

Thomas Wall Children's Centre

69 Western Road, Sutton, Surrey, SM1 2SX

Inspection date 30–31 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Good	2
The quality of practice and services		Good	2
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a good centre.

- The number of children under five years of age living in the reach area has grown considerably in the last three years. Despite this, the centre has registered 84% of them. It has identified its priority groups from looking at the needs locally and has been successful in engaging the large majority of lone parents, pregnant and teenage mothers, and has notable success in working with families from Black and minority ethnic groups, particularly Polish families.
- Services that are open to all are well balanced with those tailored to meet particular needs such as the childminders' drop-ins, the Polish Play group and Transition Stay and Play groups for children moving on to nursery school. A wide range of workshops and health sessions is much appreciated by parents and is effective in supporting them to keep their children safe and healthy.
- Well-established partnerships and very effective links with health services, early intervention and prevention services and the family information services mean that families assessed as the most vulnerable receive good levels of support, care and guidance.
- Children's learning profiles and tracking information show that children make good progress during their time at the centre and when they move on to the linked nursery school. This is because staff are very experienced in early education, planning is excellent and sessions are highly enjoyable.
- The day-to-day management of the centre is excellent and the small staff team works very enthusiastically and effectively to meet the needs of local families. The local authority and the advisory board provide good levels of support and monitoring, using quarterly reviews of the detailed development plan to measure the centre's performance against challenging targets. As a result, the centre is improving strongly.

It is not outstanding because:

- There is little recent information available in relation to health outcomes in the local area; the centre is not provided with enough detail about the most vulnerable families so that even more can benefit directly from the good level of support available.
- Whilst increasing, the number of families from workless households who access services is relatively low; the long term outcomes, as a result of the support these families receive, is not being followed up well enough.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the head of centre designate, centre manager and other staff, officers from the local authority, representatives from the health services including a speech and language therapist. They also met with the community nursery nurse, locality children's centre managers and several other key partners. Inspectors held discussions with parents and members of the advisory board. The inspectors visited several activities, including one jointly with the centre manager. A local authority representative and the centre manager attended all inspection team meetings. Inspectors looked at the centre's self-evaluation, development plan, a sample of case studies, safeguarding policies and procedures and a range of other relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Joan Lindsay

Additional Inspector, Lead Inspector

Barbara Saltmarsh

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

The centre opened in July 2008, as a phase two stand alone centre. It delivers or supports access to a range of services to meet its core purpose as part of the borough's Pink Locality consisting of three children's centres. The building is open 51 weeks of the year Monday to Friday from 9.00a.m. until 5.00p.m. Services are also delivered in other venues in the community, including health clinics and the library. The centre is located adjacent to the federated Thomas Wall Nursery School (URN 102956) and Robin Hood Infant School (URN 102981) whose governing body manages it on behalf of the local authority; the headteacher is the head of centre. The schools are subject to separate inspections.

There are 1,142 children under five years of age living in the centre's reach area. Children enter early years provision in line with levels expected for their age. The centre is located close to Sutton town centre and serves 11 local areas, one of which is ranked in the 30% most deprived. Approximately 18% of families are eligible for the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. White British heritage families account for 67% of the population, with 33% of children in the reach area coming from a wide range of Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups. The centre has identified its priority groups as children from BME families, lone parents, teenage mothers and pregnant teenagers, children from households where there have been incidences of domestic violence and workless households where families have young children.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Work with the local authority and health services to ensure that information about vulnerable families, levels of deprivation and health outcomes in the local area is the most accurate and up to date, to enable leaders to measure the impact of the centre's work precisely and enable more families to benefit from its good quality services.
- Increase the number of families from workless households who access the centre and follow up rigorously how well they get on in finding employment so that future services are fine tuned to meet their ongoing needs.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The centre has a multitude of links with the local community. It is proactive in responding to local changes, such as increasingly high levels of domestic violence and the changing make up of the population. By providing tailor-made activities, such as the weekly Polish Play group and Young Parents' Stay and Play session, it has ensured that the large majority of priority groups access and benefit from services.
- The centre monitors the attendance of priority groups at all activities and they are always the large majority of attendees. The proportion of BME families coming to the centre is twice that living in the reach area; the number of lone parents is also increasing significantly.
- Hosting antenatal clinics, two-year-old reviews and breastfeeding support groups, together with excellent communication with the link nursery and other providers, ensure that most young children and expectant mothers are in contact with the centre. There is a 100% take up of early education for three- and four-year-olds and a 75% take up of the two-year-old health review.
- Extensive outreach work, often in conjunction with the other locality children's centres, such as the very popular Toddler Thursdays held in a shopping centre food court, has been instrumental in engaging families who might otherwise be reluctant to come to the centre.
- The centre is very effective at prioritising families who need support the most when they are identified or referred to them. At present, however, the most vulnerable children, such as those who are looked after, subject to child protection plans or assessed through the Common Assessment Framework, are not individually identified to the centre. Furthermore, the levels of deprivation of all

but one of the 11 local areas are not provided routinely to the centre to enable it to target its work even more precisely.

