

Willesden Locality, Brent

Wykeham Primary School Children's Centre, Aboyne Road, London, NW10 0EX

Inspection date 19–20 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Access to services by young children and families		Requires improvement	3
The quality of practice and services		Requires improvement	3
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for children and families

This children's centre group requires improvement.. It is not good because:

- The local authority is not making sure that families can access services regularly and easily. Sometimes families are turned away from Let's Play Together and Time for Rhymes activities because there is not enough space and not enough staff to run more sessions.
- The number of families from target groups using the centres is growing, but the manager and staff know that they need to do more to make sure that all communities, such as those from Somalia, benefit from services.
- Services to help parents improve their English and number skills and get jobs are not reaching enough families. The children's centres are not tracking adults' achievements and there is limited support to help them build on their skills and progress.
- New local authority systems to make sure there are clear locality priorities, targets and action plans are not yet well established. The information the centres get about the families in the locality is better than it was, but not yet detailed enough to help them reach some target families.
- Planning of the popular and engaging Let's Play Together sessions is not focused on children's learning outcomes. This means that the progress children make is not checked and tracked to make sure children are well prepared to move on to school.
- The advisory board receives regular reports but provides insufficient challenge to the children's centres to really drive improvement.

This children's centre group has the following strengths:

- Committed and skilled staff and volunteers are well supported by a manager who is highly knowledgeable and understands the communities within the locality well. Less experienced staff build confidence in their role because of the praise and support provided by the manager.
- The locality is helping parents to take up early education places for eligible two-year-olds at high-quality nurseries and the numbers of children achieving a good level of development is improving.
- Parents value services and staff highly. The outstanding work with fathers encourages a growing number to enjoy, understand and take part in their children's learning and development.
- The quality of family support work and the care and guidance provided to families is good. Parents tell powerful stories of how the locality's support has changed their lives and those of their families.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children's centre group was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. The centres that form part of this children's centre group are Treetops Children's Centre and Wykeham Primary School.

This inspection was carried out by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs).

The inspectors held meetings with the manager of the children's centres in the locality, senior leaders and managers in the local authority, health, education and early help partners, parents, community involvement workers, family support assistants and family support workers, early years practitioners, volunteers, representatives from commissioned services and representatives of the locality advisory board.

The inspectors visited both centres and an independent nursery that shares the same building as the Treetops Children's Centre.

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

Inspection team

Penny Fisher	Her Majesty's Inspector, Lead Inspector
Chris Davies	Her Majesty's Inspector
Harmesh Manghra	Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about the group

Services for children and families in Brent are delivered in five locality areas. The Willesden locality children's centre service is managed directly by the local authority, with the advisory group, comprising key partners, assisting in its governance. There are two children's centres in the locality that are managed by the locality manager. The Willesden Locality covers the wards of Welsh Harp, Dollis Hill, Dudden Hill and Willesden Green.

Restructuring of the children's centres means that the primary centre is now Wykeham, although this was originally a phase 3 centre. Treetops, originally a phase 2 centre, has reduced in size as the Treetops Nursery is now independent from the children's centre and the provision is subject to a separate inspection. Services are shared across both centres and both are open five days-a-week, although on some days there are no open sessions at one or the other due to capacity issues. The fathers' group, which is held monthly on a Saturday, is often held at Wykeham and on a Friday afternoon the Neasden Parent Group organises a parent-led Let's Play Together session.

There are approximately 4,070 children under five years of age living in the locality area. School data demonstrate the diversity of the locality, with the Somalian community being the largest ethnic group and a target group within the children's centre locality. Levels of deprivation are high with 20 out of 30 super output areas in the locality being in the top 30% on the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010. Many children under five years of age are living in families that are claiming benefits, and levels of obesity and dental decay among children are high. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to school are below the levels expected for their age.

What does the centre/group need to do to improve further?

- Clarify priorities with partner agencies and local groups so that the locality can plan its use of resources effectively, increase capacity and engage more families, including target families, in the area.
- Continue to embed the new performance management framework and improve the quality of data available to the centre so that target groups can be clearly identified and reached.
- Develop the established local advisory board further to ensure it provides good levels of support, guidance and challenge to the manager in order to maximise the effectiveness of the locality and drive improvements.
- Sharpen the focus on developing the employability skills of adults by developing partnerships with service providers such as the adult learning service in order to provide a variety of courses and support.
- Ensure that staff have a clear focus on learning outcomes during the planning of sessions for parents and children and establish robust procedures to check and track childrens' and adult learners' achievements so that children are well prepared to move on to school and adults to the next stage in their education and development.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Families cannot always access the services they need easily or regularly. Inspectors saw families being turned away at the door of the Wykeham centre from both Let's Play Together and the Time for Rhymes sessions, which is a universal session with specialist input from a speech and language therapist. The need to increase and balance capacity across the locality, through working in partnership with other agencies, is clearly understood, but strategies to achieve this are not fully considered.
- The majority of target families are registered with the children's centre locality and this is an increase on last year but only a small minority are regularly engaging with the centres. The centres

are welcoming, inclusive and foster equality and diversity well. However, the staff know there is a need to re-establish links with Somali families through the engagement of community leaders, as currently not enough Somali families are using the centres.

