

# Inspection report for Mission Grove Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Waltham Forest
<b>Inspection number</b>	383782
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 July 2012
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Mission Grove 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 link 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 planned the inspection with the newly-appointed cluster coordinator and met with senior staff from other centres and schools that have had previous responsibility for, or involvement in, running the centre. They also met with representatives of the local authority and consultants leading children's centre developments on behalf of the local authority. Inspectors met with a number of parents individually, health partners including midwifery, health visitors, speech and language therapists and the chair of the now dissolved advisory board. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including its self-evaluation form and delivery plan.

## Information about the centre

Mission Grove Children's Centre, a phase two centre, was designated in 2007. The centre delivers a range of services to meet its core purpose including early education, health services and support to help parents get back into employment.

The centre is in the process of forming a cluster partnership with two other centres: Low Hall Nursery and Children's Centre and Sybourn Children's Centre. The governing body of Mission Grove Primary School and Children's Centre provided the governance for the centres until 31 March 2012, with a planned transition to the new cluster arrangement under the direction of Low Hall Nursery and Children's Centre. New governance has not yet been clearly established however, the local authority retains overall responsibility for the centre and is the appropriate authority.

The centre’s reach area covers the High Street Ward which is made up of seven of the top 30% most deprived Super Output Areas (SOAs) in England. One of these SOAs is in the top 10% most deprived and four are in the top 20%. Recent data show that 1,199 children aged under five years live in the reach area. Around 25% of families are of Asian origin, mainly from Pakistan, India or Bangladesh. A further 25% of families are from White British or White Other backgrounds. A high proportion of children from Black African and Black Caribbean origins live in the most deprived SOAs. Around a third of families with young children live in poverty.

The knowledge and skills of children when they enter early years provision are typically well 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**

**4**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**4**

## Main findings

Mission Grove Children’s Centre’s overall effectiveness is inadequate because safeguarding procedures are not robust and limit the centre’s ability to fully meet requirements. The range of services and activities available to help families lead better lives is inadequate. Leadership, management and governance arrangements are ineffective and too few parents engage routinely in the running of the centre. The centre’s self-evaluation is weak and its capacity for sustained improvement is inadequate.

The assessment of families’ needs across different target groups, including those identified as in most need of intervention and support, is inadequate. Partnerships with health and social care are not as strong as they previously were due to local reorganisation of services and this is beginning to impact negatively on the outcomes for families. Nevertheless, provision is judged to be satisfactory overall for the families who use the centre because the centre successfully supports their learning and development, their good educational achievements and their personal and social development. The achievement of children living in the reach area at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved over the last three years with the gap between those at risk of the lowest outcomes and the rest narrowing over time. Parents’ participation rates in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses

and success rates are good. The centre effectively promotes equality and diversity and this is demonstrated well by the good engagement of children with disabilities and families from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds.

The quality of the guidance staff give to parents who attend the centre regularly is satisfactory and leads to their improved emotional health. As one parent said, 'I was extremely impressed by the manner in which a senior outreach worker dealt with my concerns and by the way in which she assured me that she would speak to the relevant staff before calling me back...which she did.' Another said, 'The outreach worker is like a big sister and mother figure.'

Children and parents say that they feel safe when they are at the centre, but the centre does not effectively safeguard children and families because some frontline staff do not routinely follow the centre's safeguarding procedures. The recording of sensitive information is too informal and there are instances where child protection matters are not being dealt with rigorously enough. The use of the Common Assessment Framework is insufficiently robust to ensure that all of the most vulnerable children living in the centre's reach area have their needs met and receive effective support.

The process of working more closely with two other centres is unclear to everyone involved and for some months accountability has been limited. At the time of the inspection there was disagreement between the local authority and Mission Grove Primary School regarding who holds responsibility for the day-to-day management of the centre. Until very recently the centre has been without a specific coordinator. There has been poor line management. The appraisal of staff, including frontline workers, has failed to take place regularly. The centre's delivery plan was completed 18 months ago and since then there has been no further planning to guide the centre's development. The centre's self-assessment is inaccurate due to the lack of specific data to enable rigorous evaluation of the actions being taken to improve outcomes. The commitment of centre staff has kept the centre active and enabled it to support some families despite these uncertainties; the increase in registration and participation rates of families across target groups reflects positively on their work.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Leaders and managers should appropriately safeguard children and families by ensuring that:
  - all child protection concerns are followed through fully and recorded appropriately by all staff
  - a designated safeguarding lead takes full oversight of all child protection matters
  - all frontline staff receive appropriate supervision in dealing with child protection instances
  - robust use is made of the Common Assessment Framework to ensure that all children's needs are identified and fully supported

- family case files are maintained properly to include all required and relevant documentation
- safeguarding procedures are audited, and case files monitored, to ensure they fully meet legal requirements.
- The local authority should immediately clarify the governance arrangements of the centre so that day-to-day management arrangements are clear and all staff receive appropriate supervision and regular performance management.
- Improve outcomes for all children and families by:
  - assessing accurately the needs of families in the reach area by using all available data
  - implementing systems to evaluate the impact of services
  - creating and implementing a development plan with specific, measurable, achievable, realistic outcome-based targets
  - involving parents in the centre’s decision making.
- The local authority should ensure that social services and health services work closely together to strengthen partnerships with the centre and to support the transition to an effective cluster model.