- The centre provides access to a wide range of support for workless families and the numbers registered are increasing. However, it does not have sufficiently detailed information for its area to enable the impact of its work to be measured precisely, especially in the longer term.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The quality, range and relevance of services are good. Close working relationships with neighbouring children's centres mean that duplication of services is avoided and families benefit from the widest choice of activities, such as the Men Behaving Dadly group held at Manor Park Children's Centre. At 68%, there is an appropriate split between targeted sessions, such as structured parenting courses and child health workshops, with 32% that are open to all like the Baby Stay and Play.
- More than half of the centre's services are dedicated to ensuring target children are ready for school, and all children develop independence and good communication skills due to the good quality experiences provided. Singing counting songs, such as 'Five Little Monkeys', exceptionally well-planned activities and good role modelling by staff, all enhance children's learning skills. Parents feel very well supported in this regard through the Transition Stay and Play sessions and workshops to help with behaviour management and potty training.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage profile results for the reach area have improved significantly over the last two years and, at 70.8%, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development is well above that seen nationally. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and the rest narrowed substantially last year to 23.3%, and well below the national figure of 30.1%. The centre's own detailed records of individual children's progress and the checks carried out by the nursery school show children making good, and sometimes outstanding, progress.
- There is very little recent information about local health outcomes, such as childhood obesity or immunisations, which makes it hard for the centre to measure its impact in these areas. Nevertheless, families feel that they are given good support, especially with regard to breastfeeding and healthy lifestyles, through the drop-in sessions and numerous workshops, such as Safe and Sound and Healthy Eating.
- 'Brilliant' and 'really, really helpful' sum up how parents feel about the good levels of care, guidance and support offered by the centre and to which they are signposted, such as to the One-Stop-Shop and free legal advice where there are cases of domestic abuse. Close working partnerships with the early intervention and prevention service and the family information service, as well as church and voluntary organisations, mean that families have a wide network of effective tailored support.
- A large majority of priority families have accessed adult learning or skills-based courses. A menu of specific support from the employability adviser, adult education and Jobcentre Plus ensures that families have many opportunities to improve their skills and become 'work ready'. However, although there is positive feedback from those who have been supported in this way, the longer term outcomes are not followed up systematically.
- Parents play a significant role in the centre, with volunteers running the Polish Play group and the Young Parents' Stay and Play, as well as four representatives on the advisory board. The Parents' Voice meetings provide a good platform for parents to shape the development of the centre and ensure they are fully involved in decision making.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Key to the centre's success is the experience, adaptability and enthusiasm of the staff and the centre manager's excellent day-to-day organisation and leadership. Members of the governing body, the advisory board and the local authority provide good support and hold the centre to account.
- Challenging targets in the development plan are reviewed quarterly, with all available information being used well to measure the centre's impact. The local authority is aware that it has yet to

provide a comprehensive set of information, especially in relation to local health outcomes, levels of deprivation and more specific details about the most vulnerable families.

- Safeguarding families is paramount in all the centre's work. This starts with the physical security of the building, good staff training and robust policies and procedures. It continues with early identification of any concerns and high levels of one-to-one support for vulnerable families that are known to the centre. Where families have been supported, for example through the Common Assessment Framework procedures, outcomes have been good.
- Resources are used very efficiently, in this relatively small centre, meeting the needs of various groups very effectively. For example, the Baby Stay and Play is well resourced with safe, clean chewable toys that are much appreciated by parents. Best use is made of the space, including the outdoor area, and there is a wealth of information available throughout the main rooms, especially in relation to the needs of the priority groups.
- Parents' views are requested often and the children's learning profiles include 'children's voice'. This records their preferences which staff note at the end of each session. Parents have 100% satisfaction with the centre and are very eager to encourage others to attend, as shown by the high numbers that come along to the Polish Play group and the music and drama sessions. Asked to sum up the centre in three words, one parent stated, 'Feels like home.'

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 wellbeing 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.

Unique reference number	23292
Local authority	London Borough of Sutton
Inspection number	428573
Managed by	The governing body of Thomas Wall Nursery School

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,142
Centre manager	Angelina McLoughlin
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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