

Inspection report for Altmore Children's Centre

Local authority	Newham Council
Inspection number	409929
Inspection dates	12–13 December 2012
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Altmore Infant School
Linked early years and childcare, if 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.

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

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, the local authority, the children's centre manager and members of the advisory board. They met with a number of representatives of services who work through the children's centre, including health visitors and the outreach workers. Inspectors spoke to groups of parents. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the centre's self-evaluation, delivery plan, user evaluations and case study information.

Information about the centre

Altmore Children's Centre is a phase three children's centre that provides full core purpose provision. It operates in the Wall End ward from two sites based within Altmore Infant School.

The headteacher has overall responsibility for the school and centre. The centre manager is responsible for the day-to-day running of the centre. The local authority funds the centre. The advisory board consists of representatives from partner organisations and key stakeholders that work with the children's centre, the local authority and parents.

The majority of the families who use the centre are of Indian heritage. A growing number of families using the centre are of Sri Lankan origin. The area is one of the 20% most deprived wards nationally. The children's centre has 1598 children under five in its area. About 30% of children and adults who use the centre come from homes that are dependent on benefits and where no-one is in work. When they start early years provision, the majority of children have skills, knowledge and abilities that are well below those expected for their age.

The range of activities offered by the centre includes support at the local community baby clinic, antenatal birth clinic, breastfeeding support and baby massage. The centre has links with health visitors, community midwives and speech therapists. It signposts families to a range of providers that offer adult education, volunteering opportunities, and activities designed to support parents and carers back into employment and training. The centre opens 50 weeks each year on weekdays from 8 to 6.15 pm and 7pm Wednesdays.

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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

Altmore Children’s Centre is outstanding because of its very high quality provision and excellent targeting of services that fully meet families’ needs. It is particularly successful in engaging with over 80% of children in its area. The centre also engages with all priority groups very well, including teenage parents, lone parents and fathers. The outstanding provision is based on highly effective use of data gathered by the centre, together with those provided by the local authority. The centre places great emphasis on gaining feedback from all its families after every session to improve its services even further. Comments such as ‘The centre is like a family and they have been so supportive’ and ‘My child is learning to speak English and is confident with other children’ are typical of many.

A significant strength of the centre is the way in which it engages parents and children in all the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage for children aged from birth to five. It is particularly successful in developing all parents’ understanding of early years education and how it works in practice. Throughout the centre, there are high quality resources and displays that successfully promote parental awareness of all the areas of learning in a child’s development, in particular their communication and language skills. Consequently, the percentage of children who achieve the expected skills at the end of Reception in the area is consistently increasing year on year.

Exceptionally close work with partner agencies ensures that health, learning and care

services are seamless for all families. A carefully balanced and adaptable programme of activities is tailored to support groups and individuals. Excellent attention to inclusion drives the centre's work, for example by the use of multi-language labels and displays throughout the centre and volunteers who speak the community languages. Staff make sure that the centre services are known to all new families with young children in the area and that it is at the heart of family learning for the very large majority.

The headteacher and children's centre manager, supported by highly skilled staff, provides outstanding and inspirational leadership and management. The self-evaluation is accurate. The centre's delivery plan is a detailed document, with ambitious targets aimed at improving outcomes for families, especially those in priority groups. However, the centre does not sufficiently monitor the work of all its commissioned partners in order to assess the impact of their services. The centre demonstrates an excellent track record of improving outcomes for families and enjoys high levels of parental satisfaction. The sustained development of the centre's impact on the community and the high quality of provision means that the centre has an outstanding capacity to sustain further improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Strengthen the evaluation process by developing rigorous procedures to measure the impact of all commissioned services to inform future delivery plans.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

The centre is highly effective in engaging a very large majority of families in the area to participate in its extensive range of health services, such as joint keep-fit sessions for adults and children. A parent commented, 'I love to have the chance to dance with my child.' As a result of a programme to reduce childhood obesity and promote breastfeeding, 85% of mothers are sustaining breastfeeding, which is well above the borough average. Families benefit from very well integrated services provided by health professionals to promote their well-being. For example, referrals to the 'Stop Smoking' programme have resulted in high numbers of expectant mothers giving up smoking.

The centre is particularly successful in the way in which it engages parents and children in all of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Consequently, children make outstanding progress from their starting points in developing the skills that will help them in the future. The achievement gap between the 20% most disadvantaged children and the rest in the local area is closing each year. Fifty-eight parents passed recognised literacy and numeracy courses in the last year, increasing their confidence in supporting their children's development. One parent said, 'I can now talk to my children's teacher and help my children with their

homework.'

Families feel safe at the centre because of the very thorough checks and risk assessments that are carried out. Parents' awareness of home safety is very much improved and they value the provision of home safety workshops that include fire brigade visits to check on smoke alarms. Adults are confident to approach the centre with concerns about community issues. Case studies show significant impact and improved outcomes for children subject to child protection plans and for looked after children. Very effective working with partner agencies ensures that families who may be at risk of harm and children assessed under the Common Assessment Framework are closely monitored and kept safe.

The centre plays a significant role in the life of the community. In response to local need, it has set up a youth club for local teenagers. There are high levels of enjoyment and participation in the sport and social activities provided. Volunteers are a key strength of the centre's philosophy of engagement and support. Currently six multilingual volunteers actively participate in the centre's work. In the last year, 82 parents have completed the English for Speakers of Other Languages course (ESOL). One parent said, 'I now have the confidence to talk to other people.' The centre's comprehensive back-to-work programme has improved parents' self-confidence and work-readiness. For example, the centre has set up retail workshops on employment opportunities at the Westfield Stratford shopping centre. Eighty-seven parents have been provided with advice, leading to a very good understanding of their rights to housing and debt management, improving their economic stability.

