

# Inspection report for Queen's Park Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Westminster City Council
<b>Inspection number</b>	383713
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 September 2011
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<b>Centre leader</b>	Katherine Harwood
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Dorothy Gardner Centre
<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.

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the leadership team, delivery group members, local authority representatives, outreach workers, health, employment and training professionals and frontline staff. They met parents, observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

The centre is located in West London and serves a very disadvantaged community. Child poverty is very significant with over 50% of children living in households dependent on workless benefits. A high proportion of families claim additional incapacity allowances. The proportion of lone parents in the community is 3% higher than the national average. Relatively few teenage parents live in the centre's reach area. Two thirds of all families are from minority ethnic backgrounds, with the large majority speaking either Arabic or Bengali at home. Many families are at a very early stage of learning to speak English. Most children enter early education with knowledge and skills that are well below the level expected for their age.

The centre opened in 2004 as a phase one centre and is the designated hub for four other children centres as part of the council's strategy to reshape its provision across the borough. The centre is governed by a delivery group comprising service providers and parents. Strategic matters are handled by a strategy board, which is chaired by the local authority and includes local and parental representation.

The centre is open from 8.30am until 6.00pm Monday to Friday and opens on Saturdays to offer access to courses to working parents. A range of services is provided based around a core offer of integrated early learning, parenting courses, family support, health services, outreach and access to training and employment advice.

## 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**

**2**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**2**

## Main findings

The centre provides good services for young children and their families. Its ethos is warm, welcoming and harmonious, with parents identifying how safe they feel and how much they love coming. Excellent partnerships underpin the well-targeted services that effectively promote the learning, development and enjoyment of those families most in need of support within the area. 'Drop Ins' offer a daily opportunity for parents and children to learn together and have fun. One parent told inspectors, 'The children's centre is great, it has helped me through a difficult time, my child is so happy here, and is developing brilliantly through playing with others.' A Bengali-speaking father praised the centre's work, 'My daughter has really progressed here because children enjoy being with one another and staff are so caring.' Such comments typify the very high regard in which the centre is held. Parenting courses are a successful feature of the centre's work in assisting adults to be better equipped personally and economically.

Outcomes for most children and families are good and improving. Much beneficial work takes place to promote healthy lifestyles and improve personal well-being. Free 'M.O.T' health checks take place regularly for dads who told inspectors how much this has helped them and their families make changes to their diets in order to be healthier. Despite the centre's efforts to meet all local needs, data show that obesity rates are still too high. The close liaison between social, medical and educational partners assists those families in times of personal crisis very effectively, for example when violence erupts in the home.

Children make good progress in their communication, language and literacy skills as a result of well-chosen activities to promote purposeful talk. The input from speech and language specialists, for example in 'Stay and Play' sessions, helps those learning English as a new language to build confidence to 'have a go' at talking to others. As a result of the centre's early intervention strategies and partnership working, there has been a significant narrowing of the achievement gap between the lowest 20% of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the rest. Highly-effective links with the adjacent nursery school assist the children's readiness for

school and make transfer a smooth process. Parents' and carers' employability skills are improving because of the good advice and well-targeted support they receive. Data show the number of young people in the community in training or education is rising over time.

The families from many different cultural backgrounds who use the centre say they feel valued. They show high levels of trust in staff and partner agencies because of the good levels of care, guidance and support they receive. Relationships are nurturing and inclusive. The centre's work on promoting equalities is outstanding. For example, the centre has contact with 100% of children, including those with disabilities, and provides services for the majority of lone parents and workless households in the area. Safeguarding procedures are high priority with child protection arrangements well understood and carried out effectively. Families feel they have a real say in shaping services through informal conversations or by responding to regular questionnaires. The parents' forum has made a good start on getting to grips with its reformed role as part of the new management arrangements.

The leadership team is very hands-on in its approach and has a firm grasp on the needs of the community. Clear protocols to ensure joined-up working between the new well-attended parents' forum, delivery group and strategy board are embedding successfully. Data and case study evaluations provide useful details about service quality, but information about the impact of the actions taken on meeting targets is too variable. Nevertheless, the strong drive for still better effectiveness, outstanding partnerships and equalities, clear focus on meeting the needs of those most at risk, and the good-quality outcomes of the centre's work demonstrate its good capacity to improve.

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

#### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Press ahead with reducing obesity levels in the community so that the local authority's target of 10% is met or exceeded.
- Identify and share the very best practice in service evaluations that demonstrate impact, track outcomes and use this information to set precise improvement targets.