## How good are outcomes for families?

<b>4</b>
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Outcomes for children and parents are highly variable but inadequate overall because safeguarding outcomes are inadequate and too few parents are involved in the decision making at the centre. Data to substantiate the centre’s own self-evaluation of outcomes were not always readily available, or up to date. However, case studies and interviews with parents demonstrate that the centre makes a positive difference to the health, personal achievement and skills development of those who attend and engage with its services. As one said, ‘The centre is a massive part of my life and given me my confidence. From the bottom of my heart I think they are really good to me.’

The centre has contributed to some notable success in helping families keep healthy for example, the breastfeeding café plays a pivotal role in championing breastfeeding. At 74%, the proportion of mothers who continue to breast feed at 6 to 8 weeks after birth is well above the local average. Further analysis of the data shows an improving trend, with little variation between the different ethnic groups living in the reach other than Chinese, where the prevalence of sustained breastfeeding is currently 44%. Breastfeeding rates of mothers from Black African groups are high at 87%. The centre encourages healthy eating through the provision of good-quality food and healthy snacks. However, data show that the level of obesity in reception-age children is higher than local and national averages.

Of the 18 parents who responded to surveys in 2011, 100% stated they felt safe at the centre and all of those interviewed by inspectors shared these views. However, safeguarding procedures do not ensure that children and families are adequately protected. The centre does not currently have information about admission rates to hospital for children suffering accidental and deliberate injuries. The support provided for some, but not all, of the children who are subject to child protection

procedures is effective and results in some vulnerable two-year-old children gaining funded nursery places.

Achievement for five-year-olds living in the reach area has improved over the last three years. The achievement gap between the lowest achieving children and their peers is narrowing, albeit slowly. There is good impact from centre-led activities, such as Messy Arts and Craft and Come and Play, on building children’s learning and development. At 87%, an above-average proportion of children from the co-located nursery, a number of whom previously attended the centre, achieved 78+ points across the Early Years Foundation Stage including personal social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy in 2012. Some parents are engaged in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses and progress from level 1 to level 3. Their attendance and success rates are good.

Children behave very well in the centre and parents form positive and supportive relationships with each other. Parents enjoy attending centre activities and let staff know their views about the effectiveness of activities through informal conversations. However, parents do not routinely volunteer at the centre. There is no parents’ forum or advisory board and none are involved in the governance of the centre. Of those parents attending ESOL courses, some have gone on to further education and a few have gained employment. Case studies show that the Welfare Advice Surgery effectively supports families to improve their financial stability through access to benefits and better debt management.

*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>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>4</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>4</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**

Provision is satisfactory overall. However, the assessment of need lacks precision and this aspect of provision is therefore inadequate. The centre occasionally assesses the needs of individual families through, for example, the Common Assessment

Framework (CAF), but this system is not used routinely and no other assessment processes are used, for example pre CAF. Family case files do not consistently contain records of appropriately assessed needs. The centre provides universal sessions for families but does not plan targeted sessions for specific groups, other than the ESOL courses for parents.

The quality of provision is variable and as a consequence, families' achievement outcomes are inconsistent. The centre has made reasonable progress in increasing both the registration and the engagement of families from most target groups. However, fathers are still an under-represented group. Currently 45% of registered children participate in an activity or service at the centre. In the two most deprived SOAs participation rates, particularly by Black African and Black Caribbean families with young children, are slightly lower at 42%. Most ethnic groups are well represented in centre activities, including a large majority of children whose ethnicity is classed as White Other. These families tend to be of Eastern European heritage and are well engaged.

The Sensory Play session was developed at the request of parents and children love attending. One parent told the inspectors, 'I didn't realise something as simple as aluminium foil could be so much fun for young children. They love the sound and the noise.' The Under 1's and Baby Group is delivered by an independent health visitor, commissioned directly by the centre to provide support for new parents who speak very highly of the guidance given and advice they receive in these sessions.

Provision for children to learn and develop is a real strength of the centre. The children's centre and co-located nursery have effectively improved achievement under the joint leadership of the previous centre coordinator. The Messy Arts and Craft activity that runs on a Wednesday morning is very well attended and children and parents enjoy playing together. Come and Play, which takes place three days per week, is well attended with 161 different children attending the Tuesday session in 2011/12. The centre delivers three different levels of ESOL programmes for adults and these are oversubscribed. The well-planned and well-attended sessions result in adults improving their language skills and achieving a good level of success. The centre makes sure that everyone's personal achievements are recognised and celebrated.

