

Melcombe Children's Centre

Fulham Palace Road, Fulham, London W6 9ER

Inspection dates	28–29 May 2015
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	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.

- Most children are registered with the centre and a large majority of each priority group regularly uses the centre and benefits from its services. Families expecting children also benefit well from services.
- The centre is promoted as a service rather than a building. As a result, staff make good use of outreach provision and use home visits, community centres and health clinics to bring services out from the centre to enable good access by families with the most needs.
- Children who use the centre access good quality education which helps them to be well prepared for school.
- The quality and range of services offered to families are good and very relevant to their needs. There is a good balance between services that are open to all families and those that are more specialised and targeted to meet the needs of specific families.
- The centre promotes inclusion particularly well. This ensures that families from priority groups, such as families with disabled children and those whose lives are affected by mental illnesses, access relevant services that meet their needs.
- The quality of leadership, governance and management is highly effective. Competent, confident leaders and managers closely monitor the centre's performance and make accurate assessments about its strengths and weaknesses. As a result, the centre continually improves the quality and impact of its work.

It is not outstanding because:

- Not enough parents from priority groups participate in parenting programmes.
- Tracking of the progress of children who attend activities at the Bayonne centre is not yet good enough.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of parents from priority groups so that the large majority access and benefit from parenting programmes.
- Extend the existing good practice of tracking and monitoring children's progress at Melcombe to children's centre activities held at the Bayonne centre.

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 three Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, local authority managers, school staff, volunteers, advisory board members and parents. They also met representatives from a range of partner organisations, such as those from health, schools, Jobcentre Plus, Early Help and community organisations.

The inspectors observed activities at the centre such as a sewing class and a crèche session. They also visited a Play in the Park activity in a local park and visited the Bayonne centre to meet staff.

They looked at a range of relevant documentation such as the self-evaluation report, safeguarding practice and procedures, centre policies, action plans, and evaluations from parents and from partner organisations. The views of parents were taken into account from interviews and from their completed evaluations.

Inspection team

Priscilla McGuire, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Marinette Bazin	Additional inspector
Catherine Kirkham	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Melcombe Children's Centre was set up in 2008. It is a stand-alone children's centre based in a Grade 2 listed bungalow on the site of Melcombe Primary School. It is one of two hub centres operating in the south locality of the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. In the borough, hub centres offer universal and targeted services and 'spokes' deliver universal provision and signpost families to targeted services. Bayonne pre-school, which is a fifteen minute walk from the centre, is the linked 'spoke' centre.

The governing body of Melcombe Primary School manages the centre on behalf of the local authority. The Melcombe Primary School assistant headteacher/Early Years Foundation Stage leader acts as centre manager and is based in the centre two days per week. She is supported by the full time deputy centre manager and an advisory board. The school is subject to a separate inspection. Its most recent report can be found at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

Services offered by the centre include early years education, adult learning, family support, employment advice and guidance, counselling support and health services. The community served by the centre is made up of families from diverse ethnic, social and economic backgrounds. Deprivation estimates suggest that some four in 10 children under the age of four years live in poverty. Six of the wards in the area are in the 10% most deprived in England. Approximately 42% of newborn to four-year-old children live in social housing.

There are 1,818 children living in the area served by the centre. Children generally enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge that are below those typical for their age.

The centre has identified the following as priority groups with the most needs: children living in the 20% most deprived area; lone parents; families with disabled children; and, children of parents with mental health illnesses.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families Good

- Most families are registered with the centre, including from the most deprived community. A large majority from all of the centre's priority groups make good use of the centre until their needs are met. This includes families expecting children who access services provided by midwives.
- Centre staff have been particularly successful in ensuring that priority groups, such as families with disabled children or those suffering mental health problems, actively participate in activities.
- The centre shares information well with organisations such as schools, charities, health services and many others. Through regular meetings, specialist project work and productive relationships, centre staff effectively signpost and refer families to external services or agencies as needed.
- Meetings, such as team around the children's centre, are used well to ensure information about the needs of families are shared with the centre's key partner organisations. Staff also collaborate well with Fulham Central Children's Centre to keep track of families who for convenience, access its services rather than travel further to Melcombe.
- By regularly scrutinising attendance data, staff closely monitor any dips in families' engagement with the centre. This ensures that they are in a good position to help families overcome any barriers that affect their ability to access services.
- Centre staff are persistent in their efforts to help parents who, for various reasons, feel reluctant to access services. They use a combination of home visits, text messages and phone calls to ensure newly registered or referred families understand how they can benefit from the centre's services. For example, one parent explained how 'the determination and genuine care of centre staff' helped her overcome her initial resistance to using the centre. As a result, the quality of life of this parent

improved significantly.

