

Inspection report for Sunnyhill Primary School and Children's Centre

Local authority	Lambeth
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Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school if applicable	Sunnyhill Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Sunnyhill 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.

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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 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.

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

The inspectors held meetings with senior managers from the centre, frontline staff, parents, several partners, members of the advisory board and a representative of the local authority linked to the centres.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

This is a phase one centre established in September 2006 as part of a local Sure Start programme and is managed by Sunnyhill Primary School on behalf of Lambeth local authority. It was operating from a Portakabin on the school site for three years and moved to its purpose-built building in 2009. The centre's advisory board includes parents, partners (voluntary sector and Primary Care Trust), the local authority and a member of the governing body of the co-located primary school. The centre provides the full core offer, including day care, family support, child and family health services and employment advice.

The centre is situated in the South West of the London Borough of Lambeth, serving the wards of Streatham South and Streatham Wells. It serves an ethnically mixed community, the majority of which speak English as an additional language. Barriers to housing and services are a significant issue for many families living in the area. As a result, the population is more transitory than elsewhere in the borough, with many families living in council-owned temporary accommodation. The two wards are within the 20% most deprived in the country and have a high and rapidly increasing birth

rate. Unemployment rates and the number of families on benefits are higher than the national average. Childcare for children from six months to five years is delivered on site in a 25 place nursery. Children in the centre’s reach area demonstrate skills below those normally expected on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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 families

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

Sunnyhill Children’s Centre offers outstanding support to families and young children. ‘So many of the experiences we have here are truly inspirational,’ was how one user put it. This sentiment was echoed in different ways by many parents and carers spoken to by inspectors. The belief that the needs of each individual child and their family are of the highest importance underpins the high-quality care, guidance and support that the centre provides. Users are empowered to improve their individual and family circumstances and make a real difference to their lives. Outstanding partnership work provides high-quality universal, targeted and specialist programmes highly valued by users and their families. The strong and persistent focus on target groups means that equality and diversity are promoted very strongly. For example, outreach work aimed at Somali women, dads and teenage mums has been highly successful in attracting large numbers to a wide range of excellent programmes offered by the centre. Safeguarding of all users in their day-to-day lives, while in the centre, at home or working in the community, is at the heart of its work. Users appreciate the work of the centre fully. The centre is highly regarded and plays a central role within the community.

Leadership and management of the centre are outstanding and user engagement is very high and improving, particularly from target groups. Parents and carers feel that their views count and are confident that if they offer suggestions, they will be listened to. For example, they influence play activities and provision of specific health-related programmes. Parents and carers know that the centre will do its best to provide an activity or programme if it is suggested by the users. A few parents are members of the Advisory Board, who are fully supportive of the work of the centre and beginning to hold centre leaders to account. Although clearly improving, this aspect of the board’s work is not rigorous enough. The centre’s detailed and

comprehensive development plan has clear milestones and measurable targets. However, the plan does not clarify who is responsible for tracking the progress made towards meeting the identified priorities.

A very rigorous cycle of monitoring and evaluation ensures that the management team remain strongly focused on improving the quality and impact of the services and activities provided. The local authority plays a key strategic role ensuring rigour and depth to the self-evaluation undertaken by the centre. For example, key performance data is monitored and evaluated at the level of target groups, such as lone parents, teenage mums, dads, and families with disabled children as well as those in workless households. The outcomes of this process are used very skilfully by the centre to enhance and adjust the quality of provision. As a result, most outcomes, including health and children’s achievement, have improved dramatically and performance indicators are well above the local and national average, demonstrating outstanding capacity for further improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve governance by strengthening the way in which the advisory board challenges the centre and holds it to account for its work.
- Ensure that the comprehensive development plan shows clearly who is responsible for tracking the progress made towards meeting the centre’s clear and measurable targets.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

Most outcomes for families are outstanding. Rapidly improving health outcomes are the result of excellent support from health visitors and specialists from the Primary Care Trust (PCT), such as speech and language therapists. The promotion of healthy living and adopting healthy lifestyles underpins the work of the centre. As a result, children’s health checks at two and a half years old have shown considerable improvement over the past few years on a variety of health indicators. The centre works exceptionally well with other agencies to promote physical activity and healthy eating programmes. Consequently, families develop an excellent understanding of nutrition and undertake frequent exercise to reduce obesity levels and encourage healthy routines. Targeted support programmes, such as ‘Cooking on a Budget’, help families to clearly understand how to prepare healthy and nutritious meals. The very popular ‘Little Diggers’ programme has improved children’s understanding of plant growth and development. An exceptional range of courses and specialist support groups help to ensure strong emotional well-being for both children and adults.

