

Inspection report for Smallwood Children's Centre

Local authority	Wandsworth
Inspection number	383354
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Smallwood Primary School 101021
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Smallwood Road Children's Centre EY409752 & Smallwood After School Centre & Holiday Playcentre EY306311

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 staff and senior leaders, parents and members of the advisory board. They met with a range of partners, observed the centre's work, and looked at relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Smallwood Children's Centre is a phase two centre and was opened and designated in January 2010. The centre is located in the grounds of Smallwood Primary School. Currently, the centre is situated on the second floor of the main school building. However, the centre is moving to a purpose-built building within the school playground; this building is completed and centre staff are waiting for the outside play area to be completed before taking occupation.

The centre is situated in the top 30% most deprived areas. It provides the full core purpose and a range of supporting services, a crèche, health support, early years education, adult courses and pre-employment support.

The centre's reach area serves the communities of Wandsworth and Tooting. It is physically located between two council estates. There are 1160 children under the age of five living in the reach area. The area has high levels of social housing and temporary private rented housing. The number of homeless families in the area is higher than the national average. There is no health centre located in the reach area, although health workers do visit the centre to engage with families.

The number of families attending schools in the reach area who are known to be entitled to free school meals is high, as is the proportion of children who are living in households dependent on workless benefits.

The reach area has a large Urdu speaking community of mainly Pakistani heritage. There are also emerging Polish, Tamil and Somali communities. In parts of the reach area, 68% of children have English as an additional language.

Children enter early years provision with a range of skills and knowledge below those typically expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development. Boys are consistently below girls in reaching a good level of development.

The centre has an advisory board made up of representatives from the local community, professional agencies and parents. Governance of the centre is the responsibility of Smallwood Primary School governors on behalf of the local authority.

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

Smallwood Children’s Centre is a good centre. Most of its features, including the centre’s overall effectiveness, are good. The senior leadership team and centre staff are passionate about improving outcomes for families. There is a clear vision for the centre and effective governance and accountability arrangements have resulted in accurate self-evaluation of provision and outcomes. Whilst governance arrangements are good, the advisory board is relatively new and is not representative of all key partners operating in the reach area or fully reflective of the diversity of parents using the centre. Staff morale is high; they effectively support each other and show great respect for their leadership team who support and inspire them well. Effective partnership working ensures that services are well integrated and cohesive for many families, thereby ensuring the needs of families are well met. All of this confirms that the centre has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

Outcomes for families are good in all areas, except staying safe, which is satisfactory. Those accessing the centre are kept safe and protected as staff complete appropriate risk assessments and there is a high regard for safety at all times, which is successfully shared with families. Effective case supervision arrangements ensure staff are fully supported in their work and families’ needs are

appropriately monitored and reassessed regularly. The centre does not currently monitor accident rates for children in an appropriate manner, nor is it aware of the extent of home safety visits or the impact these have on child safety. However, safeguarding is satisfactory and the centre discharges its responsibilities well. Current policies and procedures are generally written for the primary school rather than the children's centre. Some staff members, although previously trained elsewhere, had not received up-date training since they joined the centre in 2011; the centre recognised this prior to inspection and appropriate training has been organised. Equality and diversity are good and the centre clearly promotes equality and diversity and tackles discrimination.

There are many strategies in place to improve the health and well-being of families. Obesity rates are in line with Wandsworth local authority averages and breastfeeding rates are increasing due to the effective support offered to new mothers and their partners. Healthy eating is actively encouraged by centre staff. As one parent reported, 'I've change my family's eating habits beyond recognition'.

The centre offers good support and advice to families in order to improve their economic and social well-being. Staff are particularly effective at improving users' self-confidence and signposting families to advice on benefits and financial management. Very good use is made of additional funding opportunities to refer needy families for additional support. One parent described the centre as 'like a little beacon, you can walk here, children can learn and when it's lonely at home you can meet people and feel valued'. These comments demonstrate why the centre is held in such high regard by those families accessing services

The range of provision on offer meets the needs of most families well. The centre's early years educator offers good support and guidance to parents, staff and childcare providers in order to continue to improve the quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision within the area.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure all policies and procedures, with particular attention to safeguarding, are clearly applicable to the children's centre
- Ensure greater involvement of all key partners as well as parents in advisory board activities

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Most families engage well with the services provided at the centre. Clear advice is given on a range of health-related matters. Together with health partners, the centre has actively encouraged breastfeeding and data show that the number of mothers sustaining breastfeeding after six weeks is improving. Families also receive a range of information about healthy eating; numerous initiatives have been successful in

raising parents' awareness of the benefits of healthy eating. There are clear plans agreed to increase the number of drop-in health clinics once the new centre is officially opened. 'Low Mood' classes are effective in meeting the needs of families affected by mental and emotional issues.

