

Mowlem Children's Centre

Mowlem Street, off Bishops Way, London, E2 9HE

| Inspection date | 18–19 May 2015 |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Overall effectiveness | Requires improvement 3 |
| This inspection: | |
| Previous inspection: | Not previously inspected |
| 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 is a centre that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Too few children and families from target groups sustain their engagement in centre services.
- Staff and key partners are not using the full range of available information to identify and establish contact with the majority of families most in need of support.
- Too few families take up the offer of free early years education for two-year-olds because there are not enough places for them.
- Too few parents, especially from workless homes, enhance their education, engage in training and volunteering or extend their workplace skills. Links with Jobcentre Plus are not as strong as with other partners and therefore not effective.
- Obesity levels are too high and the centre does not provide sufficient effective support and guidance to help parents make better decisions about their child's diet and exercise.
- The local authority does not provide the centre with accurate data to help managers identify the families most in need of support. Arrangements for recording the number of families who attend activities are unreliable.

It has the following strengths:

- The centre is well established in the local community and is building a strong reputation for its good quality activities, support and guidance for those who attend.
- Staff use their good skills and experience very effectively to ensure families are safe and a high proportion of families benefit from well-structured outreach support.
- Strong partnerships ensure services are joined up and help to build capacity for improvement.
- The leadership team has correctly identified priorities for ensuring the centre continually improves so that more families benefit.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of families sustaining contact with the centre, especially those most in need, by establishing more effective protocols for sharing key data and information to identify families with young children, and through more effective marketing of what is on offer.
- Work with the local authority to improve the quality and timeliness of information made available to the centre to help increase the take-up of free early education by eligible two-year-olds so that most, if not all, benefit from the best start possible at a good or better quality setting.
- Extend the opportunities for more adults, particularly those from workless homes, to improve their economic well-being by:
 - establishing effective links with training providers and Jobcentre Plus advisers
 - carrying out regular checks on individual education and training needs of adults
 - monitoring the progress made by adults when they access courses, and use the data gathered to help plan future services
 - increasing the number of volunteering opportunities so that more parents can benefit.
- Reduce obesity and tooth decay levels by providing more effective parenting programmes, information, advice and guidance so that parents have a better understanding of the importance of diet and oral hygiene.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by making sure data are used more effectively to plan services, accurately record those who attend and review the progress made by those who use the centre's services.

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. It was conducted at the same time as the inspection of the neighbouring Meath Gardens Children's Centre, which has a separate report that can be found on the Ofsted website at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

This inspection was carried out by two Additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with parents, centre staff, the deputy headteacher of a local school, volunteers, advisors and senior managers from the local authority, members of the locality stakeholder group, and the centre's social worker and teacher.

The inspectors visited activities taking place in the centre. Sessions observed included 'Adventurous Babies' and the 'DOVES' group for children with visual impairment.

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

Inspection team

Daniel Grant, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Peter Towner

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Mowlem Children's Centre opened in 2010 as a stand-alone children's centre. It is currently one of 12 children's centres in Tower Hamlets which are divided into four localities, each with three children's centres. Mowlem collaborates with the two other children's centres in the north west locality: Collingwood and Meath Gardens. Collingwood was inspected in 2011 and Meath Gardens was inspected at the same time as Mowlem.

Mowlem Children's Centre is based on the same site as Mowlem Primary School which is inspected under separate arrangements. Reports can be found at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

Mowlem Children's Centre is managed directly by the local authority. The centre is supported by the North West Locality Stakeholder Group for the area and the parents' forum; parents attend both. Services provided include outreach family support, activities to promote early learning, child and family health, careers, adult learning and volunteering.

There are 1,598 children under the age of five years living in the area served by the centre. The area has high levels of social and economic disadvantage; overcrowding is much higher than elsewhere in the borough. Extensive new housing development is taking place and this is seeing a rapidly increasing number of children in need of services. Some 40% of children are of Bangladeshi heritage and comprise the main ethnic group. Approximately 20% are from White British backgrounds with others from many other different ethnic groups or of 'unknown' heritage. The large majority of families speak English as an additional language. Children enter early education provision at levels below those typical for their age.