Centre users were keen to tell inspectors how safe and secure they feel within the centre. Early identification and comprehensive preventative work have resulted in an evident decrease in the numbers of children requiring a child protection plan.

Agencies and support services work together very effectively to support families and enable parents and carers to keep their children safe and secure. The Common Assessment Framework is used exceptionally well and this results in children’s needs being consistently monitored. The very informative annual safety week programme helps parents and carers to understand safety issues within the home, for example how to protect children from the risks of fire, burns and scalding. The centre is very responsive to local intelligence about safety as evidenced by its provision of a road safety programme for the targeted group of Somali parents in the light of local data showing the over-representation of black children as victims of road accidents.

Children who attend the onsite Early Years Centre make exceptional progress in their learning. Excellent provision is made for learning both inside and outside. Assessment tracking procedures are rigorous and thorough. As a result, the centre has been highly successful in dramatically narrowing the gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and the rest in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Increasing numbers at the ‘Stay and Play’ sessions and ‘Chatter Time’ reflect how much centre users enjoy activities. The targeted family learning courses provide excellent information for parents and carers to understand how to promote children’s learning through quality play experiences. Links with training providers and effective signposting to other centres and community facilities lead to increased opportunities for parents and carers to undertake courses and develop new skills. For example, members of the well-established Somali women’s sewing group have benefited from accessing the English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision. Many have used this as a springboard to access other work-related skills and opportunities, for example in information and communication technology. Teenage mothers as an identified target group have improved their financial literacy and parenting skills as a result of the one-to-one and group sessions commissioned by the centre.

Children behave very well within the centre and there are positive relationships between all parents and carers. Centre users were keen to tell inspectors how they had made new friends and how attending activities had reduced their feelings of isolation and loneliness. There are good procedures in place to enable parents and carers to share ideas and offer suggestions to the centre for future activities. For example, the Parents Forum meets regularly and, although the level of participation fluctuates, staff respond positively to their suggestions. All centre users told inspectors how they feel listened to and their views and ideas are always acknowledged and respected. Two parents have been recruited on to the advisory board and participate with confidence. However, the centre recognises that there is more work to do in involving parents at a deeper level with decision-making.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1

The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	1
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment	2

How good is the provision?

1

The centre staff are highly skilled at identifying the needs of families and swiftly and sensitively intervening to ensure they receive the personalised support they need to improve their outcomes. For example, the outreach worker has been actively engaging families who frequent the local drop-in centre for refugees and asylum seekers, with impressive results. All partners take an active role in promoting high-quality, integrated provision which is responsive to local needs. Provision is based on thorough analysis of need, using effective consultation and evaluation processes. This ensures the range of services and activities, including outreach services, meet the needs of users well. Targeted groups, such as young mums, dads, lone parents and Somali women, are particularly well catered for through a successful blend of universal and targeted provision. As a result, participation and attendance rates are high and users are highly representative of the community that the centre serves.

Outstanding early years provision enables children to learn and develop across all areas of learning through high-quality activities and resources that interest and engage them. The adventurous outdoor area in particular provides a very stimulating learning environment for all children. The use of high-quality facilitators to deliver the excellent range of courses on offer results in powerful learning experiences for parents and carers. For example, a group of parents whose children experience social and communication difficulties really enjoyed a highly interactive session about coping strategies delivered by facilitators from the Primary Care Trust. The centre's skilful use of universal, targeted and specialist services results in provision that meets the needs of all its targeted groups very effectively.

The environment is very warm and inviting. Staff and partners at all levels are friendly and extremely welcoming and the centre places great importance on encouraging the community to access the centre and services. Centre staff provide highly effective personalised support for families in crisis, offering exceptional levels of care and guidance. As a result, user engagement is high for the range of activities provided by the centre for targeted groups. Indeed, parents stated that it felt like a very long wait when the centre was closed for two weeks during late summer.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

The centre staff are highly motivated, bubbling with energy and enthusiasm. High expectations are shared by all staff and a very strong 'can do' culture permeates the organisation. The centre manager is highly respected by professionals and parents and carers across the community, and is a strong and effective leader. Regular meetings with staff have helped to identify the key strengths and weaknesses of the centre's services. Teamwork amongst staff is very good and contributes well to the positive ethos and highly welcoming environment in the centre. Self-evaluation is detailed and thorough, making a strong contribution to the centre's outstanding provision and outcomes.

