

# Inspection report for Lillian de Lissa and Belgravia Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	383770
<b>Inspection dates</b>	27–28 June 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mary Dudley

<b>Centre leader</b>	Mandy Cryan
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
<b>Centre address</b>	Bellevue Edgbaston West Midlands B5 7LX
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 675 3421
<b>Fax number</b>	0121 675 4074
<b>Email address</b>	enquiry@ldelissa.bham.sch.uk

<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Lillian de Lissa Nursery 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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Piccadilly Gate  
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Manchester  
M1 2WD

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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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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

The inspectors held meetings with the head of the centre, members of staff and professionals from partner agencies. Discussions were held with members of the governing body, parents and representatives of the local authority. Inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

This phase two children's centre is located in Edgbaston, close to the centre of Birmingham. It shares the same site as the Lillian de Lissa Nursery School. The children's centre provides a range of integrated services that include health, family support, outreach services and adult training. The local authority has delegated responsibility for the running of the children's centre to the governing body of the school. The headteacher of the school is also responsible for the management of the centre. The reorganisation of children's centres in April 2012 to a locality model of working, which will see Lillian de Lissa and Belgravia Children's Centre operating as part of the Ladywood locality, is not yet fully embedded.

The centre serves a diverse community in an area of significant deprivation. It spans super output areas that are in the 30% most disadvantaged in the country. Accommodation in the area consists mainly of social and housing association accommodation. The area includes eleven tower blocks, some of which are used to house asylum seekers when they first arrive; as a result, families are often transient and are from a mixture of cultures and backgrounds. Residents speak 38 different languages and almost half of centre users speak English as an additional language. There are 791 children under the age of five in the area, 588 of whom have engaged

with children's centre services. The majority of children under the age of five are living in households dependent on workless benefits. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities are below those expected for their age on entry to early years provision.

## 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

Lillian de Lissa and Belgravia Children's Centre is a good and improving centre. It has a number of outstanding features. Children and families using the centre are kept very safe, and work with those whose circumstances make them vulnerable is outstanding, particularly those suffering from domestic abuse. The range of provision on offer to families is excellent and the centre is very much at the heart of the local community.

Staff at the centre are extremely knowledgeable about the needs of families in the area, and parents' views are key in deciding the nature of the services and activities the centre offers. Programmes are of a high quality and are well attended; in addition, highly individualised support for families is extremely effective, particularly in times of crisis. This high quality provision and support enables individuals and families to improve their circumstances, achieve educationally and improve their personal development. These achievements are actively celebrated and used to help raise aspirations.

Parents' skills and knowledge have improved greatly as a result of accessing courses and activities at the centre. Those parents taking English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes have acquired new skills which enable them to support their children's learning and gain in confidence. Good progress is being made in children's learning and development as they engage in a variety of activities, have fun, play together and learn new skills.

Parents are well informed of the requirements for a healthy lifestyle and are making changes to their eating and exercise habits as a result. New and prospective mothers benefit from a full range of integrated services which effectively promote their health and well-being. Support for women suffering post-natal depression is a particular

strength. Safeguarding arrangements are excellent. Families using the centre have an exceptionally good understanding of how to ensure their children's safety. The Common Assessment Framework process is used very effectively to ensure an integrated response to the safeguarding of children. Partnership work is a key part of the delivery of services and the centre is proactive in seeking new partners as budget reductions result in the loss of some existing partner provision.

The economic stability of families using the centre is greatly enhanced by the support given to access training, volunteering, job opportunities and benefit advice. The centre is seen by parents as an integral part of the community. As one parent said, 'The children's centre is the backbone of the community'. Children and parents treat one another with respect and feel able to express their views in the centre and through community action in the wider community. There are, however, very few parents involved in the governance and management of the centre, although this has been recognised and volunteers are actively being recruited.

The managers of the centre are strongly focused on ensuring positive outcomes for families in the area and put high expectations for the community at the heart of the centre's work. Governors and staff work closely to ensure that the centre continues to respond to local needs while the local authority re-organises children's centres in the locality. However, the centre's action plan is now out of date as a result of delays in agreeing the locality plan. Provision is very well used and families using the centre make real progress in many areas of their lives. Staff skills and expertise are used very effectively to meet identified need and staff work flexibly to respond to changing need. The centre's outstanding attention to equal opportunities ensures that families from different backgrounds feel welcome and able to enjoy the wide range of provision on offer. Where groups or families are disadvantaged, staff work proactively to support their progress.

