

# Inspection report for Queensway Children's Centre

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| <b>Local authority</b>     | Westminster City Council |
| <b>Inspection number</b>   | 383536                   |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>    | 13–14 October 2011       |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b> | Joan Lindsay             |

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <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>                     | Halffield 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 website: [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, representatives from the local authority and members of the Delivery Group. They also held meetings with partner agencies, including the health services and voluntary organisations, parents and other users of the centre.

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

## Information about the centre

The centre was designated in March 2008 as a phase two centre. It offers the full core offer of a children's centre. It is open throughout the year, offering services at the site at Hallfield Primary School and at other local children's centres. The centre is managed directly by Westminster City Council, with the Delivery Group involved in the day-to-day management. Since April 2011 the centre has operated as part of a 'hub and spoke' model, as a small satellite, with Queens Park Children's Centre at the 'hub'. There are three other centres in the locality. The centre is currently in a period of transition however as the governing body of Hallfield Primary School expressed a wish to relinquish lead responsibility in July 2011. Lead responsibilities are currently being transferred to Bayswater Family Centre and a new management structure is being implemented. The centre manager now has responsibility for the management of four other local children's centres. The centre serves two Super Output Areas, one in the top 10% most deprived and the other in the top 20% most deprived. There are approximately 90 workless households with children under five. The percentage of eligible families benefiting from the childcare element of Working Tax Credit was

20% in 2009, the most recent figure available. The area is culturally diverse, with 62% of nought to four-year-olds from minority ethnic groups and a significant number from Arabic speaking families and from the Kurdish community. There are approximately 480 children under five in the reach area. Children's levels on entry to early years education vary across the reach area from well below to below that expected for their age.

## 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**

**3**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**3**

## Main findings

Queensway Children's Centre is providing a satisfactory service. It has a good impact on children and families who attend, especially in helping children grow in confidence and in supporting parents to learn new skills. This is because staff provide high levels of care, guidance and support, calling upon other agencies to provide well-targeted help for families, especially in times of crisis. Parents who use the centre recognise and appreciate this, with a common view being, 'My child used to be so shy but now she loves coming here every day.' However, although the centre does have contact with families from all the target groups, the spread of that contact is not sufficiently wide or sustained, especially in relation to some ethnic groups and to teenage parents.

Those who use the centre feel safe and secure there, not only because of the physical security of the site but also because staff have a good knowledge of the families and have gained their trust. Staff are adept at spotting any potential safeguarding issues and subsequently work well with other agencies to support families. This is reflected in the relatively low number of children on child protection plans in the area and the speed at which they 'step down'. Access to the centre is through keypad entry school gates and the reception area, and everyone (including professionals) attending the centre is required by the school to be escorted to and from the children's centre room. This can be a daunting prospect for some families lacking in confidence so that, although the centre itself is very welcoming and inclusive, accessing it can be difficult for some.

Those who use the centre feel fully involved and have extremely positive views about it, reflected in their robust response to consultation about the centre's future.

However, because of upheavals in the locality structure, there is not full representation from target groups on the Delivery Group and the parent forum. In addition, the newly-formed locality Delivery Group, while carrying out its duties satisfactorily, is not fully involved in development planning and in challenging the centre. The partners who are represented on this board are effective but there is scope for some, such as Jobcentre Plus and local primary schools, to become more actively involved.

