

Hitherfield and Streatham Wells Children's Centre Group

Hitherfield Road, Streatham, London, SW16 2JQ

Inspection dates	22–23 July 2014
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Good	2
		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 group of centres is good.

- Almost all children and families from priority groups in the area are registered with the group. A large majority of families from workless households, young parents and families for whom English is an additional language access services regularly.
- Parents report that the group's activities have a positive impact on their lives. A broad range of good quality services meets the needs of families well.
- Good support is given to families in most need. Staff are well qualified and work well with other professionals operating in the community to provide early help to families.
- Leadership, management and governance are good. Strong yet sensitive leadership of the group has ensured, despite significant recent changes, that staff morale is high. Governors and the local authority have a good knowledge of the challenges facing the group. The development plan used by the group is accurate, with a clear focus on improvement.
- Strong partnership work assists the group's good capacity to make further improvements.

It is not outstanding because:

- Despite significant recent increases too few families of Black Caribbean heritage are regularly accessing children's centre services.
- Checks on children's learning and development and in tracking how well adults do when they access further learning opportunities are not detailed enough to enable the group to see clearly how much progress they make.
- Procedures for the quality assurance of activities are insufficiently robust.

What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Increase engagement still further by:
 - reviewing existing practices, with particular attention to what activities are run and where
 - enhancing the effectiveness of outreach activities, especially for Black Caribbean heritage families.
- Establish a tracking system to:
 - check the progress made by children during their time with the group and when they move on to other early years settings
 - check the progress adults who access group services make, so that the group can measure the impact of its work.
- Review and formalise the arrangements for quality assuring and monitoring of all activities offered by the group to ensure that they lead to the continuous improvement of 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.

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders and managers in the local authority, health, education and social care partners, parents, outreach workers, early years practitioners, volunteers and representatives from the governing body.

The inspection covered Hitherfield and Streatham Wells children's centres. Inspectors visited both centres used by the group. They observed the group's work, such as Stay and Play.

They also looked at the group's self-evaluation, action planning, a sample of case files, safeguarding practice, policy and procedures and a range of other relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Alan Comerford-Dunbar, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Christina Christou	Additional inspector
Sandra Teacher	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the group

Hitherfield and Streatham Wells Children's Centre Group, formed in 2012, is made up of two former stand-alone children's centres located in the south west of the London Borough of Lambeth.

Both centres are situated within the grounds of primary schools, which are subject to separate inspections; Hitherfield Primary School and Nursery (URN 2082900) and Streatham Wells Primary School and Nursery (URN 2082895). The reports of these inspections can be found at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>.

Hitherfield & Streatham Wells Children's Centre Group also works collaboratively with Sunnyhill Children's Centre and share some commissioned service provision. Sunnyhill Children's Centre was inspected in September 2011. The centre was judged to be 'outstanding'.

Hitherfield Primary School and Children's Centre is the designated governing body for the group. The Streatham Wells Primary School and Children's Centre governing body is also fully involved in the governance of the group. Reporting to the governing body is a joint children's centre committee made up of an equal number of members from both governing bodies. Reporting to the joint children's centre committee is a joint advisory board and also a single parent forum known as the 'round table'. The joint advisory board is made up of members of the community, professional agencies and parents. The group is led by the children's centre partnership manager, who is responsible to the assistant headteacher, who in turn is responsible to the headteachers of each primary school.

The group offers a range of activities and services including family support, outreach work, the stay-and-play groups Tumble and Play and Make and Take, breastfeeding support, child health clinics and outdoor activities.

The group has identified that target groups are those families with a Black Caribbean heritage, workless households, young parents and families for whom English is an additional language.

The reach area is urban and densely populated with areas of significant wealth as well as some areas of social deprivation. Some 22% of families live in workless homes.

