

Inspection report for Ellen Wilkinson Children's Centre

Local authority	Newham
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Ellen Wilkinson Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Chestnut Nursery School (EY349105)

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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 the centre manager and staff, senior leaders of Ellen Wilkinson Primary School, and representatives from the local authority, the governing body and the Children's Centre Committee. They also held meetings or telephone conversations with representatives from partner organisations including Jobcentre Plus and health services. Inspectors also met parents and other users of the centre.

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

Information about the centre

Ellen Wilkinson is a phase two centre in Newham, London, that was designated in 2008 and fulfils the core purpose of services. Services offered at the centre include early years education, family support, outreach work, employment support and health services. The centre is managed by the governing body of Ellen Wilkinson Primary School on behalf of the local authority. The Children's Centre Committee fulfils the function of an advisory board. The centre operates from a single storey building and shares its site with Ellen Wilkinson Primary School and also with Chestnut Nursery School.

Newham is one of the most deprived boroughs within London and nationally. Levels of deprivation in the area served by the centre are amongst some of the highest in the borough. There are no up-to-date figures of the percentage of families benefiting from the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit. The centre serves an ethnically diverse community with a large proportion of families from Eastern European backgrounds. Families live in a mix of privately owned, rented or social housing. There are 1,360 children under five in the reach area. Most children enter early years with skills, knowledge and abilities below the level 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

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Ellen Wilkinson Children’s Centre is a successful and welcoming centre that delivers good quality provision for the majority of families in its reach area and meets their needs well. Participation rates have increased over time and demonstrate the effectiveness of the centre in reaching out to families, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. The centre’s work with the local community and its partnership work are both effective. At a strategic level, partnership arrangements with health services are strong. As a result, health provision is very responsive to local needs.

Staff are passionate about improving the life chances of children and the outstanding strengths of the centre relate to the way families are supported and kept safe. Swift action is taken to ensure early intervention, particularly for those families whose circumstances place them at risk. Case study evidence and personal testimonies identify the exceptionally positive support and guidance parents receive and how much their well-being improves as a result.

Children in the reach area achieve well educationally and data from the Early Years Foundation Stage profile confirms this. Adults also make good progress as a result of their participation in well-planned centre activities. These help them build new skills and extend their personal confidence. Some parents gain much from their involvement in programmes that are specifically designed to further their knowledge and understanding of early years learning.

The centre does not offer accredited adult learning provision. However, parents are signposted to and do progress on to further education courses elsewhere or into employment. The centre does not gather data about parents’ progression beyond its own provision and there is no specific tracking of the longer-term impact of its work on the outcomes relating to adults’ educational achievements.

The centre promotes both inclusion and equalities well. User engagement is good and the centre captures the views of parents and children in a variety of ways. Relationships with parents are good and parents feel confident to approach staff to share their views. However, staff have struggled to gain the commitment of parents in a more formal capacity on the Children’s Centre Committee which acts as an advisory board. In addition, a regular Parents’ Forum has not yet been established.

The quality of evaluations carried out by the centre is good. It has very effective methods for collecting and analysing data about the engagement of families and the impact of its services. Across the borough, membership cards are issued to children and adults who register at children’s centres. This means that data analysis is a robust process which enables centre staff to monitor the participation rates of children and adults with a high degree of accuracy.

At all levels, the quality of leadership and management is good. The strategic direction of the centre is well understood by staff and partners. As a result of the rigorous self-evaluation process and the good quality leadership and management, the centre’s capacity for sustained improvement is good.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Further explore ways to enable parents to become more formally involved in the centre’s decision making as representatives on the Children’s Centre Committee and for example by attendance at a Parents’ Forum group.
- Local authority to work with the centre to develop systems to track the progress made by parents who are signposted to further education courses or employment-related activities to see what the impact is on their achievement over the longer term.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The centre promotes the value of healthy lifestyles very well. Families from target groups, such as lone parents, benefit from its productive links with a range of health partners such as midwives, health visitors and nutritionists. Data show that, at 80%, breastfeeding rates on initiation are higher than the national average. The proportion of mothers who are still breastfeeding after six to eight weeks is improving and is now 70%. Evaluations show that parents’ understanding of health has increased significantly as a result of the centre’s well-targeted work. The centre also contributes well to reducing obesity rates in the area.