Changes in staff and the management structure are still ongoing, but the staff, who have remained constant, and the centre manager are fully committed to the centre and to improving outcomes for those in the reach area. However, their work has been hampered to some extent by strained relationships with the host school. In addition, there has been a lack of up-to-date data, especially in relation to some target groups, to enable them to measure their success. Where this can be measured, for example in some of the health outcomes and in the Early Years Foundation Stage results, there has been a notable positive impact. There is a clear understanding of the centre's strengths and weaknesses based on accurate self-evaluation and a concerted drive to embrace the new structure and to succeed. Consequently, 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 some target groups who use the centre by:
  - developing a wider range of services to extend the involvement of some target groups particularly teenage parents and some ethnic groups
  - using data to clarify which groups are under represented
  - increasing target group representation on the parent forum and Delivery Group.
- Improve the centre's action plan so that targets are measurable, specific and challenging by:
  - strengthening the involvement of the Delivery Group in the centre's self-evaluation and the setting of targets
  - gathering and using the data to measure the centre's impact in more aspects.
- Improve partnerships by:
  - re-establishing strong links with the host school to enable easier access to the centre
  - strengthening links with Jobcentre Plus and some other partners so that they are fully involved in the strategic planning of the children's centre.

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

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| <b>3</b> |
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Very high childhood obesity levels in the area prompted a strong focus on promoting healthy lifestyles and a range of activities reflect this. 'Tiny Ballers' courses and the 'Eat 5' project promote physical exercise, and outdoor activities are encouraged during daily 'Stay and Play' sessions and local walks. This has contributed to a

substantial drop in childhood obesity levels so that they are now below national levels. The challenge for the centre now is to maintain this downward trend and to extend an understanding of how to stay healthy to a greater number of families in some target groups. Sustained breastfeeding rates are very high as a result of good partnership working and staff being trained well in how to support mothers. The centre can show good outcomes in relation to smoking cessation. Childhood immunisation rates are slightly lower than the national average and this is an area the centre and health partners are working together to improve.

Children behave well and safely, inside and out, while at the centre. Developing parents' understanding of how to keep their children safe is given a high priority through courses such as paediatric first aid, 'Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities' and 'Mellow Parenting'. The rate of emergency hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries to children is low compared to national figures. Because staff are quick to respond to any concerns, including domestic violence, and they are fully involved in the use of the Common Assessment Framework and child protection plans, the outcomes for those families are generally good and numbers on such plans are low.

Children who access the centre make good progress, especially in their personal and social development. A strong focus on developing children's speech and language skills is having a positive impact on this aspect. All of this is reflected in the consistently improving Early Years Foundation Stage data in the reach area where an increasing number of children achieve levels expected for their age. In addition, the gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest is narrowing considerably. Parents are given the confidence to know how to support their children's learning and development. 'They helped me to play and talk to my child,' was a typical comment from parents. In addition, parents are also given many opportunities to develop their own skills especially in relation to language and computer skills. There are some notable individual successes in parents developing their skills leading to considerable improvement in their achievement. 'My life has been transformed,' and, 'It was a very big achievement for me,' were typical comments.

Children develop positive relationships as a result of the good role modelling of staff. Specific sessions such as 'Sparkle Time' for children with disabilities and/or learning difficulties ensure that they are fully included and able to express their views. Although families feel fully involved in decision making and their views are listened to, such as changing the name and length of the yoga course, there are not enough from different target groups involved in governance of the centre. Although this is partly due to changes in the lead responsibility and the switch to a locality Delivery Group, there is still scope to involve a wider cross section of representation at the parent forum meetings so that a more formal feedback of views can be established.

A lack of recent data in relation to the percentage of children in households dependent on workless benefits and families benefiting from the childcare element of Working Tax Credit has hampered the centre's ability to measure its impact in this

aspect. However, the data that are available show that the numbers on benefits are declining. There have been notable successes from case studies and anecdotal evidence to show that parents have been supported to access training, education and subsequently employment. Signposting to another local centre for advice on benefits and the support of the outreach team has been effective in improving the economic situation of some families, particularly those identified as being most in need of support. This includes those who are being accommodated in a refuge and who have recently arrived in this country. 'Without them I wouldn't have known about all the support available,' summed up the views of many families. The centre does recognise however that more should be done for some specific target groups, especially teenage parents and some from the hard-to reach-Kurdish community.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for families:*

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|--|----------|
| <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>3</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>3</b> |

