

Inspection report for Langtry Children's Centre

Local authority	London Borough of Camden
Inspection number	361095
Inspection dates	16–17 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Rob McKeown HMI

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Aisha Ashanti
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Langtry Nursery Centre

The inspection of this Sure Start Children's Centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Early Years Inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with centre leaders, local authority officers, representatives from the locality support teams, health professionals and early years staff.

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

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Information about the centre

The London Borough of Camden's children's centres are organised on a locality basis that follows on the Sure Start Local Programmes. They provide a range of services including childcare and education; family support; outreach and home visiting; community based health services and advice on training, employability and benefits. Families and their children have access to a range of universal and targeted children's centre services that are provided in accessible venues across each locality. Camden has high levels of deprivation and crime, and below-average life expectancy. It is one of the 30% most disadvantaged areas in the country, with unemployment above the national average. The borough has a very high population density with around one third of the child population living in households with no working adult. Free school meal eligibility is particularly high.

Langtry Children’s Centre is directly managed by the local authority. It was designated as a phase 1 children’s centre in March 2004 and was originally an early years centre. It is one of four children’s centres that make up the children’s centre offer for the Kilburn Priory Locality. The core site is based at Kilburn Grange Children’s Centre with Langtry Children’s Centre signposting its users to the facilities and activities at the core site and within the locality. Langtry delivers the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is registered with Ofsted to provide 73 early education and childcare places for children from four months to five years of age. Children aged 3–5 years attend the pre-school from 9.00am to 3.00pm in term time, with the centre also providing care for 3–5 year olds 'wrapped around' their shorter pre-school education day and for the full day during school holidays. The early years provision was last inspected in February 2008. The centre accommodates an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) unit that admits children with a diagnosis of ASD. The children are usually aged between two and four years of age. There are four places within the centre for children aged under three that are reserved for children in need within the Kilburn Priory Locality. Children’s levels of development on entry to the pre-school provision for children aged 3–5 years are below those expected for their age.

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children’s centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for users and the wider community

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre’s capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

3

Main findings

This children's centre forms a part of a locality partnership which provides a range of services for children and their families. Its overall effectiveness is satisfactory, although many of its core offer services are provided in other locations. Early years education in two nursery classes and child care for babies and toddlers provided at the Langtry building are good in some respects, although not as strong as they were at the time of the last inspection in February 2008. Children from a broad range of different Black and minority ethnic family groups attend the centre and equal opportunities are given to all. Those children who attend the ASD unit receive good support, which is greatly appreciated by their parents. Relationships between staff and children, and their parents and carers, are good and promote positive cohesion in the community. Safeguarding procedures and practice are satisfactory.

Leaders and managers are rightly focused on developing the provision for the children who come to the centre each day to learn and be cared for. Staff work successfully across all early years and childcare provision and do their best for the children who attend. Parents and carers spoken to by inspectors said they were generally pleased with what the centre is providing, although there was some criticism of the quality of the accommodation. Leaders are less successful at publicising and brokering the full range of services that are on offer elsewhere across the locality. Although there is a lack of space at Langtry to enable services to be provided on site, the lack of success is also due to leaders not broadening their approach beyond early years and child care provision to promote the full range of services more widely to centre users and the community.

Although not based at the Langtry centre, some key support teams are successfully engaging with parents and carers and their children across the locality. Family support workers and parent partnership engagement workers know the area well and are instrumental in linking families, some of which have a high level of need, to the range of services provided through the children's centre network. However, their links with the Langtry staff and the parents who use the centre are not proactive enough and result in some missed opportunities to support parents and carers who may benefit from services available, albeit elsewhere in the locality.