Local authority supervision is excellent and acts as a key driver for improvement. In addition, the advisory board works effectively with centre leaders, providing clear strategic direction. Using the excellent data available at target group level to challenge the centre leadership is currently a less well developed aspect of the board's work. Partnerships are pivotal to the centre's excellent work. All partners spoken to were unanimous in their appreciation of the services and support they could access at the centre. Several partners, for example High Trees and St Michaels Fellowship, said that the centre was very accommodating and had provided facilities, including a well-resourced crèche, for the facilitators to deliver their targeted and specialist services. The work with the health and social work teams are extremely effective. Together, they provide a thorough 'team around the child' approach to ensure that the most vulnerable children and families are protected and cared for.

The centre's comprehensive range of policies and procedures are embedded well and applied routinely. The centre promotes equality and celebrates diversity extremely well, for example through resources and information which reflect different faiths, cultures and backgrounds. In addition, the use of data is highly sophisticated, resulting in a deeper level of user engagement, especially in the case of targeted groups. Very careful consideration has been given to the design of the centre so that all users can gain full access. Safeguarding users is of the highest priority at the centre and keeping children and families safe is at the forefront of their work. The centre is a very secure environment to visit because a wide range of safety measures are in place. For example, recruitment checks are thorough and staff are very well trained in child protection. In addition, detailed risk assessments for all activities are regularly reviewed and updated.

The very well-targeted provision for lone parents, teenage mums, dads, and families with disabled children means that the centre provides excellent value for money. The centre is particularly creative in the way it uses resources to ensure that some of the families whose circumstances make them more vulnerable can take part in and enjoy the services the centre has to offer.

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 effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	1
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	1

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

Sunnyhill Primary School and Children's Centre has registered early years provision for 25 children on its premises and managed by the centre. Information from its most recent inspection (December 2010) has been taken into account when writing about early years provision and outcomes for children in the report.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Sunnyhill Primary School and Children's Centre on 14–15 September 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

Thank you for your help and contribution to the inspection. Those of you we spoke to told us how grateful you were for the support you had received from the centre and the difference it had made to your lives. We read your comments in the many evaluations about the courses you have attended and services that you use. We agree that Sunnyhill provides you with high quality care, guidance and support because the needs of each individual child and their family are of the highest importance. Family support and the centre's links with many other agencies give you the knowledge and skills to overcome difficulties you are experiencing. The health services are outstanding, and courses, such as 'Cooking on a Budget', 'Little Diggers' and 'Mini Chefs', really help your children to achieve well and be healthy. The centre is particularly good in using the excellent data it has to target support very precisely. For example, teenage mothers, dads, and Somali women have really benefited from the well-targeted specialist provision, such as the highly successful Somali women's sewing group. In addition, the centre does a very good job in enabling you to develop ways that help you to improve your parenting skills, ensure your children live healthy lives, or return to employment. It takes great care to ensure that you and your children are safeguarded and that the centre is a safe place to be.

The senior staff, together with the local authority, lead and manage the centre really well. They listen to your views carefully to ensure that the provision meets your needs and that everyone is fully included. They know what the centre needs to do to improve and are keen to help your representatives on the advisory board carry out their roles as well as they can. Although the advisory board helps the centre to set clear strategic direction, it does not currently challenge the centre's leadership and hold it to account rigorously enough. The centre has a detailed and very comprehensive development plan with clear targets and milestones to evaluate progress. However, it is not clear from the plan who is responsible for evaluating the centre's progress against each stated priority. A very strong team spirit prevails throughout the centre and the highly motivated staff work harmoniously together.

The centre values its partnership with you fully and respects your ideas. For example, centre leaders regularly review the outcomes of your evaluations of all the programmes and activities and adjust provision in the light of what the data is telling them. The inspection of the Early Years setting in December 2010 judged it to be good and found that it gives children a solid start to their lives and learning. We have found that the achievement gap has continued to close sharply and children's achievement is outstanding. Excellent partnerships with the Primary Care Trust and organisations, such as High Trees and St Michael's Fellowship, continue to have a dramatic positive impact on the lives of users. As one parent rightly remarked, 'Some of the staff here are inspirational and the services provided are really amazing. Many of us were disappointed when the centre closed for two weeks in August.'

Thank you to everyone who took the time to come and speak to us, we are very grateful and we wish you every success for the future.

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