

Inspection report for South Isleworth Children's Centre

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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Sunnysmiles Childcare Ltd EY366799

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 centre coordinator and staff, representatives from the local authority, and the advisory board. They also spoke to partner representatives from health and family support agencies, parents and other users of the centre.

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

Information about the centre

This phase two centre was designated in September 2007 and has met the full core purpose since December 2009. It is located in the grounds of Worple Primary School. The centre team comprises a children's centre coordinator and qualified teacher who work across three centres, a centre practitioner and a receptionist. The centre is managed, on behalf of the local authority, by a joint advisory board set up to oversee four local children's centres. Services are available from 9am until 5pm Monday to Friday, all year apart from Christmas and bank holidays. Services are also delivered from a satellite site in the Bridgelink Community Centre on the Ivybridge estate.

The centre serves the Ivybridge and Worton estates of Hounslow, an area of high economic and social deprivation. Of the seven Super Output Areas in the reach area, three are ranked in the top 10%, and three in the top 30% most deprived in England. Overcrowded housing is common. The area is very ethnically diverse with 66% of school children coming from Black and Minority ethnic (BME) families, the largest of which are Black African (15%) and Asian (10%). White British heritage children account for 34% of the school population. There is a large Somali

community living in the area. Over 60% of those living on the Ivybridge estate have English as an additional language.

Some 32% of children 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 is 33% which is substantially higher than the national average.

There are 865 children aged under five years living in the reach area, with 97% registered at the centre and 67% reached. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years provision are typically below the levels 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

South Isleworth Children's Centre provides a good service to the large majority of families in its reach area. It has been particularly successful in engaging those who need help most and providing them with excellent levels of care, guidance and support. Families are unanimous in praising staff for what they do for them, especially in relation to the outstanding way they and their children are safeguarded and protected. This is reflected in comments such as, 'I got tremendous support from staff. Actually they are not "staff" they are more like a family.' It is evident that very good levels of staff training, expertise and knowledge of the area, combined with the wide range of partnerships fostered by the centre, have had a positive impact on all outcomes.

A large majority of families feel they have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lives. However, the data to show the impact of the centre in relation to childhood obesity, sustained breastfeeding and immunisation rates are not available for the reach area. Sourcing whatever data there are for health and other outcome measures is largely the responsibility of each individual centre. The local authority has not provided regular up-to-date reach area information for several years, such as baseline information for various target groups. Furthermore the centre does not have

consistent systems in place to measure the longer term outcomes of the work done to improve adults' education or economic well-being. This has hampered staff in showing the impact of their work, although they have sought to overcome this by sourcing as much health and baseline data as they can themselves.

Families have very positive views of the centre. They have outstanding levels of confidence in the staff and therefore feel they can put forward their ideas informally whenever they want. Their views are regularly canvassed at the end of activities and are acted upon, for example, by putting on specific courses requested by parents. However, only a small number of parents play an active role in the centre's governance as only a few attend the parents' forum and, while there is parent representation from other centres on the joint advisory board, there is none at present from this one. In addition, while children's preferences are noted, this is not done in a structured way to ensure they are fully used to shape services.

The centre has a good capacity to continue to improve. There is good leadership and management at all levels. Although the full-time staff team is small in number it is fully committed to improving the lives of those in the community. There is a palpable sense of teamwork and constantly looking to how the centre can build on the good and outstanding outcomes that have been achieved so far. Everyone has a clear understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for development. However, while the business plan lays out clear timescales, it contains too many priorities and the lack of data hampers the centre's ability to set measurable targets.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work with the local authority and health services to plan services and measure the impact of the centre's work more precisely by:
 - ensuring that the most up-to-date data are available, at a reach area level, in relation to baseline information about target groups and outcome data, especially with regard to health outcomes
 - using this information to focus on a smaller number of key priorities in the business plan and to set specific measurable targets
 - developing effective systems for recording the longer-term impact of the services it provides for adults.
- Ensure adults' and children's views are formally taken into account by:
 - involving families in the strategic management and governance of the centre by increasing the membership and regularity of parents' forum meetings and recruiting parents onto the joint advisory board
 - developing a structured method to canvass the views of children.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Childhood obesity levels have fallen over the last three years to 12.5% in 2012. Immunisation rates rose by 6% to 87% in 2012 and sustained breastfeeding rates

also improved significantly each quarter last year to 67.8%. However, all data are only available for the borough as a whole and therefore it is hard to measure the centre's specific impact. Nevertheless, feedback from parents shows that the large majority have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lives, assisted by activities such as healthy cooking, and a focus on exercise such as yoga and children's football. Weekly baby clinics and breastfeeding support held in the centre attract very high numbers and are an excellent source of information for families.

Many workshops and activities, such as first aid, safety in the home and cycling with young children, ensure families have an excellent understanding of how to protect their children. A very wide range of structured parenting courses, some specifically for Somali families, has led to the large majority of families, including those most in need of support, feeling much more confident in their parenting skills and understanding of how to keep their children safe. Staff are very adept at using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to engage other agencies to support and safeguard children. They build excellent trusting relationships with families. This ensures that there are greatly improved outcomes for all of the most vulnerable families the centre is working with, as well as looked after children and those subject to child protection plans, with children 'stepping down' to lower or no supervision as a result of the centre's targeted support.

