Muschamp Children's Centre on 29–30 June 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory 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, a member of the extended schools committee 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 very positive about all the centre does for you and your children. All of you commented about how friendly and welcoming the staff are and how you feel you can talk to them. 'I think the staff are brilliant' was a view voiced by many of you. The support given to you in helping your children learn and develop has been especially effective. However, the centre has had only limited success in helping adults to gain qualifications or return to work. In part, this is due to constraints on staff time but also a lack of specialist support. In addition, whilst those of you who use the centre benefit from what is on offer, there are still groups in the community who do not use it. This is because the outreach work from the centre is not yet done systematically and the information about different groups, such as lone parents, children with disabilities and those out of work, has not been used effectively enough to encourage more of them to come to the centre. We have asked the managers to improve these aspects.

The centre works well with midwives, health visitors and voluntary groups such as Homestart. This has led to many of you getting good levels of care, guidance and support. Because you have confidence in the staff at the centre, the outcomes have been good in relation to improving the lives of your children. One of you said, 'I know I can come here for all the advice I will need', and many of you agreed. The centre listens to your views well and uses them to improve its services, but not enough of you are involved on a more formal basis. For example, there is no parents' forum and few of you sit on the extended schools committee so you are not involved enough in the governance of the centre. This committee is relatively new and has not yet developed its role in setting targets for the centre that are challenging and evaluating its impact. We have asked the centre to make improvements here too.

The day-to-day management of the centre is good as staff are all enthusiastic and committed to improvement. They are well aware of the centre's strengths and weaknesses and have had a positive impact in some areas. As a result, the centre is satisfactorily 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).