- The centre is helping parents of disadvantaged two-year-olds to take up their free entitlement to early education. Places are reserved in high-quality nurseries to ensure children receive the early help they need. The development gap between the lowest performing children and their peers is narrowing well in the locality.
- The quality of data that the local authority makes available to the centre is adequate and improving. Much is available at locality level, although some of the raw data, such as the number of teenage parents in the area, is not meaningful. The very recent agreement regarding the sharing of live birth data with the locality so that the centres start to support new families as soon as possible is welcome, but not yet implemented.
- Good priority is given to supporting families and children with high levels of additional needs, such as those that are the subject of a child protection or child in need plan. Through adopting flexible ways of working, family support workers and assistants attend and make valuable contributions at important meetings with partner agencies.

The quality of practice and services

requires improvement

- A broad range of effectively evaluated and good quality services supports families' well-being. The large majority of parents that access parenting programmes, such as the Solihull Approach, complete them and continue to benefit from what they have learnt. Parents also told inspectors about the benefits they gain from the counselling service, support groups such as Strengthening Women and access to advice and guidance through the Citizens Advice Bureau.
- The provision of courses for English for Speakers of Other Languages is inadequate. This provision, commissioned from a local college, only partially met the needs of a small number of parents. There are currently 45 parents on a waiting list and the local authority and staff identify high levels of need for this service in the area.
- Parents get good advice, support and guidance about their children's learning and development. Staff interact well with children, who are well engaged in activities, but planning is not clearly focused on learning outcomes, so children's progress is not effectively checked and tracked to make sure they are ready for school.
- The locality does not focus sufficiently on improving the employability of parents. They do not have enough opportunities to access English, mathematics and information technology courses or get support with finding work, such as help with job applications. The Navigator service is being piloted and provides useful support, but it is too soon to see the impact of this scheme.
- The Wykeham centre is an established hub for the community, providing a base for the dynamic Neasden Parent Group which works in partnership with the locality manager. The group has increased the capacity of the centre by running parent-led Let's Play Together sessions, fund raising for outings and extending the use of the centre at the weekend. The Treetops centre is less well established and the local authority, locality manager and staff recognise that more needs to be done to ensure the best use of resources across the whole locality area.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

requires improvement

- Governance arrangements are clear; the advisory board has a highly supportive new chair and is meeting regularly. New guidance to support the effectiveness of the advisory board is good and training to support this is already arranged. However, recent minutes and discussions show that the challenge provided by the board to drive forward the improvements needed in the locality is limited.
- Performance management is improving, but not yet well established. The Performance Management Framework introduced in May 2013 is welcome, bringing together the planning, delivery and review of services, which are currently not cohesive. The local authority has set ambitious provisional targets for the locality for 2013/2014, but some are not yet complete, such as those being agreed

with partner agencies.

- Safeguarding arrangements are secure and there is a good focus on keeping children and parents safe at both centres. Joint working and information sharing between the locality children's centres, Family Solutions, the early help team and children's social care are developing. There is a growing understanding of the children's centres' contribution to the local authority's early help agenda, but further clarification of the role of family support workers is required to make sure that resources are being used effectively.
- The locality manager is a highly qualified, reflective practitioner and his leadership is highly visible across both centres. The open-door policy is greatly valued by staff who are well supported and supervised. The differing communities and levels of need across the locality mean that the dedicated staff, who deliver services across both centres, have to work very flexibly.
- The locality manager and staff are open to learning and adapt services accordingly, for example, the removal of the booking system for Let's Play Together sessions in response to concerns raised by parents. Effective informal opportunities for parents to share their views with staff are in place and parents are routinely asked to feed back on the quality of services.
- More formal mechanisms to involve families in the design and delivery of services are being developed following the relaunch of parents' forums across the local authority. It is early days, but involving parents at the Treetops centre is proving a challenge. Discussions held with parents and surveys show parents are highly satisfied with the level and quality of services.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Practice consistently reflects the highest aspirations for children and their families and as a result inequalities are reducing rapidly and gaps are closing.
Grade 2	Good	Practice enables most children and their families to access good quality services that improve children's well-being and achieve the stated outcomes for families.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	Performance is not as good as it might reasonably be expected to be in one or more key areas.
Grade 4	Inadequate	The needs of children and families in its area are not being met and/or the leaders and managers are not providing sufficient challenge to bring about improvement to the quality of services.

Children's centre group details

Unique reference number	80409
Local authority	London Borough of Brent
Inspection number	424634
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	4,068
Centre leader	Peter Firkin
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Telephone number	020 8838 3901
Email address	peter.firkin@brent.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- Wykeham Primary School
- Treetops

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