Priority target groups identified by the centre are: two-year-old children eligible for free education, particularly those living in the most disadvantaged communities; children known to social care; children of young parents; and disabled children.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- The number of families who attend activities regularly is low and requires improvement. Too few, particularly those from priority groups, benefit from what the centre and its partners have to offer.
- The centre has identified young parents as a priority group and an increasing number are registering with the centre. However, staff do not know how many young parents there are in the local area and do not monitor how many of those registered use the centre's services.
- The proportion of families with two-year-olds who use the centre is low and too few are benefiting from free funding for high-quality early education. The centre and the local authority are aware of this shortfall and recognise that there are insufficient places in the areas where they live. Action to address this has been slow.
- The centre staff have a good understanding of the needs of the local community and use this effectively in their work with key partners, such as schools and children's social care, to provide help for families in need of support.
- The centre staff team includes a social worker who takes a lead role in ensuring that multi-agency working to keep children safe is effective. The centre is aware of which children are known to social care, including those with education, health and care plans. The large majority of these engage well with the centre and benefit from early help and support.
- Effective outreach support makes a positive difference to a large number of families who are unable or unwilling to attend the centre. Home visits are planned and structured well with close attention given to helping families to overcome problems.
- The centre does not receive live birth data, but the good partnership with health professionals helps the centre to make early contact with parents-to-be and their new babies. The staff team has

worked effectively to register a large majority of local families with the centre, including a high proportion of those most in need.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- Only a minority of those registered benefit from the good support and activities available and as a result the impact of the centre's services requires improvement.
- Too few parents, especially those from workless households, engage in training or extend their workplace skills. Links with Jobcentre Plus are not well established and too few parents receive sufficient information, advice and support related to finding work. Only a few parents enhance their education and language skills. Opportunities to volunteer are too narrow but the very few parents who do so gain useful experiences of working effectively in children's settings.
- Support to improve parenting skills is given high priority and parents recognise and value the very effective individual support they receive. However, in the last year the staff team has delivered accredited parenting programmes to only a few parents. Evaluations by those who have attended are very positive and it is clear that this work has been effective. Support aimed at promoting oral hygiene and helping parents to ensure their children maintain a healthy weight are less successful, as obesity rates and levels of dental decay are high.
- Children are helped to develop and learn successfully during activities such as 'Adventurous Babies'. Staff keep accurate records which show that those who attend, including those most in need of support, make good progress from their starting points. Strong partnership work and the effective oversight of the children's centre teacher have enabled children to make a smooth transition to prepare them for their next stage of education. However, despite a recent increase in the number of children who reach a good level of development at the end of Reception, too many children are starting school not ready to learn.
- Good family support, including outreach visits, helps many families overcome the personal challenges they face. Record keeping is very detailed with clear targets set to help staff remain focused on helping the families make progress. High-quality professional supervision of staff is effective. Audits are carried out frequently to ensure case file recording is good quality, inequalities are reduced and personal circumstances are improved.
- The centre is well established in the area and staff ensure that families attending the centre are made to feel welcome. Information about the services on offer is well presented within the centre and a few families make good use of social media to tell each other about what the centre has to offer.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The centre is establishing an increasingly positive reputation with partners and the local community. Leaders, managers and those involved in governance of the centre have a good understanding of the needs of local families and have a clear focus on priorities. They ensure staff perform well so that the centre becomes more effective and that outcomes for more families improve. As a result, inequalities for families using the centre's services are tackled successfully. However, the rate of progress is too slow and more work is required to ensure the centre improves at a faster pace.
- The local authority's arrangements for monitoring the centre's performance have helped leaders and managers to identify and prioritise key areas for improvement, for example, the need for clear protocols to allow the centre to receive accurate live birth data and information about families most in need of support, particularly those expecting a new baby. However, data are not used rigorously enough to track the centre's overall performance, which has limited the centre's effectiveness. The centre has sufficient resources to ensure local priorities and the needs of local families are effectively met.
- The centre has good safeguarding arrangements which ensure families using its services are safe and well protected. Effective policies and procedures are in place, including those for the safe recruitment of staff.

- The staff team has a good level of experience and knowledge of safeguarding, with professional advice and supervision from the centre's social worker. Good attention is given to promoting the welfare of children in need, those looked after by the local authority and those subject to child protection plans. Common Assessment Framework processes are used effectively to provide coordinated early help for those families who need it.
- Arrangements to consult with families about the work of the centre and to involve them in evaluating the centre's effectiveness are good. Staff seek the views of parents and children at the end of sessions and the centre has a very effective parents' forum. Partners and parents regularly attend the Locality Stakeholder Group set up to assist the governance of the three centres which work in partnership.
- The centre is very attractive and purpose built to ensure those who attend are stimulated by the innovative design which makes very good use of light and space. Families feel safe at the centre and place their trust and confidence in the well-qualified and experienced staff team. One parent told inspectors, 'This place is the epicentre of everything that has gone well in my life. I owe so much to the staff team and hope to give something back by helping other people as soon as I am able to.'

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. |

Centre details

| | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Unique reference number | 22068 |
| Local authority | Tower Hamlets |
| Inspection number | 455106 |
| Managed by | The local authority |
| Approximate number of children under five in the reach area | 1,598 |
| Centre leader | Paula Holt |
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