The systems for engaging parents in evaluating the quality of provision at Langtry are not well established. The local authority has conducted a useful satisfaction survey among users in all its localities. This information is not centre specific and not able to be used by leaders at Langtry to set priorities, which might improve and reflect a broader service provision. Leaders at Langtry have yet to set up a comprehensive approach to gathering and acting upon parents' and carers' views of their children's experiences at the centre. There are some opportunities for parents and carers to meet in small groups to hear about and discuss issues which may affect them and their children, but parents are not formally involved in the governance of the centre or any centres in the locality.

There are strengths in leadership and management across the locality, which provide

the centre with adequate capacity for sustained improvement. However, systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality and impact of provision at Langtry, and more widely across the locality, are insufficiently robust. Locality leaders acknowledge that evaluating and proving the impact of the services provided are weaknesses. Consequently, they have begun to devise ways of collecting evidence to determine how successful locality centres and outreach staff are at improving outcomes for children, parents and carers. There are similar weaknesses in the Langtry leaders' approach to collecting evidence to show how the work of the centre improves outcomes for children over time, including the difference made for children once they reach school.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve monitoring and evaluation systems at the centre and in the locality to clearly show the impact of the children's centre's work on outcomes for children
- Increase the involvement of parents and carers in the governance of the centre, so that they are able to contribute their views on the quality of the services provided and to decision making about centre developments
- Develop a vision for Langtry Children's Centre that goes beyond early years and childcare provision, so that it plays its full part in the children's centre locality model.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

Outcomes for users are at least satisfactory but the centre itself and the locality partnership have limited statistical evidence to demonstrate high levels of impact. At Langtry, children are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles. Meals are prepared daily by the centre kitchen and they provide children with a balanced nutritious diet. There are plenty of outdoor learning spaces in which children can develop their physical skills. Parents are invited to attend talks on how to prepare healthy food for their children and the locality breast feeding advisory clinics are oversubscribed. The good links with health services result in positive support for emotional well-being and high immunisation rates across the locality. The locality family support worker service can show that their work with teenage parents is helping them to manage their lives successfully. Children's behaviour at the centre is good and staff ensure that children in their care are safe. Advice is given to parents and carers on safety in the home, and the locality centres promote this during child safety week. The locality services can point to examples of individual families who have benefited from family support, for example in being protected from domestic violence.

The enjoyment and achievement of children attending the Langtry early learning and child care setting was at least good at the time of the last inspection in 2008. Parents spoken to at the centre continue to believe that their children enjoy the learning they undertake. Inspectors did not complete a full inspection of the centre's early years provision but spent some time in the learning and care bases and looked at a sample of children's progress records. These records showed that children are making

satisfactory progress, although the more precise assessments made in the ASD unit indicated that the children with special educational needs are making good progress. A stronger emphasis on developing communication, language and literacy skills is helping children to do better in this aspect of their early learning. There are plans in place to strengthen the programme to support transition for children moving on to school. At the moment the centre does not monitor or have an overall record of progress and achievement in the nursery to enable leaders to identify the progress all children are making in relation to their starting points. Leaders do not know how effective the children's centre is over time in helping to improve overall outcomes for children in their first year at school.

Relationships between the centre staff and parents, carers and children are good. In the locality, family support workers can point to positive examples of when fathers have received good support to enable them to play a more prominent role in bringing up their children. A small number of parents have gained confidence from helping in the nursery and have gone on to further training. There are courses advertised through the locality for parents and carers, such as learning English and improving computer skills but no information was available on the take up of these for the Langtry community. Parents with limited English language skills are helped with interpretation. There are also some productive links through the locality with the employment and housing services to help users to get into work or improve their living conditions. These are signposted through leaflets displayed at the Langtry centre. Monthly parent question time meetings are held at the centre or elsewhere in the locality but overall, parents' and carers' contributions to decision making are limited.

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	3
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	3
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	3

How good is the provision?

