

Inspection report for Old Oak Community and Children's Centre

Local authority	Hammersmith and Fulham
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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.

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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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with staff and senior leaders, parents and members of the advisory board. They met with a range of partners, observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Old Oak Community and Children's Centre is a phase two centre which was designated in 2007, although it only became fully operational in 2009 following significant refurbishment of an existing building used as a community centre. The building now acts as both a community and also a children's centre.

Hammersmith and Fulham local authority is ultimately responsible for the governance of the centre. However, the centre is managed by the board of Old Oak Housing Association, a charitable organisation, acting on behalf of the local authority. Old Oak Housing Association is part of the Family Mosaic Group; all staff at the centre are employed by this group. The centre is primarily governed by a community sub-committee of the housing association, known as the 'community development group' which is made up of representatives from the local community, parents, councillors and partners. The committee is in essence an advisory board with a broad remit that includes overseeing community centre business as well as the children's centre services. The centre serves a diverse community and is located adjacent to HMP Wormward Scrubs on land owned by the Family Mosaic Group. The centre provides a range of services that meet its full core purpose including health support, adult courses and educational workshops.

The vast majority of wards that make up the reach area are within the 10% most socially and economically deprived in the country. There are 705 children under five living in the reach area. The percentage of families with young children identified as living in poverty is 49%. Currently, 10% of families receive the childcare element of

Working Tax Credit. Families living in the reach area come from a wide range of backgrounds. Most (50%) are of White British heritage with around 11% of White East European heritage and 7% of Black African heritage. Children enter early years provision with typically above average skills, knowledge and abilities than those expected for their age.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children’s centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for families

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Old Oak Community and Children’s Centre is a good centre that sits at the heart of its community and effectively meets the needs of local families from all target groups.

Outcomes for all users are good. Staff at the centre strive to improve the education of children and parents through a variety of activities. As a result, the centre has successfully reduced the gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the rest from 35.1% in 2009/10 to 28.7% in 2011/12. The gap is much narrower than the national average. A range of strategies ensures that the health and well-being of all families improve well. However, the number of health-related clinics run at the centre is low and this is a barrier to even more families accessing health services.

Good provision meets the needs of the large majority of families well, including those whose circumstances make them particularly vulnerable. The care, guidance and support available for families, especially when they most need it, are good. The ready availability of inter-agency partnership working ensures that all family needs are met well. The centre’s engagement with families from all target groups has increased year on year as a result of effective actions taken by the centre.

Children and other users are kept safe in the centre. Safeguarding arrangements are robust with careful attention paid to assessing risks for every activity. Equality and diversity are effectively promoted. Families from different backgrounds and with differing needs get along very well together and say how much they enjoy the

centre's warm, friendly and inclusive ethos. However, centre activities involving disabled children or children with disabled parents are relatively few compared to other groups.

The manager, senior leaders and staff are passionate about improving life chances for families within the reach area and their work has good impact. This results in a positive experience for most users and satisfaction levels are high. There is a clear vision and accurate self-evaluation with appropriately challenging targets for improvement. The centre's track record of success, together with a sensible number of priorities for driving development, demonstrates good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve services for users by building on the existing good partnerships with health workers and increasing the frequency of health-related clinics run at the centre in order to further improve health outcomes.
- Increase involvement with disabled children and children whose parents are disabled by reviewing existing practices and identifying new strategies for engaging these target groups in centre services.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Health outcomes for families are good and improving steadily. Healthy eating and oral hygiene are constantly woven into all activities involving parents and children. Parents are confident when talking about changes in their families' eating habits that these result in a healthier lifestyle. Close partnership working ensures the centre is having a good impact on community health. The rate of sustained breastfeeding at six to eight weeks has improved steadily over recent years and at 79% is significantly above the national average. Obesity rates for children in Reception are improving due to the centre's work with partners. For example, its work with commissioned dieticians encourages families to live healthier lifestyles; six-week programmes called 'Baby Boost' and 'Toddler Boost' are well attended and valued by parents. Although health workers and centre staff work together cooperatively, they are keen to forge still closer working arrangements. They recognise the need to increase the provision of health clinics at the centre as many families in the reach area are unable or unwilling to travel to attend clinics run elsewhere. As one mother put it, 'It's just not pram-pushable'.

