

Inspection report for Archway Children's Centre

Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	366377
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2011
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Centre leader	Nasso Christou
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Archway Children's Centre Nursery

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 registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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

The inspectors held meetings with children's centre staff, representatives of the advisory board and local authority, midwives, childminders, parents and a range of other partners including health visitors, social workers and a clinical psychologist.

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

Information about the centre

The London Borough of Islington is the second most deprived borough in England and Archway Children's Centre serves one of the most deprived wards within the borough. There are 619 children aged nought to five living in the reach area. Nineteen per cent of children live in workless households and 53% are affected by income deprivation. A quarter of children are from lone parent families. Forty-nine per cent of the children living in the reach area are from minority ethnic backgrounds including Asian, Black Somali and Black African. Children's levels on entry to early years education are below those expected for their age.

Governance of the centre is the responsibility of the local authority and the Hornsey advisory board. Archway Children's Centre is the lead centre in the Hornsey advisory board area, with North Islington Nursery School and Children's Centre and Margaret McMillan Nursery School and Children's Centre.

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

Ambitious leaders and managers, and highly effective partnership working, ensure that the centre reaches the large majority of families in the local area, including those in target groups. 'An unbelievable centre with well-run and excellent activities', and 'my entire family loves this place' are typical views of parents who access services at Archway Children's Centre.

Care, guidance and support, particularly for the most vulnerable parents, are exceptional. For example, parents who have been subject to domestic violence are very ably supported to access safe housing, benefits and further education and training. As one user, now studying for a degree, said to an inspector: 'If it wasn't for this centre, I would simply have curled up and cried forever.'

The achievement of children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved steadily in the reach area over the past three years. Highly effective early learning provision, which was judged to be outstanding in the nursery, has significantly narrowed the achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and their peers. In 2011 the gap was well below the national average at 23%.

Peer support workers, health visitors, midwives and family support workers have jointly contributed to outstanding health outcomes. The on-site café provides an excellent range of healthy vegetarian food for families, and is a warm and welcoming environment in which breastfeeding is encouraged. The café helps to promote local diversity. As one parent said: 'I enjoy coming to the sessions and go to the café afterwards to socialise.' Another parent stated: 'It's great to be immersed in so many different languages.'

Leaders and managers have correctly identified the need to fully evaluate the impact of services in a more sophisticated and robust way, and have just begun to put in place processes to improve this aspect of their work. The centre's capacity for sustained improvement is good because action to overcome weaknesses and gaps in

provision has been concerted and effective, particularly with regard to increasing the number of parents accessing services. The children's centre improvement partner programme, which is coordinated by the local authority, contributes to good governance as it correctly identifies areas for development.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- The local authority should support the centre to target services further, so that the reach to more vulnerable families increases by:
 - ensuring that all outcome data are broken down by target groups, including families of minority ethnic backgrounds
 - analysing this outcome data to identify any trends, so that specific interventions are more effectively tailored to meet these needs and lead to outstanding outcomes.
- Leaders and managers should build on the good practice already in place in order to accelerate the implementation of evaluation processes so that the impact of interventions can be more clearly evidenced and used to inform future service development.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Parents and children say that they feel safe in the centre and children's behaviour is exceptional. The strong relationships between health professionals, including the local accident and emergency department, ensure that children who have visited hospital receive a follow-up call or visit so that they are safe.

Outreach work is well managed by a qualified social worker, and strong links exist with children's social care in the local area. For example, social workers share information appropriately with centre staff so that children in need, or those who are no longer subject to child protection plans, receive support from the centre. Family support workers and the special educational needs coordinator undertake Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable children and families are met in a swift and timely manner. Centre leaders and managers attend child protection meetings and contribute fully to packages of support agreed at Team Around the Child (TAC) meetings. Record keeping is of high quality and case files clearly demonstrate that children and families are very effectively safeguarded

Breastfeeding rates have improved through the implementation of the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative. The percentage of mothers breastfeeding at six to eight weeks after birth is rising and is above the borough and national average. Immunisation rates have improved so that over 95% of the child population is now immunised in the reach area. The centre has a no sweets or biscuits policy and parents and carers are actively supported to develop the skills to produce healthy meals for their families. As one parent said: 'There's no handbook to parenting. I used to feed my

children anything but now I only feed them healthy food.'

Parents and children alike enjoy learning together. For example, 'Sing and Sign' for fathers is well attended and helps to promote family learning. As one father said: 'I love it here and my daughter loves it too.' Many children and their parents and carers or grandparents take part in the wide range of singing activities, which help children to develop their communication and language skills and to interact positively with other children.

The contribution of parents to the running of the centre is good overall, as they are routinely asked their views and give these willingly. Some volunteer at the centre: for example, running interesting sessions for children to share their own cultures and festivals, such as Eid. However, they are not currently engaged in the recently established advisory board.

Parents are supported to access benefits and develop attitudes, skills and knowledge to be able to return to work or training. Several striking case studies clearly show the impact that the centre has in this area of its work, for example supporting a parent to access university education. However, the leaders and managers do not track attendance at all adult learning activities, which are delivered by a partner organisation, or analyse data to show whether the number of children living households dependent on benefits is reducing, for example.

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	2
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

'I am really impressed by the quality of the sessions and the building,' is a typical view of parents and carers. Case studies demonstrate that the wide range of services delivered by the centre and its partners make a significant difference to the lives of children and families living in the local area, and lead to good and outstanding

outcomes.

Early learning provision is outstanding. The centre signposts parents and carers to high quality adult learning opportunities, delivered by the local adult learning service which was recently judged outstanding by Ofsted, including English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). The centre effectively supports childminders in the local area so that they plan activities that clearly contribute to children achieving excellent early learning goals.