Families feel safe at the centre and women feel emotionally safe enough to disclose if they are living with domestic violence. Swift action is taken by centre staff whenever safeguarding concerns are identified. The borough no longer uses the

Common Assessment Framework. However, through a combination of Every Child Matters meetings and, more recently, a triage system, centre staff take effective action to ensure children are safe. Case studies demonstrate that the centre is instrumental in providing support that leads to children being removed from child protection plans. Evaluations from evidence-based parenting programmes also show a significant improvement in the confidence and parenting skills of parents who participate in the programmes. As a result, their ability to keep their children safe also shows significant improvement. Through a range of other activities, such as home safety workshops and first aid courses, parents develop an excellent understanding of practical steps they can take to ensure their children are safe.

Through carefully planned activities for parents and children, the centre is improving the education and development of both adults and young children. Programmes such as 'Ready, Steady, Nursery, Go' also help children make a successful transition to school. Data for the reach area show that the percentage of children who achieve 78 plus scale points across the Early Years Foundation Stage profile is 73% and higher than the national average. Data also show that, in many aspects, children who attend the centre outperform their peers. Children who access centre services are clearly developing good skills for the future. Parents who participate in centre activities also make good progress in their personal development. They gain confidence, improve their parenting skills and learn how to support their children's learning and development. As one parent said: 'I learnt how I could use pots and pans at home to help my child enjoy play and learning.'

Members of the Children's Centre Committee, which acts as an advisory board, use 'breakout' sessions from meetings to meet with groups of parents to discuss agenda items. This approach has been used effectively to ensure parents participate in decision making and governance. However, in spite of all their efforts and due to parents' reluctance, centre staff have not yet been able to secure the formal representation of parents on the committee. They have also yet to establish a regular Parents' Forum. In various ways, such as by volunteering, parents also contribute to the centre's work.

As a result of effective partnership work, the centre successfully promotes economic stability for families. Links with Jobcentre Plus are good. A member of staff from the service provides regular advice and guidance for parents that has enabled some to find employment. However, evidence about the progression of all parents to further education or employment is not fully captured. Parents who are not entitled to receive support from Jobcentre Plus benefit from the centre's links with the local authority's childcare and employment advisers. Parents who use this service receive good support and guidance to improve their employability and their access to good quality childcare.

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	2
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The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	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	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	3
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 quality of provision at the centre is good and includes a diverse range of courses and activities. These give parents good quality opportunities for their own personal development and the educational achievement of their children. Centre staff use data and their partnership links well to assess local needs. They also use evaluations and input from parents and partners to further develop provision to ensure it remains responsive to needs. The overall participation rate of 64% demonstrates the centre's success in engaging with the majority of families within the community. In addition, the centre's engagement with known teenage parents in the area is 100%. Data show that, in three years, the centre has nearly doubled the number of contacts it has with both children and adults across most target groups.

The balance between universal and targeted provision is good. This means that the centre responds well to both the needs of the wider community and of specific target groups. The centre has also taken account of the needs of fathers, one of its key target groups. As a result, activities have been arranged on Saturdays to encourage their participation. Outreach work is also planned to target those families who are not yet benefiting from the centre's good provision.

Activities for adults and children are well planned. Sessions for children are explicitly linked to Early Years Foundation Stage outcomes. Effective partnership work with both the co-located primary school and nursery contribute well to the planning of activities. Session plans are shared with parents and posted on noticeboards to help parents understand the links between play and learning. Although the centre does not offer accredited family learning courses, staff have developed their own 'family learning' provision. This includes courses such as 'Early Maths' and 'Early Science'. These courses have explicit aims and objectives to promote purposeful learning for parents alongside their children's learning and development.

'The centre has helped me so much I can't put it into words,' commented one parent. It reflects well the outstanding quality of care and guidance offered to families. Staff are tenacious in their efforts to support families, particularly those who face multiple barriers that impede their progress in life. Case studies and personal

testimonies from parents confirm the outstanding and determined efforts staff make to ensure families receive the best possible care. Parents who receive support progress to the point of gaining confidence to make informed choices. They also become independent users of the centre and other services. The quality of information and guidance offered to families from leaflets, handouts, booklets and directly from specialist partners is excellent.