## How good is the provision?

**3**

The centre is effective in reaching high proportions of some target groups such as lone parents, children in minority ethnic groups and those in workless households. Overall, a very high number of children in the reach area have had contact with the centre. However, there is an awareness that some groups (although small in size), such as teenage parents, are not accessing the services as much as others or not sustaining their contact. To some extent the centre is hampered by the limited space and access to the Hallfield Primary School accommodation as a result of the school relinquishing its lead role. This means that morning-only drop-in sessions now take place there, although a full range of services is available at other 'hub and spoke' centres. Nevertheless, participation rates are high at the activities that are run as a result of effective outreach work because staff ensure families are aware of what is on offer elsewhere and will accompany those who lack confidence. For example, a growing number of fathers are being encouraged to attend Saturday sessions at other centres. Consequently, outcomes are satisfactory or better for those families.

The centre provides well for children's early development, planning the 'Stay and Play' sessions around the areas of learning and providing guidance for parents to help children learn. This is leading to improved outcomes for the children who use the centre. Although activities are generally of good quality, there are a limited number now held at the centre's main site and staff changes have meant that they are not always sufficiently individualised. While many target groups are engaging with the centre, a minority (for example teenage parents and some ethnic groups) is not doing so in sufficient numbers to enable learning and development overall to be judged as good.

Families are very appreciative of the high level of care, guidance and support offered to them from the caring staff. 'We love Queensway Children's Centre...it's a very homely warm place for my child,' was a typical view. In many cases the support given has had a profound impact on families' lives, helping them in times of crisis such as when they are homeless or victims of domestic violence. The range and quality of the outreach work are especially effective in this respect, as is the quality of support and advice given by many of the partner agencies. For example, work with organisations such as HomeStart, Working with Men and a domestic violence charity has been highly successful in providing help for those most in need of support. This is having a beneficial impact for those families.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision:*

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| <b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>      | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b> | <b>3</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?**

**3**

Day-to-day management of the centre is effective despite the recent upheavals to staffing and the management structure. New systems of management and governance have only recently been implemented as the centre is in transition from Hallfield Primary School being the lead authority to transferring this to Bayswater Family Centre (an Action for Children centre). Consequently, although governance and accountability arrangements are in place and understood, there has not been time for the new Delivery Group to be fully effective in the strategic planning for the centre. While key partners are supportive, the impact of their involvement is not being measured as some of the relevant data to do so have only just become available.

The local authority, key partners and the centre management have an



accurate and clear understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for development and are motivated to continue to improve. However, measuring the impact of the centre has been hampered by a lack of up-to-date data for some aspects. Where this can be measured, they can show strong impact in some areas such as improvements in childhood obesity and in relation to early years development. However, although the centre is aware of its key priorities, the action plan does not set measurable or time-specific targets.

Centre resources are managed well, although there is now a more limited period of usage of the Hallfield Primary School site. Nevertheless, the facilities and services of the other locality centres, such as the toy library, are used effectively to meet the needs of a satisfactory range of families. Families value the outdoor facilities which benefit their children's development and health as many live in flats. Staff resources, especially those of the outreach workers, are having an impact on increasing the numbers who use the services, although there is an awareness that some groups are still under represented. Consequently, the centre gives satisfactory value for money.

Staff in the centre promote equality and diversity well and it is evident that all groups attending the centre mix well together and show each other high levels of respect. Those who do not speak English as their first language are supported well through the use of staff or other parents helping to translate. All the sites used for activities and courses are accessible to the disabled and the centre meets its statutory duties in this regard. Crèche facilities available for some courses have improved access for parents. Consequently, the centre has had a positive impact on narrowing the achievement gap between different groups by enabling them to have access to training, further education and advice on benefits.

