

Inspection report for Harmood Children's Centre

Local authority	Camden
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Harmood Children's Centre Early Years provision EY337970, inspected June 13 2012

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 senior managers from the centre, front-line staff, parents, partners, members of the advisory board and a representative of the local authority linked to the centre.

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

Information about the centre

This is a phase one centre which was designated in October 2006. It is one of 15 children's centres in Camden organised in five distinct localities. Each locality includes several centres offering integrated care, health services and education. The centre meets its core purpose. Harmond Children's Centre falls under the Kentish Town West locality, which is comprised of four wards and has 2,908 children aged under five. The centre is managed by Camden local authority. Leadership arrangements are jointly overseen by a children's centre head, who manages the integrated care and early years education element, and a children's centre locality manager responsible for ensuring delivery of all other locality services, either directly or through partnership or commissioning arrangements. Governance arrangements reflect this model with one advisory board representing the Kentish Town West locality. The advisory board is comprised of key partners including agency representatives, parents and the local authority.

The key ethnic groups represented in the locality are White British, White European, Bangladeshi and Black African families. The Haverstock Ward, which is part of the centre's reach area, has 50% of its children living in poverty, the second highest proportion in Camden. There are large housing estates in the locality with many low income families living in Council tenancies. The Camden average for unemployment is 5.4%, which is below the national average. However, overcrowding and a lack of

outside spaces attached to accommodation, coupled with the lack of affordable housing, are all significant issues for families in the reach area.

The centre has on-site early years provision which is registered for a maximum of 82 children aged from four months to four years old. Children in the centre’s reach area entering early years education demonstrate skills broadly in line with those expected for their age. This provision is also managed by 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

This is a good centre that understands and serves the needs of the local community well. It has some outstanding features including the quality of its care, guidance and support and safeguarding arrangements. The centre has built excellent links with partner agencies and community resources, and this is an outstanding feature. Staff are committed to improving the life chances of those families whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Families overcome many barriers to success as a result of the targeted outreach work provided by the centre as well as groups and activities that run from the centre and in the community.

The centre’s outreach work is highly successful in supporting families most in need, including those from target groups including teenage parents and homeless families. Excellent care, guidance and support are also reflected in the way in which centre staff form highly positive trusting relationships with all parents and their children. The centre has been proactive in taking services out to the community, working closely with a range of partner agencies to provide a fully integrated service. Families value the excellent support they receive. One parent’s remark echoed the views of many: ‘The children’s centre is a big part of my life; the support is unbelievable.’

Partnership working between all agencies is exceptional and these relationships play a pivotal role in the overall effectiveness of the centre. A swift process of screening referrals and allocations ensures that services are responsive and preventative work is put in place at an early stage. This results in improving outcomes for families most

in need of intervention and support. The use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is fully embedded in the work of the centre and supports the excellent multi-agency approach.

The centre's leadership is committed to improving outcomes for families and strives for the highest standards. Case studies demonstrate that services are targeted at those most in need. A range of data is available from the local authority and helps the centre to set ambitious targets in all aspects of its work. However, the centre does not yet have robust data on the impact of provision on families' well-being when they engage with education and training prior to moving into the world of work. Although children's achievement in the early years setting is outstanding and securely good in the wider reach area, there is insufficient information about the outcomes for children when they move on from the centre.

Self-evaluation is effective and provides an accurate picture of the centre. There is a strong commitment from staff to reflect on the centre's effectiveness and they are proactive in seeking feedback from families. Arrangements for governance are equally strong and reflect well the locality model for children's centres in Camden. However, the new parents on the advisory board do not yet have the skills they need to challenge the centre's work more robustly. Nevertheless, the centre has a strong track record of continuing improvement and is well aware of where it needs to develop and strengthen its processes. As a result, its capacity to improve is good.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Secure robust data on the impact of provision on families' well-being when they engage with education and training prior to moving into the world of work.
- Collate information from partners such as schools and settings about the outcomes for children when they move on from the centre to show the centre's effectiveness.
- Through appropriate induction arrangements, equip new parents on the advisory board with the skills they need to challenge the centre's work more effectively.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The centre promotes healthy lifestyles well through a wide range of healthy eating programmes, exercise and nutrition groups for parents of toddlers, and staff are well trained to help adults stop smoking. A large majority of families engage well with health services, as can be seen by the high numbers attending these programmes. As a result, obesity rates of children by the end of Reception have shown a year-on-year decrease, although they are still slightly above the national average at 11%. Additionally, sustained breastfeeding rates are improving in line with the centre's target and, at 77%, are now higher than both the London and national averages. The centre has been successful in improving children's oral health and immunisation

rates across Camden. Through its close work with health services, the centre has been successful in improving the mental and emotional health of families, for example those suffering from domestic violence. This has led to positive outcomes for those families who are most in need of help.

