

Inspection report for Effra Early Years and Children's Centre

Local authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	383496
Inspection dates	28–29 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Nasim Butt

Centre leader	Denise King
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Effra Early Years Centre (Nursery School)
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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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 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 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

The centre was designated in March 2006 and is part of an integrated service that includes the nursery school (Effra Early Years Centre) which manages the centre on behalf of Lambeth local authority. Both school and centre share the same building. The centre's advisory board is a sub-committee of the nursery school's governing body. Its membership comprises members of the senior leadership team and a member of the governing body of the co-located school, parents, key partners, and the local authority. The centre provides the full core offer including day care, family support, child and family health services and employment advice.

The centre is situated within central Lambeth on the boundaries of Coldharbour, Tulse Hill and Herne Hill wards. This is a densely populated area of contrasting households in terms of culture, ethnicity and socio-economic status. It serves three large local authority housing estates, interspersed with streets of private owner-occupied properties. Although culturally diverse, Black Africans and Black Caribbeans comprise the majority of the population in the reach area, and families of White British backgrounds comprise a small minority. Of the children within the wards of Tulse Hill and Coldharbour, 50% live in poverty and almost half speak English as an

additional language. Coldharbour ward has the highest murder rate in Europe as well as the highest levels of crime. Teenage conceptions for 15-17-year-olds in the reach area are the highest in the country. The wards serviced by the centre are within the 20% most deprived in England. Unemployment rates and the number of families on benefits are higher than the national average. Childcare for children aged two to rising-three years is delivered on site in a childcare setting open from 8.00am to 6.00pm, with 16 children at any one time. Children in the centre’s reach area demonstrate skills below those normally expected for their age 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

This highly effective centre provides outstanding support for children and families. A comment made by one parent is typical of the view held by so many, ‘It’s incredible what this place can do. It’s a one stop shop; you come here and get everything sorted out, it’s just magical.’

Inspirational leadership and management have taken the centre on a remarkable journey since its designation in 2006. There is a strong culture of continuous improvement underpinned by high quality self-evaluation driven by a highly motivated and cohesive team. All centre staff have an in-depth understanding of the issues and challenges facing families within the local community. This ensures very well-targeted and highly effective support for the very large majority of children and families, helping them to make the best of the available opportunities. Many very vulnerable families have been really well supported, helping them to re-engage in everyday life. A very caring yet aspirational ethos permeates the centre. This flexible and personalised approach to identifying and assessing need is a key strength of the centre. As a result, the quality of provision and all outcomes are outstanding, demonstrating outstanding capacity for further sustained improvement.

The centre works very effectively with a range of partners to ensure the provision of individualised packages of support. User engagement is very high, particularly for

lone parents, teenage mothers and, increasingly, the significant minority of Jamaican families. The highly respected outreach worker has been hugely successful in engaging harder to reach families, identifying need and supporting them to access a range of services. The level of support received by families is greatly appreciated and this contributes to the genuine sense of trust and respect displayed by local parents towards all staff within the centre.

Children and parents and carers really enjoy attending the centre and make excellent progress in their personal, social and educational development. The voice of users is highly valued and their views inform the operation of the centre through consultations, informal and formal feedback and through the very successful Parents Forum. Parents are well represented on the advisory board, which has played a significant role in the recent strategic development of the centre. However, the board's monitoring of the centre's progress against the key targets identified in its comprehensive development plan is insufficiently rigorous. Centre leaders are aware and determined to remedy this.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure that the advisory board holds the centre to account by monitoring more sharply the progress made against the key priorities identified in the centre's development plan.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

Children really enjoy outdoor play activities and eat very healthy food. For example, a range of exotic fruits are eagerly consumed by children during snack times. Parents and carers and children have an excellent understanding of what actions they can take to improve their health. This is the result of the well attended 'Healthy Eating' and 'Baby Clinic' sessions held throughout the year. As a result, obesity levels in the reach area have decreased. Healthy cooking is very well promoted and many parents and carers, including teenage mothers on their 'Teen Friday' sessions, have benefited from learning how to cook healthy meals at home. Healthy cooking is further promoted by a cookbook put together by centre staff and parents. Staff in the daycare setting eat lunch with the children and use this as a wonderful opportunity to talk about food. Emotional health is also very well promoted. Parents really value the counselling opportunities set up by centre staff. This has helped many parents to successfully deal with emotional problems and implement effective coping strategies in their lives.