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

<b>2</b>
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There is a strong focus on diet and nutrition that is assisting families to understand better the importance of eating healthily. Adults and children respond well to the opportunities to grow vegetables and salads in the centre's garden. There are regular opportunities for parents to cook together, with themed events chosen to exchange menus and enjoy food from different countries. Very recently, parents have been given advice about what best to eat when their fast is broken during Ramadan. The centre promotes physical activity well through regular exercise classes for mums, family walks to the park and through the daily opportunities for children to use the exciting and well-resourced outdoor play space at the centre. Despite the centre's

efforts, obesity rates are increasing across both the reach area and local authority, with a quarter of children assessed as being obese by the age of eleven. The centre is keen to support the local authority's target of 10% reduction, but has not set out its strategy for tackling the problem locally.

The partnership with local health services is effective with data showing significant impact on the contacts made with young children in particular. For example, data show that 96% of babies are immunised by the age of two years. The centre is proactive in supporting new mothers who want to breastfeed their babies. The take up rate at 76% is increasing but is still slightly below the level found elsewhere in the borough.

The centre is very sensitive to the needs of vulnerable families and works effectively to keep them safe and protected. Children most at risk are very well supported with case studies showing that the vast majority of families subject to child care plans benefit from the centre's interventions. The uptake of relevant courses, such as paediatric first aid, is good. Parents recently requested advice about what to do in the event of their child choking and the centre responded immediately. The reduction of emergency admissions to hospitals is a centre priority, with road safety being a current focus in seeking to reduce the number of traffic accidents involving young children. Courses such as 'Talking Without Fear' prove successful in helping those parents in domestically violent situations to feel less isolated. Children behave well in the centre and play safely together when using the climbing frames and slides. Parents starting a new parenting course to help with managing behaviour told inspectors how helpful it was to air and share concerns and realise that others experienced similar problems.

The challenging target set by the local authority for children attaining 78 points by the end of Reception has been exceeded this year because of the centre's early interventions and highly-effective work with the local nursery. Over 40% of children now work at age-related expectations by the end of Reception compared to 27% last year. Children make good progress from their starting points and, as a result, are well prepared for school. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities enjoy achieving as well as their peers and were observed to learn very successfully at a 'Drop In' session as they sang their favourite songs and played instruments. Parents and carers benefit equally from the centre's services. Adults out of work are given practical support to help immediate problems, for example through finance and debt counselling. English as a second language courses are very well attended and are successfully helping Arabic- and Bengali-speaking parents to build their English language skills and overcome a key barrier to employment. There is good take up of courses such as National Vocational Qualifications in health and child care which are leading to employment. Through such experiences, centre users build confidence, grasp new opportunities and develop important skills for their future economic well-being.

The centre is viewed as being at the heart of its community and integral to fostering the excellent cohesion and harmony between families from different ethnic

backgrounds. A high number of parents have attended meetings to have their say in planning for the future. All community groups are represented on the Parents' Forum which has agreed its remit as part of the re-shaped management structure to oversee services across the locality.

Enhancing employability and reducing child poverty are main thrusts of the centre's work, especially for those most at risk of low outcomes in its area. Case studies demonstrate a high number of successes, for example through confidence building and skills training, curriculum vitae preparation, careers advice and volunteer placements which are helping to break the cycle of deprivation for families in workless homes and increasing the number finding employment. Well-targeted outreach work is securing the participation of an increasing number of families who may otherwise not have accessed services. Over a third of families are actively engaged in training or adult learning, reflecting good take-up rates. Purposeful partnerships, for example with 'Save the Children', extend the opportunities available. The centre has been successful in attracting major private sponsorship over the next five years to enhance the work of Jobcentre Plus staff and assist even more families get back into work. Children enjoy attending the free crèche provided for all courses, and so parents are able to concentrate on improving personal skills.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for families*

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, 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 parents, including those from target groups, 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, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment</b>	<b>2</b>

**How good is the provision?**

**2**

The centre is effective in identifying the key groups in its area who require support. New families to the area, for example those on the Mozart Estate, are quickly identified and introduced to the centre's services. Strong partnership working ensures that provision is dovetailed and, as far as possible, avoids duplication of efforts. Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes are used effectively. High-quality family relationships and outreach work result in a very secure safety net of support for children with disabilities, those whose safety is at risk as a result of

domestic violence and those who are isolated because they speak little or no English. Specific projects, such as the Bengali mum's storytelling sessions, are successful in bringing people together, enabling the sharing of cultural experiences and raising confidence and self-esteem. The 'Date with Dads' activities involve a range of opportunities to strengthen family bonds, for example when making pizza with their children. Surveys show that families are very appreciative of the centre's support and are confident that they will be given high-quality advice and guidance.

Purposeful learning and enjoyment for families, including those in most need of intervention and support, were key features in all of the observations made during the inspection. Children enjoy the well-planned opportunities to develop their communication, language and literacy skills and adults relish the experiences that let them build new skills. Individual achievements are given high status through displays which celebrate individual work; an example is the high-quality photographic self-portraits created by a group of very young mums working with the National Gallery. Plans are in hand to develop personal profiles that will record the learning journeys of centre users.