Safeguarding procedures, policies and training are all strong. All appropriate Criminal Records Bureau checks are carried out initially and on a rolling programme and the relevant assurances are given by partner agencies. Regular Early Access Support Team meetings ensure multi-agency support is well targeted and effective. This has been instrumental in ensuring that children's and families' interests are safeguarded and the risk of harm is reduced. Overall, the partnerships with key agencies are clear and understood; 'True partnership working' was how one agency described their relationship with the centre. They are effective in enabling the centre to meet its core purpose. Families who use the centre are seen as, and feel they are, important partners. The strongest links are with the health agencies (the outreach team is based in a health centre which has a positive impact on ensuring an exchange of information and cross-referrals) and some private, voluntary and independent organisations such as a local nursery, as well as the local authority maintained Westminster Adult Education. However, other partnerships such as with Jobcentre Plus

and the host school, while satisfactory overall are more tenuous and not all partners are fully engaged in the centre's planning.

A very large majority of families who use the centre are very satisfied with the help and support they receive and value the service highly. This was very evident during the consultation in relation to whether the centre should move from its current main base. Their views are frequently sought in relation to the courses and activities and they are listened to and acted upon. Although all target groups are engaging to some extent, the level of engagement is not consistent, especially among some of the hard-to-reach groups such as some of the Kurdish community. In addition, families' formal involvement is limited as there are currently no volunteers in the centre and the range of groups represented on the parent forum and Delivery Group is relatively narrow.

*These are the grades for leadership and management:*

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|---|----------|
| <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 effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>  | <b>3</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>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 partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose</b>     | <b>3</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>3</b> |

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

The findings of the inspection of Hallfield Primary School, in relation to the Early Years Foundation Stage and safeguarding, contributed to the children's centre report.

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Queensway Children's Centre on 13 and 14 October 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

During our visit, we looked at your centre's plans for improvement and numerous other documents. We spoke to a wide range of partner agencies working with the centre as well as staff, members of the Delivery Group and representatives from the local authority. We also visited many of the centre activities taking place during the inspection at the centre and other locations and spoke to a substantial number of families using the centre.

Thank you for your participation in the inspection. Those of you we spoke to were very positive about what the centre does for you and especially for your children, helping them learn and develop well. In addition, you feel that the staff are very helpful, caring and committed to supporting you and your family. This is especially so when the situation is critical. 'I had to leave my family behind, now they are like my family,' was a view typical of many in relation to how families view the work of the centre. The staff know the families well and call on a wide range of other agencies to provide support, advice and guidance. This has been particularly effective in helping to develop parenting skills and in improving financial circumstances. The centre is aware of the need to increase the numbers who benefit from this help and expertise as there are still some groups in the community who are under represented, such as teenage parents and some ethnic groups. To do this, we have asked the staff to make better use of the data that have recently become available and to monitor the impact on all groups in the community it serves. We have asked that the action plan targets are more measurable and time specific so that the impact of their work is easier to measure. In addition, although families' views are often sought, all groups are not equally represented in the decision making and management of the centre. This is partly because of changes to the governance and management structure, but we have asked the centre to make improvements so that a wider range of groups in the community are represented on the parent forum and Delivery Group.

A strong aspect of the centre is the way it safeguards those who use it. This is not only because the site is safe and secure but also because child protection procedures are good. Staff are quick to spot any signs of concern and then enlist other partners to provide support that is tailored to specific needs. This is something that many of you appreciate highly and feel that it has made a considerable difference to your lives. A lot of this work is effective because key partners work together well, although some are more effective than others. For example, recent changes to the way the centre is run and managed mean that the links with Hallfield Primary School

are not strong and those with Jobcentre Plus, while satisfactory, need to be developed further. This is so that even more families in the community can benefit from contact with the centre and those less confident feel that they can access the main site.

The centre runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and all of the staff, despite the recent upheavals and uncertainties, are enthusiastic, aware of the centre's strengths and areas for development and committed to improve. They are having a positive impact in some areas, especially in relation to improving early learning and development in adults and children and in the way families are supported. 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).