3

The Langtry centre effectively promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all the children who attend. It supports the locality theme days, weeks and months set for all children's centres. These run through the year and cover a good range of health, safety and community topics such as, smoking cessation,

childminding, family learning, Black history and road safety. Good support is provided to help children settle into the centre and meet children's individual welfare needs. Home visits are made to some families, although these are not always tailored to meet individual circumstances. Children's individual learning and progress are assessed by staff in the nursery classes. Some of the assessment records scrutinised by inspectors varied in quality. In some cases, the time between assessments was too long for them to be used effectively to keep up with the progress children are making and identify gaps in their learning. Provision for children who have special educational needs is good and the assessment of their progress is meticulous. In the locality, there are positive links with other services to support vulnerable families. Effective use is made of the common assessment framework and centre staff monitor the support provided for children who have child protection plans. Assessments of need undertaken by the locality family support team are persistent and engage hard to reach parents. The good support from this team has helped some families in times of crisis.

The locality children's centres provide a broad range of appropriate services, although very few of these are available at the Langtry site. New parents and carers are registered within the locality, if they have not accessed children's centre services previously, and this has led to some new users at Langtry receiving family outreach and support. The locality services are signposted at Langtry through a selection of displayed publications and leaflets, although their display could be more eye-catching and inviting. These services are run at a number of local centres and cover a broad range of early learning and parenting topics. There are also drop-in sessions at local community venues, which focus on a range of topics, such as cooking, early play and music, with some targeted at particular ethnic communities. English language courses are also available with crèche facilities, but not at the Langtry centre. The locality partnership has an energetic team of parent engagement workers who go out into the community to engage parents and carers who are not using the services. They visit shops, local schools and private provider settings to inform potential users of the benefits of the services provided locally by children's centres.

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	3
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	3

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

There is an overall coherent plan and structure for the development and delivery of services offered by the local authority children's centres. There are appropriately

clear lines of responsibilities for leadership and management of the Langtry centre and for the locality service teams. Less clear is how the separate teams work collectively together in the best interests of users in the Langtry community. Governance and accountability arrangements are currently under review and leaders in the centre and the locality acknowledge that greater representation by parents is required to strengthen governance. There are suitable links established with partner organisations, such as health and employment services and with commissioned service providers.

Leaders at the Langtry centre are strongly committed to providing children with a positive learning and care experience. The centre actively promotes the inclusion of all children and celebrates diversity. Leaders have identified their priorities for improvements in teaching, learning and provision, such as establishing the 'every child a talker' programme this year to help improve children's early literacy skills. However, they have not drawn up a development plan in which all of the centre's priorities are set out clearly with measurable success criteria with which to judge the impact of improvements on outcomes for children. Leaders' vision and plans for the future lack a clear perspective on how provision at Langtry can be fully integrated into the core offer of services offered in the locality.

Systems for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the centre are insufficiently developed. Annual appraisals are conducted with staff and targets are set to improve their effectiveness and performance. Other aspects of monitoring, such as keeping a close check on children's progress and development are insufficiently rigorous. The centre's overall evaluation of its effectiveness is not matched against the range of services provided in the locality. Too little information is gathered systematically from parents and carers at Langtry to help leaders judge their views of the overall effectiveness of what is provided for them and their children.

Accommodation at the centre is generally safe and suitable, although space indoors is quite restricted. The fabric of the building requires refurbishment to improve working conditions for children and staff. The local authority is considering some remodelling plans in order to establish more space in which staff can conduct meetings with parents, with an option to provide a wider range of locality services within the Langtry centre. Safeguarding is suitably prioritised and procedures and policies are satisfactory. Appropriate recruitment and vetting checks are made on staff and protocols are established with other safeguarding services. Routine maintenance checks are made on appliances in the building and the caretaker checks the site daily before children arrive. A more systematic approach to the recording of health and safety checks and the logging of safeguarding information, such as child protection training, is required. Overall, the centre provides satisfactory value for money.