All families spoken to during the inspection stated they have complete confidence in staff and of how their parenting skills have been developed extensively through contact with the centre. They have an excellent understanding of how to keep their children safe through structured parenting classes and frequent home visits, as well as visits from the police and fire services to guide them in home safety. Staff have been highly successful in securing funded places for the most vulnerable two-year-olds with very positive outcomes, especially for lone parent families. They also very successfully instigate and manage multi-agency support through the Common Assessment Framework. The involvement of centre staff in supporting families where children are subject to child protection plans, and those looked after, has meant that there has been significant and sustained improvement for most of those children.

Children's achievement at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved strongly over the past three years and is now broadly average. In addition, the achievement gap between the lowest 20% of children and the rest has shown a year-on-year decrease and is now slightly narrower than the national figure of 31.4%. Children's achievement in the nursery section of the early years setting was judged as outstanding in the Ofsted inspection of June 13 2012. A highly personalised approach to children's learning and development makes a strong contribution to children's excellent self-esteem and confidence. However, the centre does not systematically collate information from partners such as schools and settings about the outcomes for children when they move on from the centre. Most adults using the centre are developing their skills well, with many talking about the 'the huge difference' to their self-esteem. Parents from all target groups feel well supported in helping their children learn and develop through universal sessions such as the popular 'Drop ins' and targeted services such as 'Talk and Play'. High levels of enjoyment are evident at these sessions and constructive relationships develop well because of good adult role-modelling.

The response rate to the centre's surveys and consultations is high and the majority of families have a strong input into the centre's decision-making processes, for example through suggestion boards and evaluations undertaken after courses. Many families using the centre are engaged in some form of training or adult learning, and outcomes for families in relation to improving their confidence, and especially their parenting skills, are good. Where the centre does not directly deliver courses, for example English language or literacy classes, it signposts elsewhere. However, it is not yet following up all these families so it can show the full impact of that initial work. Nevertheless, where families have been supported directly by the centre, there have been good outcomes, for example in having benefits awarded or moving on to employment or volunteering in the Camden Baby Feeding Service. This has led to demonstrable improvements in their lives, especially for those most in need of support, such as the homeless.

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
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
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 a wide range of integrated services and activities, which has resulted in an increasing number of families accessing what is on offer. More Black and minority ethnic families, lone parents, teenage parents and those families with complex needs are attending the centre as they see it as a place where someone will listen to them and help them. 'I would have had a nervous breakdown if I had not had the support from this centre' typifies how many families view the centre as a place of safety and security, and a place they feel they can turn to when they have nowhere else to go.

The centre assesses families' needs particularly well using the very helpful strategic data from the local authority and the regular achievement data from the early years setting. As a result, the centre has identified the small minority of Congolese families and White British families with children known to be eligible for free school meals as in need of targeted support. The full impact of the centre's work with these families is not yet known. Outreach is a vital and highly successful part of the centre's work, demonstrating exceptional care, guidance and support for families. Excellent partnership arrangements ensure that families receive a highly coordinated approach and where difficulties arise in attending, home visits are swiftly arranged to provide support and engagement with other services.

Very good crèche facilities enable adults to attend activities at the centre, safe in the knowledge that their children are having as much fun as they are. The work of the Camden Baby Feeding Service has been instrumental in ensuring that more mothers understand the important advantages breastfeeding can have for them and their babies. The health team assists centre staff to educate pregnant mothers on the harm smoking can cause to their babies while in the womb. The targeted 'Drop ins'

for parents of children with disabilities ensures that this group has equal access to all the centre's services.

