

# Margaret McMillan Children's Centre

Hornsey Rise, Islington, London, N19 3SF

<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 June 2014
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b> Previous inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
		Not applicable	
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 centre has successfully extended its services since the building has been completed. Over the last year, most families in the area attended at least one children's centre activity.
- The integrated approach across the school and day care is a key strength in offering families a wide range of activities which suit their needs well.
- Partnership work, including with health and social care, is very strong and ensures that families' needs are identified at an early stage and met quickly.
- The key focus on improving parenting skills and helping parents to give their children good experiences at home impacts very well on children's well-being and readiness for school.
- Safeguarding of vulnerable children and adults is given the highest priority. Staff are trusted by families so that those experiencing difficulties in their lives have strong support.
- A range of adult training programmes helps many parents to develop their skills and successfully tackle the circumstances which make them vulnerable.
- Leadership, management and governance are good. Senior leaders, staff and governors constantly check how well they are doing and are agreed on the next steps to be taken. This gives the centre a good foundation on which to extend its work even more widely.

### It is not outstanding because:

- Not enough parents take up the entitlement to free early education places available in the area for their two-year-old children.
- The centre does not use all the information available to it to identify which activities have the most positive effect on the lives of families.
- Centre staff have not had enough opportunities to identify and share the most effective practice with other providers of early years services in the area.

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

- Increase the take-up of free early years education by the two-year-olds who are eligible.
- Track the effectiveness of the activities on offer over time to identify which have the most positive effect on improving families' lives.
- Implement the plans to identify and share best practice to improve further the quality of provision across centre and school activities and those provided by childminders and community nurseries.

## 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 children's centre leader, centre staff, representatives of the local authority and advisory board, parents and users of the centre and representatives of the organisations, including health, education and community nurseries, who work in partnership with the centre.

The inspectors visited sessions held in the centre and outdoor play area.

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

## Inspection team

Helen Hutchings, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Ann Janssen

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

The centre was brought under the leadership of Margaret McMillan Nursery School in 2008. It shares a building with the school, which also provides day care (EY304482) for children from birth to age three years. The headteacher of the school has responsibility for the day-to-day running of the centre. Health services are available separately within the same complex. The local authority has delegated centre governance to the school's governing body. The centre also receives advice and guidance from a cluster advisory board covering this centre and Archway Children's Centre. This centre, the school and day care are inspected separately and the reports are available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The centre has provided a full service since building refurbishment was completed in 2010, and comprises drop-in groups for parents and children, family support services and learning courses. Activities are planned with partners and other centres locally to ensure that a full range of services is available to families.

The centre serves an area which falls within the 30% most deprived nationally. It has a population of approximately 850 children under five years of age. Around 40% of children live in workless households. Housing is mostly social or private rental, with some areas of affluence and privately-owned housing. The large majority of families are from White British backgrounds. When they start early years provision, children have skills and knowledge below those expected for their age.

The main priority groups identified by the centre group are workless families with young children, families on low incomes and those with mental health difficulties.

### Inspection judgements

#### Access to services by young children and families Good

- Since the building has been refurbished, centre staff have improved the centre's effectiveness quickly and there has been a rapid increase in the number of families using centre services. The centre's work is underpinned by warm relationships and a welcoming atmosphere. During the last year, over 90% of families with young children have used the centre, including those identified as being in the greatest need of support.
- The centre has developed strong partnerships with other agencies working with families. Staff use these links effectively to bring families into the centre. This includes midwives and health visitors making the first contact on behalf of the centre, in many cases with expectant parents before a baby's birth. As a result, families are reassured, knowing how activities are planned to cover their changing needs as children develop from birth to school age.
- Almost all children join a nursery class at the age of three, some within the school linked to the centre. Nevertheless, a minority of two-year-olds eligible for free early education have not taken up their entitlement.
- The centre's holistic approach to supporting families ensures seamless provision across the school, day care and the centre. This effectively builds parents' confidence in the continuity of care for children as they move into day care or school. The integrated approach also adds flexibility to the centre's work, for example in providing crèche facilities while parents attend adult learning programmes or respite care during times of

crisis.

- Centre staff are skilful and sensitive in encouraging those in need of support to join activities open to all. Parents commented on how well all groups of parents and children get on together, including those on low incomes and those in more affluent circumstances, and how this contributes positively to their children's early learning.
- Family workers, health and social care professionals work very well together to identify the barriers families may have to seeking support for themselves and to support families who are experiencing difficulties in their lives. For example, family support workers help parents, including those suffering mental health difficulties such as low mood, to join parenting courses developed in partnership with the local authority psychology service. Joint work with speech and language therapists develops staff skills so that intensive therapy is complemented by ongoing work in other activities.
- Staff have a good knowledge of the approaches used by other agencies and help to put families in touch with those best suited to offer support. Within the centre, staff offer effective sessions on managing children's routines and behaviour, and developing children's language skills, identified as a particular weakness within the area, for example in Chatterpillars.