Good-quality care, guidance and support help families from different backgrounds who use the centre to feel free from harm and bullying. Staff reflect the ethnic make up of the community and are excellent role models for others. Relationships at all levels are respectful and trusting. Mums from Bengali, Turkish, Arabic and Polish backgrounds were united in their view that the centre provides a safe refuge and a happy place to be. Quarterly meetings between service partners usefully enable the sharing of information. There is a good range of information for centre users to access. However, the leadership team recognises that leaflets offering advice on smoking, alcohol and drug misuse could be given a higher profile in the centre.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>

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

**2**

There is a unity of purpose and shared vision among all stakeholders involved with the centre. A clear structure of responsibilities has been established to develop the future children's centre provision in the locality. As the hub, Queen's Park Children's Centre is at the forefront of developments. The leadership team has a wealth of experience and uses its individual expertise to good impact. High expectations are clearly communicated and reflected well in the excellent partnerships, outstanding



attention to equalities and good, and improving, outcomes. The centre clearly demonstrates good value for money.

Safeguarding arrangements are robust and ensure that all who use the centre are well protected. Health and safety matters are given close attention and risk assessments, for example when families and children go on visits, are comprehensive. The staff have received recent and appropriate training on child protection and there are dedicated trained paediatric first aiders.

The delivery group has good oversight of provision. They make sure that resources are used carefully and work effectively to ensure that the right level of support takes place at the right time. The Strategy Board has good systems for holding the centre to account. Support and challenge are used in equal measure to ensure that service delivery is both meeting needs and giving good value. Two parents sit on the centre's delivery group and strategy board. Parents from Queen's Park identify that they have a strong and cohesive voice in decision-making.

High status is placed on promoting equality of opportunity and ensuring that any form of discrimination is combated. Cultural diversity is celebrated and assists the outstanding community cohesion and personal well-being of centre users. Families and children have very high regard for the staff. They reflect the racial backgrounds of centre users and are excellent role models in the way they conduct themselves. Relationships at all levels are harmonious and underpin the strong sense of enjoyment in achieving that learners of all ages demonstrate. The decision to open on a Saturday to extend the opportunities for working fathers to 'drop in' is one example of how the centre is widening access for its community.

The centre's self-evaluation is accurate and very detailed. Partners prepare very useful case study evaluations to show what impact their service is having on target groups. A massive amount of data is collected by the leadership team to help earmark resources. Although its use is effective in ensuring that the needs of the most vulnerable are well met and outcomes are good, priority is not given to streamlining the information so that it is more manageable and becomes a sharper tool for tracking and target setting.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</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</b>	<b>1</b>

statutory duties	
<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 partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>

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

The inspection report for Dorothy Gardner Centre (URN 101105), inspected in July 2011

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Queen's Park Children's Centre on 21 and 22 September 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We are grateful to those of you who spent time chatting to us and sharing your experiences. We enjoyed spending time in the crèche and 'Drop In' and especially trying the samosas you made!

There are some outstanding features of the centre. Multi-agency partnerships are excellent and ensure that you receive good-quality services that help you and your children. Those of you who use the centre say how valued you feel as individuals. Staff promote equality of opportunities and tackle discrimination so that you experience a warm, welcoming and racially harmonious centre that you told us is, 'simply a good place to be'.

Lots of good work takes place to promote healthy lifestyles and keep families safe. However, despite the centre's efforts, child obesity rates are still too high. We have asked the centre's team to work to improve this and hope you will do your best to support them.

The centre is doing exceptionally well in helping children enjoy achieving to the full. Parenting courses are a successful part of the centre's work and help many of you to

move towards better personal and financial well-being. Your children make good progress in their communication, language and literacy skills because of the centre's good support. When the children start school, their achievement is moving very close to that of other children of the same age in Westminster. The links with the Dorothy Gardner Centre help the children who transfer there to do so really smoothly.

We found that the work to help those of you learn to speak English is very supportive. It was lovely to look at the story book the Bengali mums have produced. It was also good to see the photographic portraits of the mums who worked with the National Gallery – what an amazing experience! The opportunities and advice you receive to help you prepare to get back into work is good and the courses, such as National Vocational Qualifications in health and child care, are leading some of you into full employment.

The centre makes sure that you are well looked after when you visit. Safeguarding and child protection arrangements fully meet legal requirements. You told us that you have a real say in shaping services through chats with staff or by responding to questionnaires. We enjoyed reading your good ideas on the notice board and talking to members of the parents' forum who are very well informed about the community and keen to play a part in future developments.

The leadership team does a good job and makes sure that things move forward under the new arrangements. The delivery group and strategy board keep their finger firmly on the pulse of what is going on in the area and the quality of services being delivered. They draw on a lot of information to help them plan carefully and make checks on how well things are going. Sometimes, there is too much information to look at. We have asked the centre to streamline information, to set out exactly what information will be most useful to helping them keep track of developments and set targets for future improvement.

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