Very popular 'Stay and Play' sessions held at both sites are testament to high levels of enjoyment. Parents say their children get very excited about coming to the groups and they often see dramatic improvements in their speech, behaviour and independence. Comments such as, 'I feel really happy with the way my son has developed, it's such a relief', sum up parents' views. Tracking of children who move on to school shows they consistently achieve higher scores at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage than those who have not come to the centre. They settle well because of 'Getting Ready for School' sessions and close working links with the staff. The reach area schools have shown a significant improvement in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile results over the past three years and, at an average of 75%, are far higher than the borough and national levels. Over the same period, the achievement gap between the lowest 20% and the rest has narrowed to 23.67%, which is significantly better than the national average.

Most adults using the centre develop their skills well through the many adult education courses and taster sessions that are run, especially at the Bridgelink centre. Several have been encouraged to go on to further training or to set up their own enterprises, such as running yoga classes. However, the centre does not consistently record the longer-term benefits to adults of laying these foundations. This is also the case where parents have accessed the very popular drop-in service for help with benefits or housing problems or have been put in touch with Job Centre Plus. The centre has helped 19 families access free nursery provision for two-year-olds. Some have seen significant improvements in their economic and social well-being as a result of all of this but, while some outcomes are recorded, the longer-term impact is largely anecdotal.

Families feel fully involved in the centre and are able to express their views freely. They shape services effectively and are responded to positively. For example, after attending a structured parenting programme, parents felt the need for more confidence building and so assertiveness training was provided for them. Although there is only one volunteer at the moment, this is because five recent volunteers have progressed to paid roles as crèche workers or other employment. Parents support the centre and each other very well, especially through translating some of the many languages spoken by centre families. They are reluctant to become more formally involved however, through attending parents' forum meetings or sitting on the advisory board.

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 staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the make-up and sensitivities of the local community and have significantly increased the numbers of families registering and accessing services. This is especially so as services have been taken out to those who need them most through the satellite site on the Ivybridge estate. This has ensured that the needs of the large majority of families are being met. The centre has been particularly successful in encouraging families to attend where either a parent or child is disabled. The number of fathers engaging with services increased significantly in 2012 as more attended groups or were signposted to the Saturday Fun Club at another centre. The proportion of lone parents who come to the centre is relatively low but there is no accurate baseline data for this and other target groups and many are reluctant to disclose their status at registration. Overall, families of Black or Minority Ethnic backgrounds account for about half of all attendances and the centre has been particularly successful in fostering the trust of the Somali community.

Children are helped to learn well through activities that are carefully planned to focus

on early development, and through good modelling by staff, including the crèche workers and the qualified teacher. This also helps parents to support their children and so improve outcomes. A commonly held view was, 'It's a very exciting environment where my children have learnt to socialise, share and have fun at the same time.' Certificates and celebratory meals encourage participants to build on their achievements, such as in English for Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) courses, and to progress to make further improvements in their lives.

All staff, including the locality outreach workers and centre practitioner, ensure there are outstanding levels of care, guidance and support offered to families, tailored to meet very specific or personal needs. Parents speak about staff going well beyond expectations to bring in specialist support or advice, for example for autism, or to give one-to-one help with behaviour or bonding concerns. The way other services are galvanised to help, especially in times of crisis, such as for the increasing numbers who are under threat of eviction following changes to their benefits, is extremely effective in leading to often excellent outcomes for the most vulnerable families.

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

The centre coordinator provides excellent day-to-day organisation. She is ably supported by the two full-time staff who share her vision to continue to build on their good work and continue to improve outcomes for local families. The joint advisory board, although relatively new, is fully involved in the strategic development of the centre and partners are well represented on this board, although parents are less so. The local authority monitors the centre well and is supportive in all but the provision of up-to-date reach area data. Self-evaluation by all of those involved in the centre is accurate and used to set priorities in the business plan. However, at present, while many priorities are suitably ambitious, there are too many to ensure targets are sharply focused.

There is a full timetable of activities at both sites. The split between those open to all and targeted groups, such as 'Toddler Talk' and adult education classes, is good. This ensures the majority of target groups engage well and have services aligned to meet their needs. Staff are used very effectively; for example crèche workers help run 'Stay and Play' sessions so that children can be left in their care while parents

attend courses. All of this results in good or better outcomes for families and ensures there is good value for money.

The staff and attendance at groups reflect the multicultural community very well. Equality and diversity are central to this very inclusive centre's work. It is proactive in helping foster harmony in the community, for example by jointly hosting an anti-tribalism workshop. A weekly ESOL 'Stay and Play' session, celebrating Chinese New Year, and encouraging the sharing of food from other cultures all support this well. The building is fully accessible to all and is warm, welcoming and very secure. Hence the achievement gaps are narrowing as families feel comfortable and able to benefit from the many services on offer.

