

Inspection report for West Hill Children's Centre

Local authority	London Borough of Wandsworth
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	West Hill Primary School (URN: 101024)
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not 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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with centre users, leaders and managers, health and local authority representatives, front line workers and partners.

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

Information about the centre

West Hill Children's Centre was designated in January 2008 as a phase two children's centre and started to deliver services in January 2009. Around 52% of families living in the centre's catchment area are from a White British background. However, the area is very culturally and economically diverse, with about 48% of families coming from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds. Of the families who speak English as an additional language, 28% speak Urdu and 14% speak Somali.

The centre is based in the heart of the borough and is on the border of all three Wandsworth localities. Families who live within walking distance of the centre come from the third most deprived area in England, while some families live in some of the least deprived wards in London. There are approximately 1,915 families in the reach area, of which 41% live in deprived areas. Overall 66% of families in the most deprived areas are in receipt of workless benefits, which is significantly above national and local authority averages. The reach area also has a high number of pupils eligible for free school meals. The reach area is made up of a mix of social housing, mainly in high-rise blocks of flats, but also has some very large and expensive homes.

The centre is a stand-alone centre that is located on the site of West Hill Primary School. The centre delivers all of its services and activities, except family support, in the children's centre building, which is also the base for a multi-disciplinary team. The centre is governed by the governing body of West Hill Primary School, on behalf

of the local authority, with an advisory board that is made up of school governors, parents and partners. Health services are delivered on site and family support is provided through a local authority contract for the whole of the borough.

Data indicates that children enter nursery provision with a much narrower range of skills and abilities than those typically expected for their age, specifically in relation to issues linked to English as an additional language. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, children in Wandsworth local authority area reach or exceed expected levels of development across the six areas of learning, including communication, language and literacy.

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

The inspirational leadership in this outstanding and highly effective centre ensures the needs of families are at the heart of all that it does. The excellent leadership and outstanding support for families from a dedicated and enthusiastic team result in outstanding outcomes. The centre has established itself at the heart of the community and this has resulted in increasing engagement of families, especially those in targeted groups. Many parents told inspectors that ‘this is our second home’. Priority plans for the centre clearly identify key groups, barriers to participation and actions to overcome these. This ensures all target groups are engaging with the centre and are also fully involved in decision making.

From the moment you walk into the centre you are greeted with a welcoming smile. The studious air from parents runs alongside the buzz of children enjoying activities in the crèche and play sessions. Parents have gained in confidence from attendance at the centre and are quick to let staff know what is working well and where they feel some changes would make things better. For example, the centre has changed the timings of the come and play sessions to enable more families to come on a weekly basis.

Health outcomes are improving rapidly, with breastfeeding rates above national figures. ‘The breastfeeding club has really made a difference,’ said one parent. ‘I just

wish it had been around when I had my first child.' However not all health data is captured and health services do not share all of their participation data with the centre. For example, they do not share how many parents attend baby weighing clinic where they do not also attend the 'stay and play' session.

Children are making outstanding progress in developing skills that will prepare them for the future. In 2012, Early Years Foundation Stage profile results show that 72% of children in the most deprived areas reached a good level of development. The school states they can tell which children have accessed centre services before they start in nursery class because they, and their parents, are more prepared for school. Parents are involved in training and many have gained qualifications. The centre tracks the achievements of individuals well and has clear records of all training attended at the centre as well as the outcomes for those who have attended training. The centre is rightly proud of two parents who have accessed higher education and gone on to study for a degree.

Priorities and targets are clearly focused on what needs to happen next and identify aims, how to attain them and who is responsible. The centre manager knows exactly what progress is being made and where there are any issues. However, updated or annotated plans are not displayed to enable staff to understand the impact of their work and that of their colleagues. When spoken to, staff know precisely where they are in relation to their personal and centre targets; however, not all staff are consistently recording the outcomes of their work to enable the centre to clearly show the progress they are making.