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	1
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	1
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	1
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	1

How good is the provision?

1

The centre is very effective in engaging most families in the area and there are very high take-up rates of services, particularly by those in its priority groups. For example, the DADI (Dads Are Doing It) antenatal course for expectant fathers gives

them very good opportunities to learn and practise safe baby care. One father said, 'It is a very interesting course and it makes the difference.' High quality crèche facilities are provided so that parents are able to attend courses at the centre. Due to high demand for activities, the centre prioritises families in focus groups such as children with special educational needs and/or disabilities with guaranteed places. The excellent links with health professionals, local schools and other agencies ensure that the centre has the necessary information to plan for and meet families' individual needs very well.

The provision of learning and development for both children and adults is outstanding. Children benefit from very good learning opportunities for speaking and listening, and hands-on learning play areas. They are able to work and play inside and outside in equally stimulating surroundings. This means children make outstanding progress in all areas of their learning. Staff make excellent use of assessments of children's achievements to plan the next steps in learning. Case studies and individual parents highlight how they have positively changed their attitudes and behaviour following attendance at courses and that this has made them stronger people and better parents. A parent who attended a course which included behaviour management techniques said, 'I am now much better able to manage my child's behaviour.'

Adults were very keen to speak about the high-quality care and support that they receive from the centre. The open-door policy provides a listening ear to support children and families all year round. The centre knows its families very well and uses this knowledge effectively to shape its provision so that outcomes for all groups are outstanding. Careful assessment of families, especially those in most need, on a one-to-one basis ensures high quality, tailor-made support and accurate signposting to the most appropriate agencies. In the last year, the centre has been particularly successful in helping 20 families to understand their rights to housing as a result of homelessness or overcrowding.

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	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

The headteacher provides high quality strategic direction. Staff fully understand their roles and lines of responsibility. The centre manager provides excellent professional supervision for all staff, which supports outstanding performance. Governance and accountability arrangements are well defined and highly effective. The advisory

board very effectively monitors performance, reviews progress and contributes to future planning. Managers and staff are enthusiastic, highly motivated and committed to improvement.

All staff are involved in the self-evaluation process, which results in a very accurate review, which, with strong local knowledge and robust target setting, underpins the centre's outstanding capacity for improvement. However, the centre does not always measure the impact of the work of all commissioned services to evaluate the effectiveness of their provision. The work of the headteacher, centre manager and other leaders is highly focused on an identified set of priorities in meeting and sustaining ambitious targets.

The centre promotes the inclusion of children and their families very well. The centre's high quality resourced 'soft play' room has significantly increased engagement and outcomes for disabled children and those with special educational needs in its own and neighbouring areas. Outcomes for all key priority groups are very good. The centre has effectively contributed to narrowing of the achievement gap of the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage in the area.

Procedures for safeguarding are excellent and, together with the centre's effective early intervention and multi-agency cooperation, ensure that families, including those experiencing domestic violence, feel safe and that their emotional and social needs are effectively met. The centre manager chairs the local child protection working group promoting best practice within the child protection agenda. Checks on the suitability of adults to work with children are thorough and child protection arrangements are secure and updated regularly. The centre has excellent quality assurance and risk assessment systems. Staff training is regularly updated.

The centre takes a full and active role in developing statutory and voluntary organisations such as the Children's Country Holiday Fund that regularly provides opportunities for local and residential holidays to vulnerable families. Families express high satisfaction with the services the centre provides. Outreach services are highly effective in engaging with the families in the area. They have been very successful in engaging with potentially hard-to-reach groups, such as Roma families. The centre's impact on the community results in consistently improving outcomes and its outstanding quality provision engages the vast majority of families in the area. Resources are managed effectively. Its environment is sustainable by making very good use of solar panels and sensory lighting. The centre provides excellent value for money.

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	1
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	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
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	1

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

The findings of the Altmore School Ofsted Interim Assessment.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Altmore Children's Centre on 12–13 December 2012. We judged your centre as outstanding overall.

We are very grateful to all the parents and representatives from the centre and the professional partners who took the time to come and tell us about the work they do. It was a pleasure to meet you and your children and it was very helpful to hear what the centre means to you and the difference it makes to your lives. You gave us a very positive picture of the centre and this was very useful to us in making our final judgements.

The centre is very successful because the leadership provided by the headteacher and centre manger is outstanding. We were particularly impressed with the very high number of families using the centre who benefit from its excellent range of services. All the staff work together extremely well as a team and they all have highly effective relationships with their professional partners such as health visitors and midwives. Consequently, children benefit from healthier lifestyles. Everyone who works at, or out of, the centre communicates very well with each other and as a

result there is an excellent understanding of your needs and of others in the community as a whole.

All staff are extremely passionate about ensuring families are safe. As a result, families receive very high levels of support when they are most vulnerable. The learning and development opportunities within the centre are outstanding. There is an excellent range of activities and training provided, enabling all families to develop their skills and knowledge to be successful in returning to education or employment. Staff deliver an exceptional range of high quality early years services, which enable your children to benefit from excellent play experiences. They help you understand how to interact with your children positively and support their learning at home. Consequently your children make outstanding progress in developing the skills they will need for the future.

Safeguarding arrangements are excellent within the centre. The staff provide a very friendly and welcoming environment and develop trusting relationships with all families. Parents told us how much this helps them to seek help and advice when they need to. All staff work together exceptionally well to ensure that any issues concerning children's welfare are identified early and relevant action is taken to keep all children safe.

We have found one area for improvement and the centre's leaders are already aware of it. We are recommending that they look more closely at the work of services provided at the centre. By doing this, they will be in a stronger position to show how well they are doing and will be able to plan even better things for you.

We wish you every success for the future.

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