### The quality of practice and services

Good

- The centre has an ethos which focuses on reducing inequalities and ensuring that mothers and fathers gain confidence and establish a work-home life balance which benefits all the members of their family.
- Staff know families in the area very well. They use the expertise they gain through working in different areas within the school, day care and centre to plan a wide range of good quality, relevant activities. However, there has not been a robust enough evaluation to assess the effectiveness of different activities over a longer period of time to check which have the greatest impact on improving family life and well-being.
- The link with 'Working with Men' has effectively increased the participation of fathers in centre activities. Staff have been trained in recognising the needs of men within activities and timing events to suit working fathers, for example those on shift work.
- In activities open to all, such as Stay and Play, visiting professionals often give advice on a range of issues, for example welfare and financial advice by the Parent Champion. Staff have a key focus on helping parents to extend their knowledge of how to support their children at home.
- Whilst centre activities include some stimulating activities which would be difficult to replicate at home, there is always an emphasis on including low-cost activities. For example, cheap washing up bowls are used for water play and simple kitchen utensils with playdough help parents to extend the range of play activities at home, particularly supporting those on low incomes or from workless households.
- The strong partnership with health professionals is reflected in health outcomes which are generally good. For example, the proportion of mothers sustaining breastfeeding after eight weeks and immunisation rates are higher than found locally and nationally. Encouragement for early dental health is a regular feature of centre activities. The centre is now using its recognised success in this area to lead an initiative across the local authority to gain Healthy Early Years status.
- There is a successful focus on encouraging adults to become more resilient by improving their qualifications and employment prospects. Links with local adult education providers are used well to offer English and mathematics courses, and programmes for those who speak English as an additional language to improve their English language skills.

- The care and support by centre staff are outstanding and parents value the non judgemental help they are given, helping to reduce low mood or postnatal depression. Comments such as, 'She makes you blossom every day,' and, 'It's like having a handbook on how to cope,' are testament to difference the centre makes on the lives of individuals and families. Parents benefit from developing friendships, sharing problems and the encouragement they are given from staff.
- The family support team responds to needs and supports parents exceptionally well, including visiting parents in their home and liaising with other local organisations and voluntary support groups. The team helps with small everyday tasks which present an enormous challenge for some, in addition to supporting them to develop the confidence to manage their children's behaviour, legal matters or domestic violence.

### **The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management**

Good

- The leadership team has developed a strong staff team, with a range of skills and experience to continue to improve the centre's effectiveness. Staff are committed and the result of their hard work is evident in the rapid progress made in recent years to widen the impact on the lives of young children and their families.
- Governance arrangements are well established, and governors have a good awareness of the centre's work. They use this information to challenge leaders to set even more ambitious targets for the future. The advisory board brings together governors, parents and partners, and helps to ensure that services are planned across the locality to avoid duplication and achieve value for money.
- The local authority regularly checks on the centre's effectiveness and has given good support to help the centre's own evaluation. Most recently, senior leaders have usefully identified that more can be done to extend the partnership with childminders and other early years providers to identify and share best practice and training.
- Centre staff use the accommodation and resources flexibly across the centre, school and day care so that the needs of all families, particularly those in most need, are met well.
- Parents' views are sought regularly through formal consultations, such as at the governors' afternoon tea sessions, informal discussion and evaluation of key centre programmes, so that parents contribute well to the centre's development. Staff use this information well, together with wider statistical information about the area, to make changes and plan next steps
- Performance management and supervision are embedded well in the centre's culture and procedures. Leaders ensure that staff skills are used well, and that observation and training result in continued good quality work with families.
- Safeguarding arrangements are meticulous and meet current requirements to promote the welfare of young children. The use of the Common Assessment Framework procedures ensures effective multi-agency working and helps to make sure that those most at risk of harm, including looked after children, children subject to child protection plans and those in need, are kept safe. The proportion of children in the area requiring high levels of support has fallen over recent years, reflecting the success of the centre's work in partnership with other agencies.

## 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>	21929
<b>Local authority</b>	Islington
<b>Inspection number</b>	444720
<b>Managed by</b>	The governing body of Margaret McMillan Nursery School and Children's Centre on behalf of the local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	850
<b>Centre leader</b>	Mary Hart
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7281 2745
<b>Email address</b>	admin@margaretmcmillan.islington.sch.uk

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