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and	3
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understood	
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	3
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	3
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	3
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	4
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	3
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	3

Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

None.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected Langtry Children's Centre on 16 and 17 June 2010. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Your children's centre is one of four centres that make up the Kilburn Priory Children's Centre locality. It provides early years care, learning and development, and some meetings for parents are also held at the centre. The other services offered in the locality are based at one of the other children's centres or are held in buildings in the local area such as community and health centres. We visited activities in Langtry Children's Centre and the locality, looked at the centre's plans and documents and talked with some parents and carers, and professionals who provided the teaching, care and other support services.

Following our visit we judged that your centre provides satisfactory support to you and your families. All the parents and carers we spoke to were positive about the care and education offered to their children at the centre. The centre is introducing the 'every child a talker' programme this year to help improve your children's early literacy skills. However we thought, and some of you agreed, that the centre would benefit from some refurbishment. The children who attend the Autistic Spectrum Disorder Unit are particularly well supported. They make good progress in their learning as they are set clear targets that the teacher regularly looks at to see how well they are doing. However the centre has not yet set up a systematic way in which to measure the impact they are having on how well all your children are doing when they attend the centre, or when they move on to school.

The centre is good at helping you and your children to be healthy. Your children are provided with enjoyable, nourishing meals and you are also given some guidance on how to help you and your family eat well, for example through talks given at the centre by the dietician. Your children have plenty of chances to play outdoors which helps to keep them fit. The centre is very inclusive of all children and families and celebrates diversity. The children's behaviour at the centre is good and you and your children are safe. You have also been provided with advice on safety in the home through the locality focus on child safety week. Those parents and carers we spoke to believe your children enjoy their learning in the centre. However we have asked the leaders at Langtry to develop more of a vision for the centre that goes further than the early years and childcare provision, so that it plays its full part in offering you the full range of services available in the locality.

Although Langtry Children's Centre is focused on childcare there are other children's centre services run at a number of local centres covering a broad range of topics. There are drop-in sessions at local community venues on topics such as cooking, early play and music. There are also some activities specifically for Black and minority ethnic communities such as English language courses. Some activities such as the breast feeding clinic are very popular. This has resulted in some venues becoming overcrowded or families being turned away. Locality leaders agree this could be better and have already started to look at the quality and times of all their drop-in sessions to make sure they are meeting your needs.

The family support workers and parent partner engagement workers are based at Kilburn Grange Children's Centre but work across the whole of the locality. They make the first phone call to families to welcome them and to let them know about the different services the locality offers. This has led to some of you receiving family outreach and support. The family support team are very persistent at getting in touch with families, especially those who are hard to reach, so that you can all make the most of children's centre services. The parent partner engagement workers go out into areas of the community, such as the local supermarket or park, to tell parents about what the children's centre can do to support them. This locality service was able to give us examples of children and parents who have benefited from family support, for example in being protected from domestic violence and in

supporting fathers to play a part in bringing up their children. They also work well with housing, social services and teenage parents so that families are well supported especially in times of crisis.

Langtry Children's Centre lets you know about other services in the locality through displays of leaflets and posters, though these could be set out so that they are more inviting for you to look at. Parents' question time meetings are held each month, sometimes at Langtry, so that you can put forward any ideas you have about services in the locality. The locality helps to provide you with advice on finances and benefits but we would like them to help you access a wider range of courses that lead to qualifications and on to employment. Although Langtry advertises other services we have asked the leaders at the centre to make sure Langtry plays its full part in the locality so that you can benefit from the full range of services on offer. We have also asked the leaders at Langtry to improve how they monitor how well the setting is doing and do more to gain your views.

Although you are provided with a wide range of services and activities the locality leaders agree that proving the impact of the services they provide needs to be better. They have started to look at ways of collecting information to show how successfully their locality centres and outreach staff are at improving outcomes for children and families. We have also asked locality managers to increase your involvement in the governance of Langtry Children's Centre, and the other locality centres, so that you can give your views on the quality of the services and be involved more in making decisions about any new developments.

We would like to thank those of you who spared the time to speak with us and were willing to share your thoughts about the centre.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.