Safeguarding is given the highest priority at the centre. Robust systems, policies and procedures underpin the excellent practice of staff and guarantee the well-being and safety of users. Excellent assessment of individual needs results in individually bespoke services and support. The centre's excellent local knowledge of parents from ethnic minority groups ensures these families are identified and encouraged to access centre services and activities. As a result, 71% of families in the main target area, which is an 800-metre radius round the centre, are fully engaged with centre services.

The strong leadership, robust analysis of need and excellent provision result in outstanding outcomes and show the centre has outstanding capacity to improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- The local authority should develop information-sharing protocols with health services to enable the centre to obtain clear evidence of the take-up of health services in the centre, especially where families are not registered with the centre.
- Develop a systematic approach to recording progress against targets and priorities in the plan, and recording individual outcome successes, so that:
 - all staff implement recording procedures consistently

- the centre, centre users and centre partners can clearly see the progress that has been made on the plan and what else needs to be done.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

The health of users in West Hill's reach area is improving in many ways and the centre is making an excellent contribution to supporting this. Health visitor appointments are held in the centre and are always busy. Speech and language drop-in sessions are very well attended and are identifying where additional support is needed. Peri-natal support is also having an excellent impact on mental health outcomes, with nearly all attendees stating they felt their well-being had improved. Obesity rates are declining as information and training are available to parents to help them understand about healthy eating and the importance of exercise. There is no data available on smoking cessation so the centre has concentrated on information and support for families to have smoke-free homes. Families make the most of the imaginatively transformed outdoor environment, especially during the messy play sessions, and the garden is always accessible, allowing children to run and play freely and develop their physical skills. 'The messy play sessions are wonderful,' state many parents. 'They give your child a chance to do things you couldn't do with them at home.'

Children's behaviour in the centre shows that both they and their parents are increasing in confidence and developing an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe. The early years practitioners act as excellent role models, supporting parents where needed. The centre arranges for home safety checks and equipment for families who need it, and home safety is discussed in 'Parents Voice' sessions on a regular basis. The centre's involvement with children who have a child protection or children-in-need plan through the 'Step Down' programme, in conjunction with use of the Common Assessment Framework, ensures that families most in need of support are developing skills to help them deal with the difficulties of everyday life. 'I really don't know where I would be without this centre,' stated a number of parents who have made significant changes to their lives to benefit both themselves and their children. The sharing of information about all children who are involved with social care, alongside referring families to the centre when they are below the threshold for social work involvement, is helping to ensure all families who need support receive some help.

Children are making excellent progress from very low starting points. Most children start in maintained nursery provision when they reach three years of age. As a result, the link between the centre and school is exceptionally strong. Planning and information is shared, enabling the centre to offer a holistic learning experience to children. The centre also works closely with other maintained nursery provision in the reach area to ensure children's transitions to school are well supported. The universal play sessions at the centre enable early years practitioners to model excellent practice to parents and, as a result, children settle quickly into the crèche when parents attend training. There are many interesting opportunities for parents to play and learn with their children through courses that promote family learning. This gives

them confidence and encouragement to support and value their children’s learning at home. Parents also make exceptional progress in their learning. Many parents have attended English and mathematics courses at level one and two. Retention levels are exceptionally high, as is demand. ‘We could fill the courses twice over,’ said the manager, ‘as once parents have started learning they are keen to do more.’

Families using the children’s centre are fully engaged in its governance. The chair of the advisory board started as a centre user and has also recently been voted in as a parent governor. Parents also contribute to governance of the centre through ‘Parents Space’ sessions and feed back their views through evaluations and surveys. The centre is very aware of language and literacy issues in the reach area and uses pictorial displays as well as written displays to help parents understand what is happening in the centre. Photographs of the members of the advisory board, along with a statement of their aims and intentions, help parents to identify who they can talk to if they have anything they want to raise at the advisory board. The centre is significant in many users’ lives and, as a result, parents are eager and willing volunteers, with this enthusiasm continuing when children move into school.

Unemployment in some parts of the area is exceptionally high. However, the centre offers a variety of information, advice, training and support to help parents to prepare for the world of work. The Family Information Service works closely with the centre and provides support to families who are looking for childcare. The advice drop-in sessions are very well attended and provide help and information about benefits and welfare. However, the centre is aware that the up-coming changes to benefits will impact on a lot of families within the reach area and is realistic about what it will mean for them, such as having to move out of the area or having a much reduced income. ‘It can be very hard for families to hear about the impact changes will have on them,’ said the manager, ‘but it is not fair to them to pretend everything will be all right; they need to be prepared and realistic and we will support them however we can.’

