

# Leys Children's Centre

215 Wellington Drive, Dagenham, RM10 9XW

**Inspection dates** 21–22 January 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Outstanding	1
The quality of practice and services		Outstanding	1
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This is an outstanding centre.

- The centre is firmly established as the hub of the community, offering a wide range of high quality services that are meticulously planned to meet the diverse needs of children and families living in the area. As a result, participation rates are high, with most families accessing services regularly.
- Parents highly appreciate the exceptional care, guidance and support and the extent to which the centre has helped them to make positive changes in their lives. A widely held view by parents was summed up by this comment, 'I was not in a good place when I first came to the centre. This is an amazing place, everyone is so welcoming and no one judges you, it is like an extended family and has helped me in so many different ways.'
- Outstanding leadership, governance and management strive for improvement and effectively promote their pursuit for excellence. As a result, everyone at the centre is extremely passionate and committed to their work. They constantly look at different ways to improve practice further, reach families who need the most support and do the very best they can for children and adults.
- Well-established and exceptionally strong partnerships ensure the identification of families who need the most support is known and, as a result, almost all children in the area are registered with the centre. However, protocols with health partners at a local authority level do not enhance this practice because the centre does not receive the full range of health information, including live birth data.
- The centre is highly effective in engaging with its target groups, especially families in most need. It has been particularly successful in increasing the number of White British families and lone parents who engage in services.
- The centre's exceptionally skilled approach in recognising the existing skills and interests of individuals is inspiring them to make significant improvements in their personal, social and academic development by accessing high quality services, including training that leads to qualifications and becoming valued volunteers.
- Most children take up their entitlement to free early education. Well-focused and detailed tracking shows that children who attend the centre are extremely well prepared for school.

### 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 of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Leys Children's Centre was inspected as part of a single stand-alone inspection event.

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre strategic manager, the locality manager, the multi-agency panel (MAP) coordinator, the nursery manager, centre staff, health partners, adult education, Jobcentre Plus partners, Citizens Advice partners, members of the community forum, parents, volunteers and a range of senior representatives from the local authority.

The inspectors visited a range of activities and sessions held at the centre and at outreach sites, including Dagenham Heathway Library and Leys Primary School.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the centre's self-evaluation, analysis of data, development plans, case files, planning folders, tracking and monitoring information and minutes from the Children's Centre Community Forum (CCCF) and parent forum.

### Inspection team

Wendy Ratcliff, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Christine Davies

Her Majesty's Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Leys Children's Centre is a phase two centre that opened in November 2008. It is situated on the Leys Estate in the Village Ward within the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham and is run directly by the local authority. The Children's Centre Community Forum acts as its advisory board and includes a range of partners and parents. The local authority has recently undergone a restructure and Leys Children's Centre is now the main centre in the South East locality, with Marsh Green Children's Centre and other outreach sites, including Leys Primary School and Dagenham Heathway Library as satellite centres. The locality manager is responsible for the day-to-day running of the centre and the staff team works across the locality.

The centre offers health and family support services, early years provision, advice and guidance, adult training and volunteering opportunities. The centre is open from 9.00am to 5.00pm each weekday. The London Early Years Foundation (LEYF) is commissioned to provide registered early years provision. The nursery is open from 8.00am to 6.00pm all year round. Registered early years providers are subject to separate inspection arrangements. Reports can be found at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>

The Leys Estate is geographically isolated and is cut off from other areas by a dual carriageway. There are no amenities on the estate. Parent volunteers run a shop, Leys Stop and Shop, in the grounds of the centre. The Village Ward is among the 30% most deprived areas of the country. There are approximately 1,028 children under five years old living in the area, of which 38% are living in households dependent on workless benefits. A large proportion of families live in social rented accommodation and lone parent households. The Leys Estate is part of a regeneration programme resulting in a high number of families moving in and out of the area. The majority of the population are White British with smaller percentages from minority ethnic groups, including an increase in Lithuanian families. Children's knowledge, skills and abilities on entry to early years provision are typically below those usually found, especially in communication and language.

The local authority was part of the government's payment by results trial.

### What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- The local authority should work strategically with health professionals to develop effective systems for sharing the full range of information, including live birth data, and health outcomes information, so that all families are known to the centre and the full impact of health services can be monitored and measured.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