Users' views are actively sought and used to shape services. Parent satisfaction surveys rate services highly. Parents are increasingly involved in decision-making processes. Evaluation is supported by good quality data; existing plans are clear and well supported by partners, some parents and staff. The re-organisation of children's centres, which has delayed the action planning process for this year, has been finalised and managers are now able to begin this task. Staff are aware of the challenges facing families in the area, of the centre's strengths and where there is need for further improvement. The centre's capacity for sustained improvement is good.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Prioritise completion of the centre action plan following the implementation of the locality plan.
- Continue to increase the level of user involvement in the governance and management of the centre.

## How good are outcomes for families?

2

The centre staff work tirelessly to ensure positive outcomes for families in the area. Parents feel extremely safe and consider their children to be very safe when using the centre. Excellent highly individualised support for families with circumstances that make them vulnerable mean they are exceptionally well safeguarded. This is particularly true of those parents subject to domestic abuse and children subject to child protection plans. As one parent said, 'They have made a massive difference to me.' Families who are new to the area or seeking asylum are supported to know their rights and responsibilities and are made to feel welcome. Significant improvement in children's behaviour can be seen as a result of the improved parenting skills and confidence of parents who have engaged with parenting programmes and support.

The transient nature of the population means that contact with many children and families is short term. As such, measurement of the long term impact of provision on outcomes for these families is very difficult, resulting in the majority of outcomes being graded as good, rather than outstanding.

Support for families' emotional health and well-being is a particular strength of the centre. Parents with post-natal depression make significant progress supported by health professionals and centre staff. One mother said how she feels 'emotionally more stable and confident to take care of my children' thanks to the support she received from the centre. A large majority of families in the area are engaging well with health services. Centre users show a good understanding of what a healthy lifestyle is; more mothers are breastfeeding at six to eight weeks and many parents have made changes to their families' diets and have begun to take more exercise.

Children make good progress from their starting points in all areas of development; often these starting points are below those expected for their age and the children may not have English as their first language. Most children who remain in the area leave the Early Years Foundation Stage with attainment that is at least in line with national expectations for their age. 'Playing Together' sessions provide good opportunities for children and parents to play and learn together. Parents develop their understanding of how children learn through play and improve their skills and confidence to support their child's learning effectively. They are also well prepared to support their children's transition to nursery. Adults involved in programmes in the centre show significant improvement in their educational and personal development. Parents who have taken part in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes have improved their reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. Moving testimonies from students explain the difference the classes have made to their personal development and how they have been able to progress to further training

and in a few cases employment.

The centre plays a key role in the life of the community and is often the first 'port of call' for families needing to access services. Users and staff treat one another with respect, children who have accessed services engage in positive behaviour, they play well together and readily share toys. Parents have a number of opportunities to express their views and know they are listened to. Some parents have been engaged in community action to protest against changes to services in the community, learning new skills in the process. The number of volunteers in the centre is increasing. However, currently, parents have limited involvement in the management and governance of the centre.

The majority of families are improving their economic stability and independence. Good individualised support helps parents secure appropriate benefits and apply for jobs and training at the 'Time to Talk' sessions. Families access information about job vacancies on the Jobcentre board which is updated weekly. Information provided by the centre also helps parents to access appropriate childcare. Families use the computer, telephone and internet to help them apply for jobs and training.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</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>1</b>
<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment</b>	<b>2</b>

## How good is the provision?

**1**

Provision for centre users is outstanding. Staff know the needs of families in the area and work with other services to ensure that provision effectively meets those needs. Outreach is an integral part of provision and is highly effective, particularly in engaging with families new to the area and those seeking asylum. Families in need of additional support are assessed sensitively, signposted where appropriate and their progress is monitored. Parents were keen to explain how staff from the centre check up on them if they have not seen them for a while, which makes them feel good. The centre's exceptional work with disabled children is reflected in the large majority of disabled children from the area who access services. Services are diverse,

of a high quality, and are reviewed with users on a regular basis. Outcomes for those users are generally excellent; however, the transient nature of the minority of families in the area makes monitoring of their progress very difficult.

The centre promotes individualised, purposeful learning very well and activities are of a very high quality. Provision to help children and adults to learn is outstanding. Activities engage with children and their families from target groups and the centre will often provide the main interface between some families and the support they need. The centre raises the aspirations and expectations of parents and children and celebrates their achievements.