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

Participation in centre activities is improving year on year, especially for targeted groups. The well-established and highly successful partnerships between the centre and other professionals, along with the locality principal social worker being located on site, ensure that the assessment of need is robust and extremely well informed. The local knowledge of staff in the centre and the school and the involvement of parents ensure that those who are hardest to reach, and need support the most, receive it. Once parents find out about the centre they are keen to share this with friends and family, and many parents attend the centre for the first time accompanied by another parent who is already a centre user. Liaison with statutory services to ensure the appropriate support is in place is excellent. Every contact made with families is recorded and shows that families often turn to the centre in times of crisis as they are confident that they will be well supported and their well-being is of the highest priority. The centre is full of informative literature about universal and targeted services available to families, from breastfeeding support to help if suffering from domestic abuse.

The children's centre provides outstanding activities of high quality to help children learn and develop. Crèche staff work closely with speech and language staff, take on extra training and implement speech and language plans in their planning of activities. The small but well-resourced crèche room is used imaginatively, with displays and information about children's learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Clear and informative learning journeys show children's starting points, photographs of what they do and the progress they make, and link to the next steps in their learning. Apart from the English and mathematics courses, the centre also runs regular English for Speakers of Other Languages courses and provides training that leads to other qualifications such as childcare or information technology. The centre streams groups of learners so that those who are ready to progress can do so without impacting on new learners. This is ensuring that progress is rapid and learners remain involved and motivated. Parents' and children's achievements are routinely celebrated in the centre and photographs of ceremonies show parents who are rightly proud of their achievements.

Families are provided with excellent personalised care and support. Several parents told inspectors of the positive impact this has had on their lives. For example, the centre has ensured support is in place for children with special educational needs before they start in maintained nursery provision, preventing families from having to wait for several months for one-to-one support while their child is assessed. The exceptional knowledge and expertise of the family support workers, and the dedication and commitment of all staff, ensure very personalised support. Parents who shared their stories with inspectors stated, 'I don't know where I would be without this centre, they have made such a difference to all of us.' Case studies clearly show where centre staff have helped to turn lives around.

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

Data provided by the local authority is used exceptionally well as a starting point for considering need and planning future services. The manager's excellent understanding of data results in searching and rigorous analyses which provide the basis for their clearly identified priorities for the reach area. Monitoring and evaluation of individual activities and services along with overall monitoring of the centre's performance are ensuring that provision is very well matched to the needs of families in the area. Regular meetings between the centre manager and the local authority ensure everyone is aware of the centre's aims and enable all those responsible to work in an integrated way. The high expectations of the manager and head of school, and rigorous self-challenge to improve all aspects of what they do, ensure outcomes are continually improving.

There are strong lines of accountability and all staff are clear about their responsibilities. Staff receive excellent day-to-day management and guidance from the centre manager and also have professional supervision arrangements related to their specific role. The structure of support in the centre ensures that all staff have someone to turn to for guidance and support when needed. Governance arrangements are well embedded and the advisory board has representation from parents and partners who have an excellent understanding of their roles in holding the centre to account for their performance. Two school governors also sit on the advisory board and along with the head of school provide a strong and clear link between the centre and the school.

The centre provides outstanding value for money because services and resources are so accurately targeted to users' needs. All activities and services are very well used, so much so that they have had to review come and play sessions to ensure as many families as wanted to attend could do so. All adult training courses are fully booked and also have waiting lists of parents wanting to improve their education in the knowledge that their children are happy and well cared for in the crèche.

Safeguarding practice and protocols for making referrals, sharing relevant information and helping families in time of crisis are exemplary. All staff regularly attend safeguarding training and know what to do if they have any concerns. Parents also receive safeguarding training and information through the 'Parents Space'

sessions. This ensures that all staff are aware of child protection issues and parents understand the systems in place. Risk assessments are detailed and consider not only the physical safety of users but risks related to lone working. All required checks have been carried out and the centre is rigorous in its monitoring of access to the centre. This ensures users are safe and can feel confident that their children are being well cared for.