Outstanding

- The centre uses all the information it receives exceptionally well to identify the needs of children and families in the area. All those working in the centre are clear about the specific target groups, which include families in most need, White British families, teen parents, disabled children and lone parents. The centre sets challenging targets and exceeds these in most cases resulting in the very large majority of White British families, teen parents and disabled children accessing services. The number of lone parents accessing the centre has increased from 53% in 2012 to 68% in 2013.
- Almost all children in the area are registered with the centre because information sharing between key partners is extremely effective. However, the exchange of information between health partners and the local authority at a strategic level is not as well established. The centre does not receive live birth data and relies on the strong partnerships at a local level for receiving information about families with new babies so that it can target resources at those in most need.
- Highly effective joint working with midwives and health visitors has significantly improved families' access to a range of health services. The coherent pathway from midwives to health visitors' support ensures all families in most need access health services. For example, a high proportion of children from these families receive one-year and two-year developmental checks on time and most are up to date with their immunisations.
- The centre has extremely effective systems in place for tracking families' engagement and identifying any who stop attending services. This helps staff to sustain high levels of engagement, identify any trends and re-establish contact with any families who were initially reluctant to get involved.
- The centre is highly successful at helping families who are eligible to take up their free entitlement to good quality early years places. As a result, 92% of two-year-olds and 94% of three-year-olds in the locality are accessing services.
- The centre establishes and maintains contact with all targeted families promptly following a multi-agency panel (MAP) referral, including those who experience domestic violence. A highly systematic approach and detailed record keeping of communication between agencies mean that individual families are allocated promptly for targeted support and work starts without delay.

### The quality of practice and services

Outstanding

- Early intervention work is outstanding. The centre is highly successful at identifying specific needs at an early stage and puts an extensive range of services in place to support children and families. Staff are highly skilled, build trusting relationships and work at an outstanding level with a wealth of different partners, including social care, housing, and speech and language therapists, to improve children's well-being and reduce inequalities. One-to-one support for families ensures they receive the help they need to improve their parenting skills, reduce any risk of harm and results in families 'stepping down' from intensive support and become able to cope on their own.
- The focus on play and communication during sessions is providing parents with extremely helpful strategies to support their children's language development. Meticulous planning ensures sessions, such as Babbling Babes, Little Rhyme Makers, and Play with a story, are highly effective and meet the needs of families. Staff are excellent role models and parents explain how watching how they work with their children during these sessions helps them play and communicate effectively with their children at home.
- Systems to track the progress of both adults and children are extremely effective. Children, including those in most need, make excellent progress and have the skills they need to be ready for school. For example, the 2013 Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scores show 86% of children attending 12 or more sessions at the centre achieved or exceeded the expected levels in their personal, social and emotional development. Of children eligible for free school meals who attended at least 12 sessions, 18% more achieved a good level of development than eligible

children who attended less than 12 sessions or had not attended the centre.

- Children and families are improving their knowledge of healthy lifestyles extremely well. Sessions such as Fit 4 Fun are extremely popular with older and younger children and provide an excellent opportunity for families to enthusiastically dance to popular music and keep fit together. However, the centre does not receive timely information on health outcomes, such as childhood obesity data, to help it measure the full impact of this work.
- Case tracking shows highly effective use of individuals' existing skills and interests, motivating them to raise aspirations, confidence and skill level. Adults highly value the support and range of high quality adult learning services they receive, recognising how this helps them to improve their skill base and become 'work ready'. For example, in 2013, 83% of adults who attended Work Club Plus, an accredited course for career progression, progressed to employment, further training or volunteering.

### The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Outstanding

- Those responsible for governance, including leaders and managers at all levels, are highly ambitious and successful in their pursuit to help families to make significant and sustained changes in their lives. Highly challenging targets to assist the centre's work are set, met and, in some cases, exceeded.
- The local authority's strategic direction is clear and well understood. The central commissioning and subsequent evaluation of some key services have a significant impact on supporting families. For example, the early years team has clear and precise contracts in place with London Early Years Foundation (LEYF) to provide on-site early years provision, which is meticulously monitored to ensure children receive high quality early education. The local authority is looking to improve strategic working with health partners and is currently advertising a development opportunity to pursue this.
- The effectiveness of monitoring is exemplary at all levels and embedded in performance management. As a result, staff are absolutely clear about their roles and responsibilities. The early intervention performance outcome framework (EIPOF) is highly effective in supporting staff to measure the outcome of their work. 'I love EIPOF.' This was a quote from an early intervention worker, and explains how the outcome framework helps her to focus and improve practice as well as track the progress for children and families.
- Safeguarding is given exceptionally high priority. Policies and procedures are robust and staff are well qualified and highly trained, including in the use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and to spot and act on any concerns. Excellent information exchange between professionals and MAP processes means that the families in greatest need are safeguarded extremely well.
- The centre provides excellent value for money. Space is used extremely well by the centre, partners and wider community groups such as Street Base, a local youth group. The centre supports the parent forum to make bids for funding to finance a range of different projects, including the running of shop on site, Leys Stop and Shop. Exemplary partnerships are adding value and contributing to the high participation rates and the impressive improvements families make to their lives.
- Children and families are at the heart of the centre's decision making and service delivery. A highly enthusiastic and effective parent forum provides outstanding opportunities for parents to become volunteers and build on their existing skills. It too is ambitious and arranges exciting community events, such as 'Spooky fun' to increase participation of those families who need services the most. One member's comment sums up many, 'We are the eyes and ears of the community and a vital part of decision making.'

### 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.

**Centre details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	21778
<b>Local authority</b>	Barking and Dagenham
<b>Inspection number</b>	440240
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority
<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	1,028
<b>Centre leader</b>	Jill Gallagher
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	0208 724 1983
<b>Email address</b>	Jill.gallagher@lbbd.gov.uk

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