

# Inspection report for Bessemer Grange Children's Centre

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| <b>Local authority</b>     | Southwark                  |
| <b>Inspection number</b>   | 383872                     |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>    | 31 October–1 November 2012 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b> | Priscilla McGuire          |

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| <b>Centre leader</b>               | Carrie Johnson                           |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b> | No previous inspection                   |
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| <b>Linked school if applicable</b>                     | Bessemer Grange Primary School<br>URN 130918 |
| <b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b> | None   |

The inspection of this Sure Start children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

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## Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

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

The inspectors held meetings with staff from the co-located school, centre staff, parents, volunteers, representatives of the advisory board and staff representing partner organisations such as health, education and voluntary sectors.

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

## Information about the centre

Bessemer Grange Children's Centre is a phase two centre located in Southwark. It shares its site with Bessemer Grange Primary School. Governors of the school are responsible for the overall management of the centre. The centre serves the communities of Camberwell and Dulwich. The ethnic profile of the area has changed over the last ten years and families from various minority ethnic groups now live in the area. The reach area is socially diverse, with areas of high affluence and also pockets of deprivation. There are seven Lower Superoutput Areas (LSOAs) within the reach area and three of these are in the top 30% of the most deprived areas in England. Around 15.2% of the children in the reach area live in poverty and in families reliant on workless benefits. Unemployment rates vary across the reach area, with high levels of unemployment and worklessness in the more deprived parts of the reach area.

Most families in the area immediately surrounding the centre live in social housing accommodation, most of which is flats or apartments. In the more affluent parts of the reach area, families live in privately owned houses. The centre meets its core purpose. Services offered at the centre include health provision, early years education, adult learning and training, advice and guidance services and family support.

On entry to early years education, children’s skills are broadly in line with the expected levels.

## 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**

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| 3 |
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### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

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| 3 |
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## Main findings

Bessemer Grange Children’s Centre provides a satisfactory level of effectiveness in meeting the needs of local families. After some difficulties at management level, a new centre manager was appointed in July 2012 and a new staff team subsequently recruited. After previous management problems led to a breakdown in relationships with some partner organisations, the new manager and her team have worked hard to gain their trust. Centre users speak highly about their improved relationships with staff since the new manager was appointed. However, it is too early to judge the impact of all of the changes made since July and currently satisfactory provision is leading to satisfactory outcomes.

The centre uses its positive relationships with partners such as health practitioners, to provide clinics, health advice and health activities for families, including the most vulnerable, to keep healthy. Children who access centre services make a good transition to the co-located school. However, links with other early years providers and schools within the reach area are still in their early stages. Nevertheless, the centre provides a range of opportunities, such as Stay and Play and Healthy Fun Time, which promotes enjoyment and development of children’s skills. Some parents have achieved well on accredited childcare courses.

Provision is continually reviewed and adapted to ensure it is responsive to local needs. In line with Southwark’s approach to children’s centres, the centre provides support to many families from outside its reach area. However, it is not yet routinely using data to monitor the impact of provision on key target groups within its own reach area. Parents contribute satisfactorily to decisions about centre services and are represented on the advisory board. However, the link between the advisory board and the parents’ forum is not clearly defined. As a result, parents’ views do not systematically feed into the advisory board’s decision making.

The centre provides a welcoming environment for families and promotes inclusion. Equality is promoted soundly and diversity celebrated with events and activities that are pertinent to the respective cultures of families who use the centre. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory and staff use signposting and referrals as appropriate to ensure families are kept safe.

The centre's self-evaluation process is satisfactory and appropriately linked to development planning. With the support of the advisory board and an improvement partner, the actions the centre needs to take to improve have been clearly defined. These factors, along with the centre's satisfactory leadership and management, mean that its capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve outcomes for families by:
  - undertaking thorough data analysis to ensure provision is suitably planned to meet the needs of all target groups
  - strengthening links with partners to ensure well-integrated services
  - working with the local authority to use data effectively to monitor and provide evidence of the impact of the centre's work in supporting families from all target groups living in the reach area.
- Strengthen the role of the parents' forum and ensure a clearer link with the advisory board and parents' involvement in the centre's governance.