The centre is very successful at promoting equality and diversity. All key target groups are engaged in the centre, resulting in significantly improved outcomes and a significant reduction in the attainment gap. Crèches are provided for all learning activities to ensure families who wish to engage in training are able to do so. Many parents say they have made friends with people they would never have met if not for the centre. It is not unusual for families from very different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds to mix together and form friendships that last beyond the children's centre's walls.

Partner agencies hold the centre in very high regard. Very effective working partnerships have been established so that the centre can ensure that services are of very high quality for users. Partner agencies are enabled to be more effective because of the centre's expertise at breaking down barriers and targeting users. 'This centre is so organised,' said many partners. 'They are the only centre that will ensure we interview parents for courses before the summer break,' said the partner from South Thames College, and this can be seen in their forward thinking for many of their priorities. The partnership between agencies and the centre results in fully integrated provision.

Families are involved in governance of the centre at various levels from advisory board members to a parent representative on the governing body of the school. Satisfaction surveys show that 100% of parents who use the centre are satisfied with the services they receive. Users are fully engaged with decision making and evidence shows where they have influenced key matters that affect the centre. Users act as ambassadors for the centre, bringing new parents in to the centre and gathering their views through 'Parent Space'.

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	1
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

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Summary for centre users

We inspected West Hill Children’s Centre on 21 and 22 March 2013. We judged the centre as outstanding overall. During our visit we spoke to a number of you, observed activities and met with staff and professionals who work with the centre.

The very strong centre leadership, alongside the work of the dedicated staff, has provided you and your children with a wide range of excellent services that are carefully tailored to meet your particular needs. Many of you went out of your way to tell us how much you enjoy the activities, and have benefited from the services provided through the centre. We were impressed by how well you are supporting your children’s learning at home by attending courses and activities at the centre. Those of you who spoke to us said that your children’s centre is a friendly and welcoming place and many of you think of the centre as your second home. Thank you to those of you who willingly shared your life stories and explained how without the help of the centre you would not be where you are now.

The centre’s close working partnership with health visitors, plus the local knowledge held by parents and staff, ensures those most in need of support receive it. The centre records attendance at baby and crawlers’ play sessions that are run alongside the baby health clinics. However health partners do not share all their data on take up rates of health services with the centre. As a result we have asked the local authority and the health authority to work together to share data about the take-up of health services in the centre to enable the centre to clearly show how many families are participating in them.

The centre has a clear plan of priorities and targets for the coming year that are clearly focused on what needs to happen next. The centre manager knows exactly

what progress is being made and where there are any issues. However, although the manager knows about progress, updated plans are not shared to enable staff to fully understand the impact of their work. When we spoke to staff they knew precisely where they are in relation to their personal and centre targets. However, they are not all consistently recording the outcomes of their work to enable the centre to clearly show the progress they are making.

Children who use the crèche and play activities are making outstanding progress in their learning. This high standard is clearly reflected in the Early Years Foundation Stage profile scores for the reach area. Those of you who access training courses are making excellent progress and gaining qualifications, and some of you have gone on to gain employment or access higher education. Several of you volunteer at the centre and continue to do this when your children go on to school. Many of you told us about how much you enjoy attending courses and activities at the centre and we can see that many of you have attended family learning sessions in order to support your children's learning at home. You are rightly proud of your successes.

The centre has developed excellent partnerships with professionals, which ensures you get the help you need when you need it. We were very impressed with the centre's dedication to keeping children and families safe. Safeguarding is given the highest priority in the centre and staff have excellent relationships with other agencies that ensure you get the help and support you need when you need it. Those of you we spoke to said how much they appreciated that there is always someone to help when you need advice. Many of you who have felt isolated and alone with your problems say you have made friends as a result of coming to the centre.

Thank you to everybody who took the time to come and speak with us and to let us know what you thought about the centre. We are very grateful to you all and wish you and your families every success for the future.

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