

Inspection report for Earlsmead Children's Centre

Local authority	London Borough of Haringey
Inspection number	383754
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Earlsmead Primary School URN 102091 Inspected 13–14 June 2012
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Earlsmead Children's Centre EY429084

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 the head of centre, the early intervention coordinator and staff, representatives from the local authority, the governing body and the joint advisory board. They also spoke to partner services, for example a health visitor and speech and language therapist, parents and other users of the centre.

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

Information about the centre

This phase two centre was designated in September 2008 and is situated in a purpose-built facility on the site of Earlsmead Primary School. Following a local authority reorganisation in January 2012, it has been part of the South Tottenham Children's Centre cluster. Through this it fulfils the full core purpose. Services are available from 9.00am until 6.00pm Monday to Friday during term time only, with its partner settings offering all year provision through the cluster. The principal services are run from the main site with a two-year-old nursery providing childcare. The children's centre is managed by the governing body of Earlsmead Primary School on behalf of the local authority and there is a joint advisory board in place for the cluster. The headteacher of the school is the head of centre, with the early intervention coordinator responsible for the day-to-day organisation.

The reach area covers a large part of Tottenham Green local authority electoral ward, considered to be amongst the most deprived 20% wards in England and the fourth most deprived in London. White British heritage families account for 30% of the community. The remainder is very ethnically diverse. Some 33% of children aged from birth to four years live in households dependent on workless benefits, which is well above the national average. The proportion of eligible families benefiting from

the childcare element of Working Tax Credit in the Tottenham Green ward is 5.4%, which is well below the national average.

There are 454 children aged from birth to five years living in the reach area, with 67% registered at the centre. Children’s skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years provision are typically 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

Earlsmead Children’s Centre provides a good service to families. It has been particularly successful in ensuring that children make excellent progress in their early development through the strong partnership with Earlsmead Primary School. Outcomes are good overall. This is as a result of effective leadership and management at all levels ensuring that provision is good. In addition, dedicated staff provide good levels of care, guidance and support through strong partnership working. As a result, families are unanimous in their views that the centre is very inclusive and welcoming and that staff are there for them, especially in times of crisis. Their positive views are depicted by statements such as, ‘I feel comfortable with all the staff, I trust them a lot,’ and, ‘I could leave my child and I felt the pressure was taken off me.’

Staff have a good knowledge of the local community. The number of families registering overall is increasing significantly. Effective outreach work, including amongst Turkish and Somali families, has ensured that those from minority ethnic groups attending the centre reflect the community it serves. However, staff are hampered in measuring the impact of their actions for some target groups such as lone parents, fathers and disabled children, as the local authority does not provide accurate baseline data. Furthermore, some information in relation to measuring outcomes is only available for the borough as a whole rather than for the reach area.

The range of services offered directly through the centre, and to which it can signpost families to other children’s centres, is good overall. However, at present

there are no cluster activities or services that take place at weekends or evenings which limit access for fathers and those who work.

There are clear lines of responsibility across all levels of leadership and management. A very strong team ethos prevails despite an uncertain period during the local authority's restructuring of its children's centres. The centre's action plan is succinct, and where the data are available they are used well to set measurable targets. Senior leaders and managers have a clear and accurate understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for improvement and there is a strong commitment from partners and staff to see the centre progress even further. The good and improving outcomes reflect this and show that there is a strong capacity to continue to improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work with the local authority to ensure that data are accurate in relation to baseline information about target groups and that as much reach area data as possible are made available to enable the centre to measure the impact more precisely.
- Improve access to services and activities for those who work, and for fathers, by working in conjunction with the other cluster centres to meet their specific needs.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Health measures for childhood obesity and sustained breastfeeding rates are only available for areas wider than the centre's specific reach area. However, both measures show an improving trend and increasing immunisation rates reflect the fact that a large majority of families are engaging well with health services. The centre has a strong focus on improving families' health, giving advice and support through Tiny Teeth drop-ins, healthy eating workshops and good links with specialist services such as speech and language therapists. Families' emotional and mental health is improved through signposting to services such as Parent-Infant Psychological Support and courses such as baby massage. Consequently, a large majority of families are developing a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy.

Parents from the full range of target groups, including the most vulnerable, are unanimous that they trust staff and say their confidence in keeping their children safe has improved through contact with the centre. Structured parenting courses, home safety workshops, and one-to-one support to help with attachment issues all feed into ensuring families know how to keep themselves and their children safe. Staff have good levels of expertise in the use of working with prevention strategies, such as the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), and higher levels of supervision, for example where children are looked after or are subject to child protection plans.