## **How good are outcomes for families?**

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Through its established links with a range of health practitioners, the centre provides effective health support and guidance for families. Sessions such as Cook and Eat improve families' understanding of how to cook healthy food. Other sessions, such as Zumba for parents and outdoor play activities for children, promote families' physical health. Within the reach area obesity rates are much lower than the average for Southwark and breastfeeding rates at six to eight weeks are amongst the highest in the borough. The centre is developing methods to demonstrate how its provision makes a better-than-satisfactory contribution to these rates.

Parents feel safe in the centre. Access to the centre is appropriately controlled to ensure families are kept safe. Safety is visibly promoted through the centre's use of colourful posters and notices that reinforce messages about safeguarding. Families are signposted to parenting courses for training. This helps them improve their parenting skills. Staff within the centre and the early help team within the local authority use the Common Assessment Framework effectively. This ensures that families from key target groups, such as those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, receive the help they need. Centre staff also provide appropriate support to the very few children within the reach who are subject to child protection plans.

Children participate in a range of activities at the centre which develop their social skills, their skills for the future and promote their development. Through sessions such as Stay and Play they develop confidence, and through other sessions such as Sing and Sign they enjoy singing with their parents and develop their communication skills. 'Sessions have encouraged me to sing at home with my child,' was the positive experience of one parent, which is reflective of the views of others.

The percentage of children who achieve the 78+ scale points across the Early Years Foundation Stage profile is higher than the average for England. Data show that the achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and the rest is narrowing. However, the centre is, as yet, only able to demonstrate impact of its provision on the relatively small number of children who transfer to the co-located school. Evidence shows that these children make a good transition to school and progress well. The behaviour of children at the centre is satisfactory. Parents from different target groups, such as lone parents, achieve well on adult learning courses such as childcare, and also make satisfactory progress in their personal development.

Parents are satisfactorily involved in key decision making through the parents' forum. However, there is not yet a clearly defined link between the forum and the advisory board and this restricts full involvement in governance. Parents also make a positive contribution to the work of the centre through their roles as volunteers.

Through the centre's partnership links with Jobcentre Plus, families receive appropriate guidance about job searching and also about welfare benefits. Families whose circumstances make them vulnerable, such as those with no recourse to public funds, also benefit from specialist guidance about housing and legal issues. This is provided through the centre's good links with a local charity.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

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| <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>3</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>3</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>3</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?

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Centre staff make it their priority to get to know their community and the parents who use the centre. However, the centre's use of data and other evidence to monitor the impact of provision on target groups within the reach area is not yet a systematic process. The balance achieved between universal and targeted services is appropriate and has been adapted by the new centre manager to ensure provision better meets local needs. Data show that the centre is successfully engaging with key target groups such as lone parents and minority ethnic groups. Sessions have also been organised to meet the needs of young parents. Outreach work is developing to ensure that families from the wider community have a better awareness and access to services available at the centre.

The range of activities provided for families is satisfactory. Planning for sessions is appropriate and promotes the development of children's skills and knowledge. Activities such as Stay and Play are themed and focus on different areas of child development, such as physical movement. Outdoor play is actively promoted to meet the needs of children who have limited or no opportunities to play outside their home. Activities to promote adult learning are also suitably planned. Parents who enrol on childcare courses are able to progress through different levels of learning. Other courses are being developed to develop parents' skills in information and communication technology (ICT).

During times of crises, families feel confident to turn to the centre. Case study evidence and personal testimonies from parents demonstrate that the centre provides effective care and support. A comprehensive range of guidance and information leaflets is provided at the centre. Signposting and referrals are effectively used to help parents find solutions to problems linked to housing or health issues. Partnerships with key agencies are being further strengthened to ensure fully integrated approaches in the support of local families.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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| <b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>      | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b> | <b>3</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?