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

Leadership, management and governance at all levels are good. The locality model is working well for the centre and all staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The enthusiasm, skill and highly effective partnership of the centre head and locality manager, as well as dedicated staff, have steered the centre through a period of change very effectively and outcomes for families have improved as a result. The development plan sets out key ambitious priorities clearly and takes into account the views of partners and families. Professional supervision at all levels has also been very effective in improving the centre's performance. The local authority provides good levels of support as well as rigorous and accurate evaluation of the centre's work. The advisory board is effective in monitoring the work of the centre and key partners have a good understanding of the role of governance. However, new parents on the advisory board have a less secure understanding of how to use the information provided to challenge the centre's work more effectively.

Early intervention arrangements are exceptional, exemplifying the outstanding partnerships within the area, including a very wide range of agencies and services. The excellent working relationships between the centre and health, social care, housing and employment ensure cohesion and very effective coordination across a wide range of services for so many of the centre's most disadvantaged children. In addition, excellent levels of staff training across many aspects of safeguarding, for example domestic violence and child protection issues, ensure that families receive tailor-made solutions to often complex and highly emotive problems. As a result, outcomes for children's safety are outstanding. All recruitment and vetting processes are very rigorous. The very high profile accorded to safeguarding across all areas of the centre's work is in part responsible for ensuring that no children have been killed on Camden's roads for the past four years.

The centre is highly inclusive and the make up of the community is accurately reflected in those who use the centre, especially in the numbers from Black and minority ethnic groups. The funding of a service for disabled children and those with special educational needs, as well as support with translation for families accessing

specialist services, ensures all groups are fully included and equality and diversity is promoted effectively. This has led to a narrowing of the gap between different groups and a positive impact on outcomes overall. Families who use the centre are extremely satisfied with the services and increasing numbers from across all target groups are engaging well with activities and courses.

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	1
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	2

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

Harmood Children's Centre early years provision was inspected on June 13 2012. The outcomes of this inspection were used to inform the judgements on children's achievement.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Harmond Centre on 27–28 September 2012. We judged the centre as good overall. Many of you took the time to meet us and tell us about your experiences and involvement at the centre. Without exception, all of you whom we met praised highly the work of the centre. It was a pleasure to meet you all and to hear from you what a difference the centre has made to your lives and that of your families.

We found that the centre staff provide you and your children with excellent levels of support. Staff have worked extremely hard to build outstanding links with partner agencies. Those of you who receive support from family support workers particularly benefit from these outstanding partnerships. Staff are skilled in identifying the individual needs of the families they work with and use these excellent links and their knowledge of the community to support you effectively to bring about improvements to your families. This includes children on child protection plans and those identified as 'children in need'. Those of you who have children with disabilities and special educational needs are given the resources and support you need to help break down barriers to access. The centre provides many courses, resources and facilities to support you and help you to understand how to cope with your children's behaviour, how young children learn and how to keep them safe. As a result of more and more of you coming to the centre, the outcomes for families from all walks of life are improving in many aspects. Although there is a parents' forum and parent representatives on the advisory board, we have asked the centre to ensure there is better induction for new parents on the advisory board to enable them to challenge the work of the centre more effectively.

Children make excellent progress in the early years setting, as was indicated in the Ofsted inspection report of June 2012. Children's confidence and language skills develop particularly well, and adults also greatly improve their confidence and self-esteem. Indeed, some of you have been successful in accessing paid employment and obtaining places on accredited courses. However, the centre is not systematically tracking the longer-term improvements it is making in the lives of adults when it directs them to do courses elsewhere and when they eventually find employment. This is also something we have asked the centre to look at so that the good work it does in laying the foundations for you to improve your lives can be measured. In addition, we have asked the centre to collate information from partners such as schools and settings about the outcomes for children when they move on from the centre to show the centre's effectiveness.

The centre has been a part of the changes in Camden resulting in a new, locality-based model of how children's centres are led, managed and governed. Despite this, the staff have continued to improve the numbers coming to the centre and have also done much to improve outcomes for many families, especially those who are most in need of help. This is because of their commitment, coupled with the strong

leadership of the centre head and locality manager, and underpinned by highly effective links with key partners. There is a clear understanding of what still needs to be done to improve the lives of families even more and this means that the centre is well placed to continue to improve.

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