- Centre staff promote the centre as a service rather than a building. This ensures that wherever families live within the community they can access services. For example, they benefit from services provided during home visits or at venues such as community centres, health clinics, local parks or schools.
- The very large majority of three- and four-year-olds take up free early years places. Although the proportion of two-year-olds is not yet as high, it is higher than the average for London. Nevertheless, data show a very strong and improving trend. The percentage of eligible two-year-olds who access places has more than doubled during the last year. These children access good or better quality early years places.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The quality and range of services offered by the centre are good and very relevant to families' needs. The centre plays a key role in improving the well-being and quality of lives of families who use its services. There is a good balance between services such as Stay and Play that are offered to all families and services such as employment support or counselling services that are targeted at specific families with priority needs.
- The centre works very effectively with health partners and with specialist agencies to meet the needs of priority families. For example, through work with mental health charities and its own specially trained staff, the centre is able to provide specialist support and services to meet the needs of parents with mental health illnesses.
- Activities to help parents improve their learning and skills are good. Some courses, such as English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), help parents gain qualifications. Success rates on these courses are good. Other activities, such as sewing and craft courses, meet the wider needs of parents and, for example, help to reduce their sense of social isolation or increase their confidence.
- The centre has strong partnership links with Jobcentre Plus. As a result, parents improve their employability or become better prepared for work. The partnership also enables the centre to work with Jobcentre's lone parents advisers to meet the needs of lone parents, a key priority group.
- Individual support to help parents develop their parenting skills is good. Parents talk of how the improved parenting techniques they have learnt from attending courses such as Parent Power have had a positive impact on their children. However, not enough parents from the centre's key priority groups access parenting programmes.
- Breastfeeding is strongly promoted, and breastfeeding rates at six to eight weeks are significantly higher than national rates. Obesity rates are above national averages, but through healthy eating sessions and activities, such as Family Football or New Mum, New You, the centre is doing its best to help increase the understanding of parents of how they can help their families live healthier lives.
- Outcomes for children who access the centre are good and the quality of activities to help children improve their skills and development is also good. Tracking at Melcombe shows that children who attend the centre are more likely to reach a good level of development than children who do not. However, the recording of the progress of children who attend sessions such as Stay and Play at the Bayonne centre is not sufficiently developed.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The quality of leadership, governance and management of the centre is good. The centre is managed well by a confident and competent manager who leads a highly qualified and well trained team of staff. The effectiveness of the centre's management is seen in the increasing number of families that use the centre and the improving outcomes, especially for children.
- Governance through the school and the advisory board is effective in holding the centre to account and provides effective support and challenge. Parents are well represented on the advisory board and contribute well to making decisions that affect the way the centre is run. Through close

monitoring of its work, leaders and managers ensure the centre uses its resources well to help reduce inequalities. The success of this aspect of the centre's work is seen, for example, in its highly inclusive practices. It is also evident from the high proportion of families with disabled children who use the centre and benefit from services they cannot easily access elsewhere.

- Staffing resources are well matched to the needs of families and used effectively to reduce inequalities. Through its close partnership work with the co-located school, staffing, accommodation and other resources are shared well between the school and the centre to meet local needs.
- Through quarterly performance reviews, the local authority closely monitors the quality and impact of the centre's work. The centre's performance against agreed and measurable targets is also closely monitored and areas for development identified and recorded in detailed action plans. As a result, the centre continually improves both the quality and impact of its work and has good capacity to keep improving.
- The monitoring of the performance of staff is effective and reflected in the rigorous appraisal system. Individual objectives are set for staff which are regularly reviewed and which are clearly linked to the centre's key priorities. Staff training is also closely linked to the needs of priority group families and to safeguarding. For example, centre staff have attended training in lone parents work, in domestic violence and in parenting techniques.
- The quality of the centre's work is reflected in the productive relationships it has with a wide range of professionals and staff from organisations representing health, education, the voluntary sector and Jobcentre Plus. Staff from partner organisations express high levels of confidence in the centre's ability to support families and meet their needs.
- The quality of the centre's partnership work is particularly seen in its specialised project work. For example, the centre is working closely with a local hospital and clinicians to develop antenatal and perinatal services for mothers and expectant mothers living with mental illnesses.
- Safeguarding matters are actively promoted at the centre. Centre staff work effectively with the Early Help team to assess and meet the needs of families with children subject to child protection plans, children in need and looked after children. All appropriate policies and procedures are in place to minimise the risk of harm to children and to ensure staff and volunteers are safely recruited.

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.

Children's centre details

Unique reference number	21985
Local authority	Hammersmith and Fulham
Inspection number	455050
Managed by	The governing body of Melcombe Primary School on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,818
Centre leader	Wendy Dormer
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0208 748 2939
Email address	childrenscentre@lbhf.sch.uk

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