Adults and children feel very safe at the centre. Security arrangements are very robust and rigorous. Thorough risk assessments ensure that children and adults work and play in a very safe environment. Staff promote road safety during annual safety week, through modelling and role play, and this enhances children's awareness and understanding of risks and dangers. Data show that the number of children on child

protection plans has reduced over time. Effective multi-agency working ensures the centre receives regular information about families with children on child protection plans. These families receive intensive support and are very well supported to enable their children to be removed from these plans. The Common Assessment Framework is used to help identify the most appropriate level of intervention for a family. The take up and successful completion of first-aid courses delivered at the centre by the Red Cross has shown a recent increase for parents and carers from different backgrounds.

Children make excellent progress in their personal and social development. Their academic achievement is outstanding. From a below-expected starting point, children are consistently performing above the national and local averages on the key performance indicator which measures attainment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The progress and achievement of many parents are also exceptional. For example, several parents have progressed from being a centre user to substantive posts such as an early years educator, chair of the advisory board and centre manager. During the inspection, both children and adults were seen to thoroughly enjoy their high-quality learning experiences.

Children behave exceptionally well at the centre and parents and carers have observed the very positive impact their participation in centre activities has had on their behaviour. For example, one parent commented with great delight how her son had learnt how to sit at the table to eat and finish his meals and talk about his day in the centre. The hugely popular 'Stay and Play' sessions provide excellent opportunities for children to play and have fun at the centre and parents greatly value the opportunities their children have to interact with other children and develop their social skills. Family engagement with centre staff is excellent. Consultation, evaluations and feedback from activities are systematically collected and used to improve the quality of centre services and activities. Through the thriving Parents Forum and parent ambassadors, coupled with strong representation of parents at governance level, parents from all target groups make a marked contribution to both the operational and strategic work of the centre.

The majority of families have benefited really well from the training that is offered at the centre and across the locality served by other centres and adult training institutions. Through the high-quality education, training and volunteering organised by the centre, the economic stability and independence of a significant number of families, including those from target groups as well as those the centre has identified in need of intervention and support, have improved markedly. Most users have developed skills and/or achieved qualifications that have greatly enhanced their personal development or facilitated their progression to sustainable employment.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

<p>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</p>	<p>1</p>
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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	1
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	1

How good is the provision?

1

A comprehensive range of services and activities is delivered through the centre, or on its behalf, and these are reflective of the specific needs of this particular community. For example, a special weekly well-attended 'Stay and Play' session has been set up in a local club for those Muslim women who are not comfortable learning and playing with their children in a mixed-gender environment. Well thought through, ongoing programmes for teenage parents and childminders have been highly successful in engaging these groups. Through its excellent range of health-related and parenting courses, the centre has successfully reached almost all of the most vulnerable members of its community. Many parents spoke of the life-enhancing support they had received, and the confidence they had gained, enabling them to move forward. The high level of sensitivity with which practitioners engage with families ensures that all, no matter how anxious, visibly relax in their presence, facilitated by the welcoming and comfortable surroundings.

Staff know the community really well; they are well aware of the needs and demands for services and activities. The centre is highly proactive in taking services out to groups who are hard to reach and who they know to be vulnerable. For example, the centre has detailed data about the recent rise of the Jamaican population in the reach area and has made very impressive provision to promote the learning and development of these users. As a result, there has been a substantial rise in user engagement from this group.

The courses provided for adults are highly valued and provide high-quality learning and development in basic skills, positive parenting, health and childcare. Retention and success rates for these courses are high because users from all target groups see the relevance of training and attendance at sessions to improving outcomes in their lives. In addition, early literacy development for birth to three-year-olds is really well promoted through the very effective partnership work with Lambeth libraries. The impact of this early push on literacy is seen in the above-average attainment and children's excellent achievement in communication, language and literacy.

The highly inclusive nature of the centre underpins the excellent care, guidance and

support experienced by users and their families. Indeed, many users outside the reach area have accessed the centre’s excellent provision. An intervention for a lone parent who needs to stay home to look after her adolescent son with complex needs involved the parent ambassador bringing the lone parent’s toddler to the ‘Stay and Play’ sessions every week. Lone parents, teenage mums, dads and families who have young children with disabilities, all receive very good support to overcome a wide range of personal and social problems such as domestic violence, welfare problems and other issues. Advice, support and guidance are tailored to meet the needs of individual users with very effective signposting to other agencies as appropriate.