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Partners and parents confirm that the centre has improved significantly since the new manager's appointment in July 2012. After a difficult period in the centre's

history, the new team of staff is doing its very best to improve outcomes for families. In a relatively short space of time, the team has already made a recognisable difference to the centre and to services. For example, there is much more visible advertising of sessions and activities.

Governance arrangements are satisfactory and management arrangements well understood. Staff have a good awareness of their roles and responsibilities and the advisory board provides satisfactory support and challenge to the centre. The centre offers good-quality accommodation and resources. Staffing resources are appropriately used and value for money is satisfactory.

A wide range of partners from health services, education and other sectors are represented on the advisory board. They value the opportunities they have to contribute to the centre's work and are working to fill the gaps that appeared prior to the centre's new leadership. New partnership links are continually being made by staff to strengthen provision and ensure that it is fully responsive to local needs and improves the life chances of families.

Methods of evaluating the quality of activities are satisfactory and are improving to ensure they provide an insightful view of provision. The centre also receives support from an improvement partner based in another local authority. Through this support, the centre has received detailed feedback about the quality of its provision and also guidance on improvement strategies. Satisfactory development and action planning linked to accurate self-evaluation are being used to target the centre's improvement.

Diversity is appropriately celebrated and activities such as celebrations of Eid and of Black History Month promote families' understanding of different cultures. Children with disabilities receive appropriate support and intervention from staff and partner organisations. Policies to promote safeguarding are comprehensive. Recruitment and vetting checks are appropriate and the centre's safeguarding procedures are satisfactorily understood by staff. They link well to local authority procedures for early intervention. Multi-agency work is satisfactory and staff have completed safeguarding training that is appropriate to their roles. Families affected by domestic violence are effectively supported and signposted as appropriate to agencies that specialise in dealing with domestic violence. Through the parents' forum and on-going consultation, parents are able to share their views with staff. Parents' engagement is currently satisfactory, with outreach work being strengthened to ensure families from the wider community are aware of services and access them.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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| <b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b> | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>                            | <b>3</b> |



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| <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>3</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>3</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>3</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**

None

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaining about inspections*, which is available from our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

### **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Bessemer Grange Centre on 31 October and 1 November 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Many thanks to those of you who spent time talking to us during the inspection. We appreciate your honesty and openness in sharing your experiences of using the centre with us.

We realise that the centre has been through a difficult period over the last year or so, but we were pleased to hear that you feel things are getting better. The new team of staff is clearly making a real difference and in a short space of time has accomplished much. It is, however, early days and it is too soon for some of the changes made to have a real impact on the quality of services. The staff are planning satisfactorily and targeting improvements in the right place. Nevertheless, we have asked the centre to continue to focus its efforts on improving the outcomes for you and your families and to use data more effectively to do so.

You told us that the centre provides a warm welcome to everyone and gave us some good examples of how you have been supported by the staff. You also told us that

you feel safe at the centre and welcomed by staff. Some of you have achieved well and gained childcare qualifications or developed skills from other activities you have enjoyed at the centre.

It was good to meet those of you who are involved in the advisory board. We would like more families to be involved in the way the centre is run. This is why we have asked the staff to make sure the parents' forum contributes in a meaningful way to the work of the advisory board and governance.

We like the way the centre welcomes parents who live in different parts of Southwark. However, we have asked staff to improve the way they monitor the impact of their work on families who live within the boundaries of the centre's reach area.

Your children are making good progress at Bessemer Grange and it helps them to settle well when they arrive at school. During the inspection, we were able to observe some of the activities you and your children enjoy such as Stay and Play and Baby Yoga. It was good to see so many of you at different sessions and to see how much you and your children benefit from activities.

Evidence we looked at shows that your centre is helping parents to live healthier lives. Being involved in Cook and Eat sessions has helped many of you learn how to eat healthier foods and make healthy meals for your families.

Once again, many thanks for taking the time to talk to us during the inspection. We wish you and your centre and all the families who use it all the best for the future.

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