Currently, 1,768 children under the age of five years live in the reach area, of whom 97% are registered with the centre. The largest group of families are of White British/European heritage. Other, ethnic minority groups are from Black Caribbean, Black African, and Asian heritage families. Most children enter early education provision with a range of skills and knowledge that are at the expected level for their age.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families Good

- Access to services is good because most targeted children take up their free entitlement to early education, especially three- and four-year-olds from families in most need.
- Access to early childhood activities by families, including expectant mothers and families from the most disadvantaged areas, lone parents, children with additional needs and referred children, is good. This success has enabled the group to focus efforts to engage

with other target families, including those who are less likely to use children's centre services.

- Services open to everyone are well attended and the provision of targeted services, such as a group specifically run for women suffering domestic violence, is highly valued by parents. Engagement with fathers and/or male carers is particularly strong, with over 60% actively engaging in group activities. Outreach events, like the trip to the seaside, are extremely popular with children and families and often over subscribed.
- Outreach workers have a good knowledge of the various issues facing families in their community. Effective work with families in their own home ensures that many of those who are suffering from a range of difficulties are very well supported. Parents spoke positively about the good support they receive from knowledgeable and friendly staff.
- A large majority of families in most need, for example from workless households, young parents and families for whom English is an additional language, access children's centre services regularly. However, despite significant recent increases the group recognises, and has appropriate plans in place, the need to engage with still more families of Black Caribbean heritage.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The group's wide range of services open to everyone and those targeted for specific purposes has a positive impact on the lives of users. Parents from different cultural backgrounds say they are highly satisfied with the quality of services available. These include courses for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Parents value the positive relationships they have with staff and say that the support given to them helps significantly to improve family life.
- The group's focus on reducing the risk of harm within families is particularly effective and staff work closely with other professionals to provide support for families in crisis. Staff work particularly well with families in most need and are very quick to notice if any parent or child requires extra help. Case study evidence demonstrates the group's success in taking appropriate action that has a positive impact on the outcomes for children and families.
- Appropriate strategies are in place to support local health initiatives such as reducing obesity, improving breastfeeding rates and oral health. Staff are working closely with health colleagues to improve the health of children and their parents. A large majority of children across the group area are immunised and obesity rates meet national and local averages.
- Children are well prepared for school as a result of their attendance at the group's good quality activities. Parents feel 'Getting ready for school' sessions help their children to socialise and get to know the children who will be in their nursery groups. However, staff do not always sufficiently check the impact of activities on reducing inequalities and ensuring individual children make good progress.
- There is a wide range of activities available for adults to attend to enhance their learning. But too little attention is given to assessing the impact that attendance has on improving the life chances and choices of individuals.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Leadership, management and governance arrangements are good as a direct result of the clear direction, monitoring and support provided by the local authority. The development

plan used by the group has a clear focus on improvement and ties in well to the group's accurate self-evaluation. Partnership working is strong, especially with schools and community organisations, and are helping the group to build for even better effectiveness.

- Staff, drawn from a broad range of professional backgrounds, receive regular supervision and appropriate training; this enables them to respond professionally to the challenges that their work presents.
- The group is well led by the skilful group leader who is a good role model for staff, parents and their children. She leads the staff team very effectively. As a result, all parents feel welcome, valued and have equal opportunities to make positive changes to their lives and that of their children.
- Safeguarding arrangements are appropriately robust and policies and procedures are well written and carefully followed by staff and managers. Staff are vigilant and parents understand the importance of adopting safe practices. Support for children who are subject to the Common Assessment Framework arrangements or child protection plans is good. Case studies demonstrate that the centre's involvement has helped to reduce the level of support needed for some families at risk.
- Hitherfield Children's Centre is extremely well resourced and used well to support families living in the area. Streatham Wells Children's Centre, although less well resourced, benefits from carefully considered decisions about which venue is most suited to run activities. Resources are used effectively to meet the majority of targets; as a result, outcomes to narrow life chance gaps for most target groups are improving well.
- Careful planning of activities run by the group, either directly or by commissioned services, is appreciated and used well by families. However, procedures for the quality assurance of some activities are insufficiently robust and do not always identify issues that would lead to the further improvement of services.

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.

Group details

Unique reference number	80338
Local authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	442822
Managed by	Hitherfield Primary School and Children's Centre on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,768
Centre leader	Phyllis Hayden
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