Highly trained staff and robust systems to record and act swiftly on any concerns ensure that safeguarding is outstanding. Multi-agency support through the use of the Common Assessment Framework, excellent links with the social care practice consultant and referrals through the single point of access system ensure families, especially the most vulnerable, are extremely well safeguarded and protected. This includes those who may have concerns about domestic violence, where staff do not shy away from taking immediate action to protect vulnerable families. All appropriate Criminal Records Bureau checks are carried out or verified on anyone working with families.

Wide-ranging and well-established partnerships cover most aspects of families' needs very well. Strong links with adult education providers, social care, health services, including the family nurse practitioner working with young parents, Job Centre Plus and social care ensure that families are given excellent support. There are very productive links with two of the four reach area schools as well as with the linked day care provision and independent childcare providers such as childminders. All of this has a positive impact on outcomes for families, particularly those in most need of support.

The centre regularly evaluates its services although there has not been a recent annual satisfaction survey. Nevertheless the large number of families spoken to during the inspection shows that they have very high levels of satisfaction, especially with regard to the excellent care they receive and how well they and their children develop skills. 'Anyone who comes here once will always come back', was a comment summing up those positive opinions. Children's views are taken into account through observing what they enjoy but this is not done or recorded in a structured way.

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	2

effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	
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	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 findings of the last inspection of Sunnysmiles Childcare Ltd conducted in June 2009 were taken into account in relation to the safeguarding and partnership links.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the South Isleworth Children's Centre on 6–7 February 2013. We judged the centre as good overall. There are some outstanding features, such as the quality of care, guidance and support many families receive and the way you and your children are safeguarded. This means that you all feel very safe and secure in the centre and have exceptionally high levels of trust in the staff. One comment that summed up the views of many was, 'The best thing about coming here is the staff, they are so friendly, it's like my second home.'

Thank you for your participation in the inspection and for taking the time to tell us about the centre's work and how very positive you are about how staff have helped you and your children. It was very helpful to visit the activities taking place, such as the 'Stay and Play' at the Bridgelink Community Centre and the 'Toddler Talk' session. Thank you for welcoming us into your groups.

Outcomes are good overall because the centre makes good provision for the families who use it. You are helped to have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lives through the cooking groups and the chance to exercise at yoga and for your children to keep fit at football and other fun activities. There are very high numbers who come to the baby clinic at the main centre and at the Bridgelink Community

Centre and to the breastfeeding drop-in sessions. The impact of all of this is hard to measure, however, as the figures for the number of children who are obese at the end of the Reception Year and for how many babies are still being breastfed at two months old are only available for the whole of Hounslow and not just for the children's centre's local area. We have asked the centre to work with the local authority and the health services to try to get more accurate figures so that the impact of the centre in the immediate area can be seen more clearly.

The centre does a lot to help you keep your children safe with first aid and home safety workshops, for example. Many of you have also attended parenting courses or have been given individual support with your child's behaviour and say this has had a very big impact on your lives. Because everyone feels very welcome and secure in the centre, you all have complete trust in staff and say that it is like a 'second home' and the staff are more like friends and family.

More and more families are coming to the centre's main site and to the Bridgelink centre. That centre has been especially successful at ensuring a large number of Somali families attend and have their needs met well. Also other groups, such as fathers and families where a parent or a child is disabled, are coming to the centre more and more. There appear to be relatively smaller numbers of single parents who use the centre. However, the local authority does not have the information about how many lone parents are in the local area and some families are reluctant to disclose this information when they register so this may not be an accurate picture.

Children who come to the centre make good progress. They settle well when they move on because of sessions such as 'Getting Ready for School' and the good focus on early learning at all the sessions. Parents summed up the views of many by saying, 'I feel really happy with the way my son has developed; it's such a relief' and 'They have helped my son to be more assertive.' Similarly many adults also make good progress after attending the many courses or taster sessions, most of which are run at the Bridgelink centre. However, the centre does not always track what you go on to do in the longer term after it has given you the foundation to build on. Some of you have been successful in getting work after volunteering at the centre and others give valuable support in translating for groups, for example. You all feel that you can voice your views and that they are taken into account to shape services, for example, the provision of an assertiveness course. However, fewer of you want to be involved more formally in the centre's governance by attending parents' forum meetings or sitting on the joint advisory board. Also there is no structured way to find out what children enjoy. These are aspects we have asked the centre to improve and that you can help with directly.

The centre coordinator leads the small, but very supportive staff team very well. Everyone, including the members of the joint advisory board, the local authority and the partners are united in wanting to continue to improve services and outcomes for families. They have a clear understanding of where the centre's strengths and areas for development are although the business plan has too many priorities at the moment. We have asked the centre to improve this and also, when there is more up-

to-date information available, to use this to measure targets and outcomes more precisely. Despite this, the centre can show that outcomes for families are good and that families are very happy with the services and care they receive. As a result, the centre is well placed to continue to improve.

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