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	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The quality of leadership, management and governance is good. The centre employs competent and highly committed staff who have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Local authority leaders and managers provide good support to these staff. The performance management of the centre is effective and data are used well to monitor the impact of provision. Data and qualitative information from parents and partners are also used to provide feedback to the centre about its performance. Self-evaluation is a rigorous process which leads to improvement. In addition, external evaluations from a university are used to measure the effectiveness of the centre's evidence-based parenting programmes.

Staffing, accommodation and other resources, such as learning materials, are used well, which, together with the well-evidenced good outcomes, means that value for money is good. Equality and diversity are actively and visibly promoted. For example, signs and notices are produced in a range of community languages, and festivals reflecting the various cultures of the families who use the centre are celebrated. Information is also translated as appropriate to meet the needs of families from Eastern Europe. Inclusion is well promoted and effective support provided for disabled children. The achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and the rest is narrowing.

Safeguarding families and safer recruitment are high priorities within the centre. The centre's multi-agency work and its use of referral and signposting to ensure families are kept safe are excellent. Criminal Records Bureau and other recruitment checks are appropriately carried out. The centre's policies and induction of new staff are comprehensive and cover safeguarding and health and safety issues very effectively. Risk assessments are exceptionally robust and comprehensive. Staff are very well informed about a range of safeguarding matters, for example domestic abuse, which

helps them to respond quickly and very effectively to support families in times of personal crises.

Partnership work is productive and partners contribute well to the planning, delivery and evaluation of services. Partnership work with parents is also effective. As a result, some parents have been able to use their expertise and skills to provide sessions for other parents. For example, one parent organised a series of 'Tai Chi' sessions for other parents. Overall user engagement is good. Consultations with parents are effective and support the development of the centre's work. Through regular evaluations of services, the centre's 'consultation board' and through outreach work, the needs and interests of families and the wider community help to shape provision. However, the involvement of parents in more formal committee decision making has yet to be developed.

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	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	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

Findings from Ellen Wilkinson Primary School inspection and Chestnut Nursery School (EY349105) inspected in 2009 were taken into account.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Ellen Wilkinson Children's Centre on 28–29 June 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Many thanks for taking the time to talk to us during the inspection. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your centre and it was a real pleasure to meet so many of you. We appreciate your openness in sharing with us some of the difficult personal journeys some of you have had to make. It was good to hear how much centre staff were able to give you support at times when it was most needed.

We found that the support and care given to families is excellent and that you are right to recognise this as a strength of the centre's work. From talking to you and also from looking at some cases studies, we could see the sheer dedication of staff who are determined to do their very best for families. The impact of their work is very evident from the time and patience they show in providing support, guidance and care to you, especially those of you who are living with difficult circumstances.

We found that your centre's work to keep families safe is outstanding. Staff link exceptionally well with different agencies to make sure that, whenever problems arise that could affect the safety of families, these problems are dealt with swiftly and effectively.

The quality of health services offered at your centre is good. They contribute well to improving the health of the community in different ways. For example, breastfeeding rates are increasing and obesity rates are reducing.

During our visit, we were able to talk to some of the different professionals that work with centre staff. They work very well with staff at the centre and contribute to the way activities are planned and reviewed. We were fortunate to be able to observe some of the activities that you attend at the centre. We could see how much you and your children enjoy sessions like 'singalong and stories'. We know from what you told us, and also from reading many of your evaluations, that you and your children enjoy the wide range of other activities and trips that are offered, and grow in confidence and build new skills as a result.

Looking at statistics for the area, we can see that your centre is doing well in helping children to make good progress in their learning and development. Children receive good help to become well prepared for the big move to school. Your centre is very good at helping parents to learn and many of you have benefited from attending the 'Family Learning' courses. Others have received support to become better prepared for employment or further education. We have asked staff to do more to try and

collect evidence about the progress parents make when they enrol on courses or move into paid work.

From our visit, we could see that you and your children get on very well with centre staff. We also know that your views are valued by staff and that you contribute your ideas on a regular basis through post-activity evaluations or in conversations with staff. However, we would like you to become more involved in the centre's work at a formal level. We believe this will give you even better opportunities to contribute to the success of the centre. Therefore, we have asked staff to keep up with their efforts to find parents who will be willing to become representatives on the Children's Centre Committee and on a Parents' Forum.

Once again, many thanks for taking the time to meet us during the inspection. We wish you and your families all the best for the future.

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