As a result, there are good outcomes for the majority of those children.

Adults and children show high levels of enjoyment at centre activities, such as the popular Stay and Play sessions where parents are encouraged to play and learn with their children. Children behave well because adults model good behaviour. With the link school, the only one in the reach area, the centre can track and measure children's progress very clearly and effectively. The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile results for Earlsmead Primary School show a rapidly improving trend over the past three years and, at 86.2% in 2012, are well above the national figure. The gap between the lowest 20% and the rest has also narrowed significantly to 21.3%, well below the national average. The centre and the school have worked very closely together to achieve these outcomes through initiatives such as the Get Set 4 Nursery Group and careful planning of centre activities to address gaps in children's development. Consequently, children are very well prepared when they move on to the next stage of their education. Enjoyment and achievement are not outstanding overall, however, because the achievements of adults, whilst good, are not as substantial as those of the children. Nevertheless, some adults are improving their personal skills effectively through language classes and groups such as the internet drop-in session. Many say their confidence has grown substantially and have made good progress from their starting points, going on to next level courses or volunteering. 'It has opened other areas I did not know existed,' was a typical comment from those using the centre.

Families feel fully involved in the centre and are comfortable in expressing their views to staff through frequent evaluations or the parents' forum. There is some parent representation on the school governing body and the joint advisory board and a small number of parents volunteer in the centre or the school. The centre supports the wider community well through providing space for groups such as a Turkish language class and for the after-school club. It also runs a 12-place nursery for children on funded two-year-old provision and has made a substantial number of referrals to this programme overall. This, plus effective advice about benefits, housing and support to get back to work, has improved the economic and social well-being of the majority of families.

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	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	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
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How good is the provision?

2

The number of children under five registered at the centre has doubled in the last 12 months and the centre has been especially successful in engaging a wide range of ethnic minority groups as well as teenage parents. However, the local authority is only able to provide baseline data for some target groups, such as the numbers of Black and minority ethnic groups and lone parents in the reach area. This makes it difficult for the centre to measure its success in reaching all target groups. Nevertheless, where it has identified its own hard-to-reach groups and the most vulnerable families and has focused on encouraging them to access services, it has been very successful. This includes young parents who engage well with targeted cluster provision and universal services at the centre. Budgetary constraints, following the local authority's review of children's centre funding, mean that there are no services available in the evenings or weekends, but the centre is working with its cluster partners to rectify this to enable wider access for fathers and those who work.

Popular, well-attended sessions, such as language classes, the twins and triplets group and the four times weekly Stay and Play sessions, are planned with a strong focus on helping children and adults learn and develop well. This leads to good outcomes for the majority of families. Achievement is celebrated well with a 'graduation' ceremony and certificates for children who complete the Get Set 4 Nursery programme. Adults also take great pride in being presented formally with certificates after structured parenting programmes, for example. Consequently, aspirations are raised and built on through extending skills further or volunteering.

The quality of care, guidance and support is enhanced by good partnerships that enable staff to put tailor-made support packages in place. In times of crisis staff react swiftly and support the most vulnerable families very well. This includes accompanying them to hospital, and providing solace in very harrowing situations. Looked after children and those subject to CAFs and child protection plans receive good one-to-one support from family support workers and the community development and outreach worker. Many parents have been empowered and supported to improve their own quality of life through increased confidence and a renewed sense of self-worth. A typical view voiced by a parent was, 'When I came I did not speak English, but I learnt how to deal with my child's behaviour and I was given advice and support to do this.'

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	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Leadership and management at all levels are good. The headteacher, as head of centre, gives a clear vision for the centre and works well with the early intervention coordinator to lead a cohesive team. The governing body effectively challenges and supports the centre and is fully involved and committed to its continuing improvement. Rigorous tracking and the use of data where it is available to monitor progress, ably assisted by the senior monitoring and evaluation officer for the cluster, are enabling the centre to pinpoint where its services are most needed and to build on its successes. However, this tracking is hindered by the lack of some baseline data about target groups.

Although the centre premises are compact, they are welcoming, safe, well-resourced and well used. Staff are experienced and effectively managed. Families also benefit from being signposted to services and groups at other cluster centres, such as the breastfeeding and baby weighing sessions and drop ins with the Citizens Advice Bureau and Jobcentre Plus. All of this has a positive impact on outcomes and results in good value for money.