The extent to which children are safe and protected is satisfactory. Children who are subject to a child protection plan are effectively safeguarded through appropriate protocols and effective safeguarding arrangements. All partners working with families are keen to ensure that families need only inform one agency in order to access appropriate services. Senior managers encourage the use of Common Assessment Framework (CAF) as they see it as an effective tool to acquire greater levels of support for families in crisis. Records are satisfactorily maintained and stored. As a result, those families most in need of intervention and support receive appropriate services to best meet their needs.

Good transition arrangements ensure children are well prepared for their next stage of learning and Early Years Foundation Stage Profile point scores demonstrate improvement, particularly in personal, social and emotional development. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children in Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest closed significantly in the most deprived areas over a four-year period from 2007 to 2011. The centre early years educator has devised a very good method of tracking and monitoring progress for all children. The data clearly show performance improvements and enable the centre to target those areas of individual need.

Adults regularly access learning opportunities in order to improve their skills. One parent explained how she is now enjoying attending English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses; she said, 'I now feel part of the community.' Attendance is good on all courses. Feedback from parents is positive; as one mother said, 'The staff here are amazing, they work so hard, I don't know how they do it all.' Advice and guidance for adults in relation to work opportunities is good. The centre clearly signposts adults to appropriate partners able to help prepare them for employment.

There are good opportunities for families to make a positive contribution. Children behave well and are learning to share and take turns. Families develop strong relationships within the centre and show respect and concern for others. Adults regularly express their views about the centre through activity evaluations and the active parents' forum. Those with low self-esteem and who lack self-confidence are supported to express their opinions either informally or formally through the sensitively managed feedback sessions. Whilst the advisory board includes parent representation, more needs to be done to develop the board so that it effectively supports and challenges the centre.

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	2
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lifestyles	
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	3
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
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?

2

The centre provides good quality services. Accurate assessment is used to determine the needs of children and parents within the community. Consequently, the centre knows the community well and successfully meets the needs of its families. There are good support systems in place to help those most in need of support. Effective care and guidance plus good collaborative working with partner agencies secure a swift and appropriate response to families in times of crisis. Courses run by the centre to enhance self-esteem are particularly successful. Activities for all families are very well organised. Careful consideration is given to the lifestyle of minority groups within the community when organising activities; for example a 'Story Time' group that is run in the afternoon separate from other sessions is especially popular for Somali heritage women although it is not run exclusively for them. Participation rates and attendance levels on all courses are good.

There are many examples of good quality support work, including play sessions designed to meet varying needs of children, a rolling training programme for parents, baby massage, a young mums group and a popular fathers' parenting group. All sessions involving children are planned with the Early Years Foundation Stage areas of learning in mind and successfully promote children's learning. All activities, for children and adults alike, are continuously reviewed and changes are implemented in light of families' views and evaluation of their effectiveness. All centre families report they feel valued and respected. Achievement is celebrated well throughout the centre.

Advice and guidance given to all families is good. Parents spoke positively of the skills that they had acquired to enable them to cope with raising their children; one proud mother said, 'I now think before I act.' The centre is fully aware of the difficulties and challenges faced by families within its reach area, including feelings of isolation and issues of domestic abuse. Some innovative work has taken place to engage with families. Staff work tirelessly to engage with as many families as possible; one parent said, 'The centre has had a big impact on my life, I now have somewhere to go where I can meet people and socialise.'

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	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Leadership and management are good. The inclusion of all children and families is prioritised well. Staff ensure that all children and parents, regardless of background, aptitudes or other differences, have equal access to the provision available. As one walks through the centre, numerous languages can be heard and there is an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect. It is fully accessible and has been successful in increasing the engagement of families for children with disabilities. Consequently, the centre has had improved success in engaging with the community and with families whose circumstances make them hard to engage.