Many parents in contact with the centre, in particular those whose circumstance make them most vulnerable, are provided with sound guidance and the support to make positive changes in their lives. For example, parents interviewed by inspectors spoke positively about the support they had received concerning living with serious illness and during depression. Parents identify strongly how well the centre helps them to make new friends and get better organised, for example in attending health appointments with their babies.



*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>4</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</b>

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

<b>4</b>
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Leadership and management, including governance, are inadequate. A new advisory board is currently being developed but it has not yet formally met. The intended move towards a cluster-based model of delivery has not been effectively managed. The process has been hampered by human resource issues which have delayed timescales considerably. Key partners are therefore unclear as to which school governing body is responsible for the centre, as are the headteachers and governors. This lack of clarity has led to a lack of day-to-day management since March 2012. Centre documentation, including supervision records, clearly shows that important management activity ceased towards the end of 2011, with no team meetings or supervision occurring since then.

The local authority recognises that its monitoring has been ineffective, particularly in respect of safeguarding practices which its latest report inaccurately identified as being 'strongly embedded'. In contrast, its most recent review correctly identified that the centre required specific support and set out detailed actions. These have not yet been followed up. The newly-appointed coordinator is clear about the steps needed to put the centre on an improving course and has correctly identified a number of areas for urgent improvement including safeguarding procedures. Although capacity for sustained improvement is inadequate overall, the new governance arrangements, once implemented, include skilled and knowledgeable leaders and managers with a strong track record of leading good or better children's centres in the locality.

Safeguarding arrangements overall are inadequate. However, children are effectively protected whilst attending activities in the centre due to comprehensive risk assessments, effective staff vetting and close attention paid to health and safety matters. Inspectors observed an incident involving a member of the public entering the grounds of the children's centre and shouting at staff in the reception area. The centre staff dealt with this situation well by immediately removing families from the risk of potential harm. The centre's reception door prevented the individual from gaining access to the wider centre, demonstrating that children are protected when they are on site.

Managers and parents both cite examples of some activities that have been

developed at the request of parents, for example the Sensory Play sessions for children under 18 months old. However, the centre recognises that it needs to do more to engage parents in developing provision. The centre promotes equality and diversity well, with 100% of disabled children registered and supported by services. Parents and children from diverse ethnic cultures get on well with each other at the centre and relationships are harmonious.

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement is inadequate because significant aspects of leadership and management are weak; self-evaluation is inaccurate; and there are no specific targets for improvement. The existing self-evaluation documentation and delivery plan do not demonstrate a clear understanding of how to improve outcomes. Partnerships with health and social care are not as strong as they previously were due to local reorganisation of services and this is beginning to have a negative impact on service delivery. A minority of families with young children from the reach area are currently engaged with the centre, outcomes for families are inadequate and value for money is therefore inadequate.

*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>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>4</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>4</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>4</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>4</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 co-located Mission Grove primary school was inspected concurrently and inspectors shared their provisional findings.

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Mission Grove Children's Centre on 4 and 5 July 2012. We judged the centre as inadequate overall.

Thank you to all of you who took the time to meet with us or speak to us during activities, such as Messy Arts and Crafts and Come and Play. We are grateful for your views which were overwhelmingly positive about the centre and the staff.

We are confident that children are kept safe when they are in the centre, as health and safety procedures and security arrangements are effective. However, we judged the centre to be inadequate because safeguarding procedures are not sufficiently robust and leadership and management arrangements, at the time of the inspection, were unclear and ineffective. Too few parents are routinely engaged in the running of the centre. We have therefore asked the local authority to immediately clarify who is in charge of the centre on a day-to-day basis and asked the centre to closely monitor its safeguarding arrangements and the way in which staff keep records. Despite these failings, inspectors judged provision to be satisfactory overall because the impact of learning and development for children and adults is good and care, guidance and support for those parents who attend the centre and require help is effective. As one parent said to us, 'I was extremely impressed by the manner in which a senior outreach worker dealt with my concerns and by the way in which she assured me that she would speak to the relevant staff before calling me back...which she did.' Another told us, 'The outreach worker is like a big sister and mother figure.'

Partnerships with health and social care are weak due to uncertainties caused by the recent local reorganisation of services. We have therefore asked the local authority to facilitate better links between these important services so the centre staff can deliver integrated services.

Finally, the centre does not yet have effective governance or appropriate plans to guide its development. Furthermore, it is not effectively tracking the impact of its work on improving your lives. We have therefore asked the centre to look more closely at these aspects to develop comprehensive systems.

We wish you well for the future and would strongly encourage you to continue using this centre and to get involved as volunteers or with the new advisory board so you can play a fuller part in the life and development of the centre.

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