For those families with complex needs, the care, guidance and support provided by centre staff is exemplary. There is a strong emphasis on providing effective emotional support to boost users' confidence and raise their self-esteem. Information, advice and guidance are of a very high standard and empower families to improve their circumstances. As one mother said, 'I got excellent advice from the children's centre. Even though the housing office closed, staff were able to offer help and advice.' Sensitive, individualised support is provided to help families achieve positive outcomes and, in times of crisis, families feel extremely well supported.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>1</b>

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

**2**

Leadership and management of the centre are good. Highly effective leadership ensures high-quality, integrated provision is targeted at those in most need of support. Day-to-day management and professional supervision are robust and ensure staff have relevant and up-to-date expertise. There is an excellent sense of teamwork and ambition to provide the best possible service for families. Current local authority changes to a locality model of operation for children's centres have delayed the completion of this year's annual plan. There is a clear link between service planning and provision in the centre's existing action plan; however, there is now an urgent need for this to be updated. Self-evaluation is accurate, runs throughout all the provision and is supported by evidence of impact. Provision offered by the centre is high quality and very well used, outcomes for families are good and improving. The centre has highly effective financial monitoring, and resource allocation is responsive to changing need. The centre provides excellent value for money.

The centre celebrates diversity and values all cultures represented in the reach area

equally. The inclusion of all children and their families is excellent and central to its work. Consequently, users reflect the community that the centre serves. The staff profile also reflects that of the community and staff have the language skills to communicate with some people in their own language and where this is not possible, translation is found. Wall displays and activities promote powerful role models from many cultures. Disabled children receive focused support so that there is no negative impact on their development. Parents who do not have English as their first language are encouraged to share their views on provision using a variety of visual mediums, or with the help of the parents' champion. The views of parents are used to shape services; however, there is a need to strengthen the contribution parents make to the leadership and management of the centre.

Partnership workers value the centre's facilities, the welcome they receive and the quality of communication they get from the centre. The centre is proactive in seeking partnerships, and effective partnership working is having a positive impact on good and rapidly improving outcomes for families. Good partnership working underpins the centre's excellent safeguarding arrangements. Children's safety and well-being are significantly enhanced by the rigorous and highly consistent implementation of policies, procedures and practice. Staff have a sensitive approach to the variety of needs the centre's users present, which ensures that families feel comfortable with staff and are very well protected. Excellent risk assessments, systems for referring to other agencies and security procedures mean that children are kept extremely safe in the centre.

These are the grades for leadership and management

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>1</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>1</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>1</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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision</b>	<b>2</b>

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

Findings from the concurrent inspection of the nursery school have contributed to the centre report and judgements.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Lillian de Lissa and Belgravia Children's Centre on 27–28 June 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank those of you who met with us during the inspection, agreed to let us sit in on your groups, or spoke to us about the centre. We were pleased to hear how much you value the services the centre provides. You told us that the centre is a very important part of your community and plays an important role in helping you as parents. We found out that it is improving family life in many ways, particularly for those of you who face difficult challenges.

The centre is particularly good at supporting those of you who may need extra support. It has helped those of you who do not speak English, those of you who are new to the area, those experiencing abuse in the home and those of you who are disabled or have disabled children. Some of you spoke very highly of the support you have received. The centre is very good at helping you identify what support you need and then it tailors specific programmes of support for you.

You are regularly asked for your views about the centre and the programmes and activities you are involved in. We have asked the centre to encourage even more of you to get involved in its governance and management. We found that the centre is supporting you in many ways; you have learnt about healthier lifestyles for you and your children and some of you have been helped to improve your emotional well-being. Children using the centre are prepared well for school and you are knowledgeable about their transition to nursery. We judged that the centre keeps you and your children extremely safe. For some of you, it provides a safe haven and a place to go in times of crisis.

The senior staff do a good job in the way they run the centre. They have created a bright, clean, well-resourced environment where all are welcome. They know what the priorities are for the work of the centre and staff work hard to make sure they are achieved. The children's centre has not been able to write an action plan for this year due to the recent changes in how the centre will operate. We have asked the centre to write the action plan as a matter of urgency and to involve some of you in the process.

Thank you very much for your welcome and willingness to speak to the inspectors. We thoroughly enjoyed talking with you and sampling the centre's work. We wish you every success in the future.

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