The senior leadership team, together with the local authority, ensure the provision and services meet the needs of most target groups well. Very good use is made of the existing limited space available to the centre. Planned use of the newly built centre is exciting and there is an air of optimism amongst both staff and parents. As one astute parent said, 'This centre has grown from a room in a building into a centre in its own right.' User engagement is good and parents report that they feel fully involved in centre activities. Perhaps the best example of the influence of parents is that they chose the design for the outside play area for the newly built centre.

Despite the current economic recession, the centre has managed to acquire funding for the newly built centre; this demonstrates why the centre provides good value for money. Partnership working is strong, increasingly so at a strategic level where there is a clear desire for closer working arrangements between other partner agencies and the children's centre. The impact that the centre has had so far, alongside its ambitious strategies for further development, explains why the centre has good capacity for sustained improvement.

Senior leaders have a clear vision, communicate high expectations and ensure that the centre is effective in improving the life chances of all users. Day-to-day management, accountability and strategic leadership arrangements are clear and effective. Supervision arrangements are good and ensure staff are well supported and have clear direction. Governance of the centre is particularly effective and functioning well, holding the centre to account and challenging the centre to improve further whilst providing very good support. All staff understand how they contribute

to the centre's effectiveness.

Self-evaluation is accurate. Managers have a good understanding of the strengths in provision and where further improvements can be made. Very good use is made of data to inform targets. For example, the centre uses sophisticated data and is able to identify those minority groups that do not perform as well as others. This has enabled the centre to instigate appropriate actions, which has led to a narrowing of the achievement gap. Good partnership arrangements exist. This is enhanced by the fact that many key partners are co-located in the school; this makes informal contact and advice more readily available for staff when potential issues arise.

Staff are supported in their work through appropriate training which ensures they have the skills and knowledge to work effectively with target groups. Although some members of staff had not received up-date training this year, staff awareness of safeguarding responsibilities is appropriate. The centre meets its statutory duties regarding CRB checks and the vetting and recruitment of staff appropriately. Staff's knowledge of the safeguarding procedures means they respond swiftly and confidently to concerns.

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	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
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	3
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	2
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 recent inspection findings at Smallwood Primary School, URN 101021 were used

to inform this inspection.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Smallwood Children's Centre on 16 and 17 May 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

As part of the inspection, we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's documentation, and talked with a range of children and adults, including parents, staff, and partnership workers. We were pleased to speak to some of you about the centre's work and to listen to your views. We really enjoyed talking to you around the centre and in the various activity sessions you were engaged in. You expressed your views very clearly and we appreciated your 'straight talking' in telling us how things really are.

We are pleased to tell you that the centre provides good support to you and your families through the range of good quality activities and services it has on offer. We are pleased that appropriate attention is given to ensure you and your children stay safe. However, we have recommended that the centre creates its own policies and procedures rather than sharing the school's, with particular emphasis on its safeguarding arrangements. The way the centre offers you care, guidance and support during times of crisis is particularly effective. We were delighted to hear how you have benefited from coming to the centre, increased your confidence and become involved in the many worthwhile activities available to you.

The centre is also good at helping you increase your knowledge about play and how children learn through the many play activities and parenting sessions. The centre offers a range of good support to new mums and dads. Many of you are gaining confidence when cooking and are using new ideas to ensure your families are benefiting from a healthy diet.

We judged that the centre manager is clearly focused and enthusiastic about the work of the centre. She is well supported by senior managers from the local authority. Centre staff work very hard to make the centre as good as it can be. Centre staff are effective at finding out what the centre's strengths are and have innovative ideas to improve what they do so more families can benefit from its activities. We have recommended that partner organisations and parents become more involved in the work of the advisory board so that it can support and challenge the centre more effectively.

The centre sets challenging targets in order to improve services to you and makes good use of data to evaluate the impact of its activities. It was also good to hear

about those of you who have undertaken training to increase your confidence and develop your skills, which may help you secure employment in the future.

We know both you and staff are looking forward to being able to use the newly built centre. We were impressed that you had been involved in the design for the children's new play area.

Thank you once again for your welcome and your willingness to share your views with us. We can see why the staff enjoy working with you so much and wish you every success in the future.

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