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 manager is a great role model for the local community. Her highly effective leadership and management are helping transform the life chances of many users, particularly the most vulnerable members of the community. The shared vision and strategy to improve the lives of all users in the reach area are at the core of all the centre’s activities. The integration and shared use of facilities, accommodation and some staffing resources with the nursery school are also a key strength, resulting in the centre running very efficiently on a day-to-day basis. Responsibilities and lines of accountability are very clear and really well understood by staff.

Self-evaluation is very detailed and thorough and used very skilfully by centre leaders to drive and sustain improvement. Evaluation of all the centre’s activities and the impact across all target groups are supported very effectively by the detailed analysis of data provided periodically by the local authority. As a result, provision is fine-tuned and adjusted swiftly to meet the specific needs of targeted individuals and groups, providing outstanding value for money. Although the advisory board has played an instrumental role in setting the strategic direction, it is not yet challenging the centre leadership with sufficient rigour.

Engagement with users is outstanding, especially with the large numbers of lone parents, teenage mothers, Jamaican families and Muslim women. Surveys, consultation and evaluations are systematically used to inform the key priorities in the centre’s development plan and the setting of measurable performance targets. Levels of user satisfaction with the centre from all the target groups are very high and their comments demonstrate that the centre is an essential part of their lives.

Working relationships between the centre staff and those from partner agencies are excellent, providing a cohesive and well-integrated package of services and support that meets the needs of families. In an area characterised by very high rates of teenage pregnancy, the partnership work with St Michael’s Fellowship is a very positive feature of the centre’s arrangements. The impact of this work on parents’ personal development, as well as their economic and social well-being, has been impressive.

Safeguarding and the safe recruitment of staff are key priorities. Recruitment procedures are rigorous and very effective. Staff have received appropriate safeguarding training and role model good practice. Leaflets for visitors and information documents for staff reinforce safeguarding messages and ensure users know what to do if they feel their safety or that of their children is compromised. Case studies demonstrate that staff take swift and appropriate action when safeguarding concerns are identified.

Inclusive practice and equality and diversity are very well promoted and practised. Hard-to-reach groups are constantly targeted and work to engage more fathers in centre activities has been successful in increasing the number of males who are registered as users. Activities and support to engage parents of disabled children are also effective in promoting their inclusion and meeting their needs. For example, several tickets for the ‘Stay and Play’ sessions are always held back by the centre to give to targeted families identified as in need of additional support. In addition, the centre organises collections of dried food on a monthly basis for those users who have no access to public funds. In this and many other ways the centre plays an instrumental role in promoting equality in the local community.

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

Effra Early Years and Children’s Centre has registered early years provision for 16 children on any one day, and is managed by the centre. There are currently 34 children on roll. Information from its most recent inspection (September 2011) 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 Effra Early Years and Children’s Centre on 28 and 29 September 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

Thank you for your help and contribution to the inspection. We had the pleasure of speaking to so many of you and you all told us how grateful you were for the wonderful support you had received from the centre and the difference it had made to your lives. We read your highly positive comments in the many evaluations about the courses you have attended and services that you use. Our finding is that Effra is a highly inclusive centre whose reach goes far and deep. The centre 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 are giving you the knowledge and skills to overcome difficulties you are experiencing. The hugely popular parent and toddler sessions (‘Stay and Play’), ‘Baby Clinic’ and ‘Healthy Eating’ are really helping your child to achieve well and be healthy. The centre does a highly commendable job in enabling you to develop ways that help you to improve your parenting skills, ensure your children live healthy lives and to achieve very well academically.

We judged from the many cases studies we read, and confirmed by the many of you we spoke to, that the centre leaves no stone unturned to help you get the package of support you need, whatever your background or walk of life. Lone parents, teenage mothers, Muslim women and children with a disability, for example, have all benefited from the very well-targeted support programmes put together by the centre staff. We also observed many of you really enjoying your English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), literacy, ICT and positive parenting classes delivered by very competent and dynamic tutors. As a result, so many of you are acquiring the

basic skills you need to engage with your children more confidently and to lead more productive lives.

The senior staff, together with the local authority, lead and manage the centre really well. They listen to your views very 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. However, the members of the advisory board do not fully challenge the centre's leadership by evaluating how well it has achieved the targets in the centre's development plan. Centre leaders are aware and determined to remedy this.

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 are telling them. In addition, the centre takes great care to ensure that you and your children are safeguarded and that the centre is a very safe place to be.

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.