The reach area is ethnically diverse and the families who come to the centre reflect this well. It is committed to equality and diversity and, as such, everyone treats each other with high levels of respect and shares the view that 'everyone is important'. The building is accessible and staff ensure, through sensitive work with families, that disabled children are fully included. Using the staff of the school to translate, as well as other families to help, language barriers are broken down and the centre has been especially effective in reaching those families from the Turkish and Somali communities. Friendship groups across all backgrounds are established that promote a greater understanding of each other. This was summed up by a parent who said, 'I've been helped to make friendships and it opened other doors to me.'

Safeguarding policies and procedures are clear. Well trained staff ensure that families are protected as they are skilled at recognising any concerns such as domestic abuse or child protection issues. Very close links with the school and good information sharing with other agencies also support safeguarding outcomes well, as concerns are shared and staff are proactive in dealing with them. All appropriate recruitment checks, including Criminal Records Bureau disclosures, are carried out on anyone

working with families.

Clear, well established partnerships, such as those with specialist health services and, particularly, with the school, have had a positive impact on outcomes for families across all areas. Cluster working is still being embedded, but relationships are strengthening and supportive. Families who use the centre are fully involved in evaluating and shaping the services and so work well in partnership with the staff, for example by encouraging others to attend and supporting informally with translations. Children's views are also taken into account well through using photographs to capture their preferences, for example. Consequently, families express very high levels of satisfaction with the services, as reflected in comments such as, 'The staff are fantastic...they have been like a rock to me.'

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	2
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

The report from the last inspection for Earlsmead Primary School, which took place on 13–14 June 2012, was referred to in relation to the leadership and management judgements and attainment on entry to the early years provision and the progress of children.

The linked early years provision has not yet been inspected as it was only registered on 13 November 2012.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Earlsmead Children's Centre on 28 and 29 November 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you for your participation in the inspection and for taking the time to tell us about the centre's work and how staff have helped you and your children. It was very helpful to visit the activities taking place such as the Stay and Play session and thank you for welcoming us into your groups. Here is a summary of what we found.

Outcomes are good overall because the centre is well led and managed and there is good provision made for the families who use it. You told us that you have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lives through drop-in sessions such as Tiny Teeth and healthy eating workshops. Specialist services, for example from the speech and language therapist, and help dealing with emotional or mental health issues have also had a big impact on your lives. You all feel very welcome and safe in the centre because staff give good levels of care, guidance and support and you receive a warm, friendly welcome. You have the trust and confidence to turn to staff in times of crisis. Many of you made similar comments such as, 'I feel comfortable with all the staff; I trust them a lot,' and, 'I could leave my child and I felt the pressure was taken off me.'

Children who come to the centre make excellent progress. This is because the centre works so closely with the school to spot any gaps in their learning. Also, the Get Set 4 Nursery group helps prepare the children very well so they settle quickly when they move on to school. Your own skills and aspirations have been raised well by the centre through English language sessions and courses to help you support your children's learning and encourage good behaviour. One parent voiced the views of many of you by saying, 'When I came I did not speak English, but I learnt how to deal with my child's behaviour and I was given advice and support to do this.' For some of you, this extra confidence has led to volunteer roles in the centre or the school, progressing with your own learning or even returning to work.

Many of you say you have made good friends at the centre and it is clear that it is highly inclusive and reflects the very mixed local community. More and more families are using the services and those that are available across the other children's centres in the South Tottenham cluster. However, it is difficult for the centre to measure how well it is doing in relation to some specific groups such as lone parents, fathers and families of disabled children. This is because it does not get enough information from the local authority about the numbers from some groups who live in the area. This is something we have asked the centre to work with the local authority to improve.

Also, although there is a good range of services available at your centre and across the cluster as a whole, there are no groups or services available in the evenings or at weekends. This makes it difficult for parents who work and for fathers to make use of the good provision that is on offer during the rest of the week. We have asked the staff to work with the other centres to address this.

Everyone, including the governing body of the school, families, partners and, of course, the staff, is committed to continuing to improve outcomes for families in the community and to increase the numbers who use the services. Although staff had to go through a period of uncertainty while the local authority reorganised its children's centre services, their knowledge of local needs and their strong teamwork have kept the good quality services going which help families to improve their lives. This is particularly so for those who need help most. Having already had a positive impact on outcomes and improved the lives of many families, 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.