Support to help parents develop their parenting skills is effective. For example, a clinical psychologist, working within Child and Mental Health Services, helps parents and carers to understand how to reward positive, and ignore unwanted, behaviours so that child behaviour improves. 'I now turn the TV off and talk to my baby,' is a typical parent's comment after accessing the range of parenting support, including 'Stay and Play' sessions during which family support workers role model positive interactions between adults and children.

Outreach work is effective at reaching some of the more vulnerable families in the local area, and outreach staff visit local mosques and health clinics to promote services to parents. However, the centre's lack of incisive data analysis has limited outreach workers from accessing a small minority of more vulnerable families in the local area. Recently enhanced relationships with social care now enable better information sharing about where children in need are living, so that outreach workers are more able to provide additional support. The centre has just requested and received household data, which it is beginning to use to identify families in the local community who may require additional support. As one parent said: 'The centre needs to do more to get other mothers through the door. There are more vulnerable mums like me out there.'

The highly targeted 'Family Support – Stay and Play' sessions promote parent and child interaction, positive behaviour and healthy lifestyles through play, modelling behaviour and advice and guidance. These sessions, which are delivered by the family health advisor and family support worker, are encouraging the engagement of more vulnerable families.

Well-organised activity planning ensures that midwives and health visitors deliver clinics on the same day so that expectant mothers get to know health visitors during pregnancy, and become familiar with the centre and the range of services available. Concerns are shared between professionals at regular multi-agency meetings, for example about mothers with post-natal depression, so that they receive timely and early support.

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	2
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?

2

Leaders and managers at all levels are overwhelmingly passionate about improving the life chances of children and families in their local area. This is clearly evident in the way in which the centre was designed with families, and how motivated staff interact positively with children and parents on a day-to-day basis. Parents and carers are almost exclusively positive about the centre and satisfied with the services delivered.

Leaders and managers have effectively increased the number of families using services since it opened in 2006, so successfully that it also reaches many families from outside its area. However, it does not fully engage all those living in its reach area, with one in four families currently not registered. More recently, reductions in budgets have impacted on the structure and organisation of the centre, including the governance and advisory board. These resource constraints have rightly forced the centre to begin to target provision further and limit families' access to universal provision if they live outside the London Borough of Islington. However, the centre uses its resources very effectively, sessions are oversubscribed and outstanding provision and partnerships are bringing about improvements in outcomes, so that none is less than good. Value for money is therefore outstanding.

Parents' and carers' involvement in the running of the centre is good as they regularly evaluate services and the centre takes on board their views. However, parents and carers are not yet engaged in the new advisory board. Leaders and managers are aware of this and have plans in place to improve this aspect. The promotion of equality and diversity is a real strength of the centre. Almost all ethnic groups are represented in equal proportions to the reach population and families with children with disabilities receive very good support from the centre. A parent, of a child with a disability explained about the Common Assessment Framework: 'The process has ensured I don't have to keep repeating myself. My allocated family support worker has been brilliant. Particularly helpful in signposting me to benefits advice and assisting me with complex benefits forms and with the management of appointments.'

Safeguarding of children and families is the highest priority for the centre. Health visitors, midwives and social workers regularly make referrals to the centre for

additional support for children and families. Safeguarding policies and procedures, including the safe recruitment of staff, are in place. Regular safeguarding training is undertaken by centre staff, including more advanced training around staff collusion, so that staff are fully aware of their duties and prioritise the safeguarding of children and families.

The advisory board, which has met three times since it was formed in 2011, has had limited impact to date and does not yet provide appropriate support and challenge to the centre. However, the centre's self-evaluation is accurate, but not always founded on evidence based on the incisive analysis of data. This centre's capacity to improve is therefore good.

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	3
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	2
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	2

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

The inspection of Archway Children's Centre Nursery, which took place during the same week, judged the overall effectiveness to be outstanding. The findings of this inspection informed the judgements that were made of the children's centre.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Archway Centre on 1 and 2 December 2011. We judged the centre as good overall, with some really outstanding features.

We very much enjoyed meeting so many of you and observing all the activities that were taking place, including 'Stay and Play' for example. We also enjoyed sharing the great café facilities with you and seeing how this helps you to socialise with other children and families from a wide range of backgrounds. As one of you told us: 'I enjoy coming to the sessions and go to the café afterwards to socialise.' Another stated: 'It's great to be immersed in so many different languages.'

The centre reaches the large majority of families in your local area, including those who are often more vulnerable. Almost all of you told us that you are very satisfied with the centre and what it delivers. 'An unbelievable centre with well-run and excellent activities,' and 'my entire family loves this place' are typical views of those of you who access services. We were particularly impressed by the building and the way in which it is used so well by so many different services.

We judged the care, guidance and support that you receive as exceptional. For example, some of you who have been subject to domestic violence are very ably supported to access safe housing and benefits. Some of you are also well supported to improve your own lives through further education and training.

We concluded that highly effective early learning provision enables children to do very well in the nursery, for example. We also thought that peer support workers, health visitors, midwives and family support workers help you and your families to live healthy lives. Many of you have allowed your children to be immunised, taken up breastfeeding or now eat healthier meals as a result of the centre's work.

Leaders and managers have correctly identified that they need to evaluate what they do in a more thorough way so that they can effectively plan to help more families, particularly the most vulnerable in the local area. However, we concluded that the capacity for sustained improvement is good as the centre has an effective track record of delivering services which lead to good outcomes overall.

To help the centre to become outstanding overall we have asked the local authority and the centre to use data more effectively and work with you all to put in place systems to evidence what they do works.

We would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome and for sharing your views with us. Good luck to all of you with whatever you do next.

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