All users at the centre are kept safe due to the high priority given to safeguarding matters. Staff are vigilant and safe working practices are constantly reinforced by the detailed risk assessment of activities. All parents report that they feel safe at the centre. Families from target groups and those experiencing change, challenge or difficulties in their lives are particularly well integrated into group activities. The behaviour of children is very good and they behave in ways that are safe for

themselves and others. Staff monitor the well-being of all families and children carefully, including those who are looked after or subject to a child protection plan.

Adults make very good use of the wide variety of activities on offer at this vibrant centre, situated at the heart of the community. Children and parents enjoy and achieve well and make good progress from their starting points. Staff are using very effective teaching strategies to improve the attainment of children. The early years teacher is very experienced and highly regarded by colleagues and parents who work closely with her to learn how best to educate their children. Careful recording of the starting points of all children ensures that their progress is thoroughly recorded and tracked. Parents are sensitively shown how to be the first educator for their children. As one parent said, 'His language has really developed since being at the centre'. The percentage of children gaining at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scales with at least six points in each of the scales for personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy has risen significantly from 45.1% in 2009/10 to 64.6% in 2011/12.

Users make a positive contribution to the running of the centre, for example through their feedback on the quality of activities. Parents were extremely influential during the significant redevelopment of the centre, advising and making suggestions to architects that ultimately affected the design of the centre. The parent forum is used well to improve the confidence of parents as well as enabling parents to voice their opinions. Several changes to the delivery of activities have occurred as a direct result of suggestions made by parents. Parent representation on the community development group is satisfactory but the centre has clear, appropriate plans to further increase their involvement.

Activities offered at the centre to promote the economic well-being of parents are good. Effective strategies are in place to support individuals working towards qualifications and in gaining employment. Many parents improve their self-esteem and fitness by attending 'African Dance' sessions while others prepare for employment by attending 'European Computer Driving Licence' classes in the well-equipped information and communication technology (ICT) classroom. All adult courses are well supported by the provision of crèche facilities. Current employment opportunities are clearly advertised in the centre on high profile display boards. Good partnership arrangements with Jobcentre Plus ensure that all users receive timely advice and guidance regarding benefits and work opportunities. English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes have doubled recently in response to demands identified by centre staff.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

The extent to which children, including those from target 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 children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment	2

How good is the provision?

2

The large majority of families within the reach area access centre activities. The centre is located in an excellent position within the community, making it very accessible for families who generally walk to the centre. Centre staff make good use of comprehensive data and know the reach area very well. Registrations have doubled since the centre became operational in 2009 and are now at 78%. The centre engages well with most target groups and registrations have increased year-on-year for most groups. The centre does not run a specific group for teenage mothers or for fathers; instead it encourages individuals to take part in all events. As a result, 96% of teenage mothers are registered at the centre and 43% of fathers.

The learning and development opportunities provided for children are well planned and as a result they make good progress. The centre is full of useful information about a vast array of opportunities for both children and adults. Most walls are adorned with posters supplied by partner organisations which stimulate enquiries from users. Staff have high expectations of all users who flourish as a result. Activities are well organised with all staff clearly committed to helping families succeed. Participation rates and attendance levels on all courses are good. Achievement is always celebrated and the use of praise can be heard during every activity. Children proudly show their work to parents and adults are keen to talk about their achievements. As one parent said about the centre, 'It's not just for the children it's also for us.'

Support for families is good. Staff confidently give advice and guidance to families about a range of matters. Appropriate referral to other agencies ensures that users receive expert advice on specific issues. Families receive very good support in times of crisis as staff work well with a variety of partners to support families in most need. From the moment a person first enters the centre discreet assessment of the needs of every individual takes place. One mother's comment captures the feelings of many, 'They know you here; the moment you walk through the door they can tell if something is wrong and they care about you.' Another mother, who has recently moved to the area, said, 'They have been a lifeline'.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Leadership and management and the overall effectiveness of the centre are good. The centre manager is clearly focused and enthusiastic about the work of the centre. She is described by colleagues as 'calm, stable and a great example to us all' and epitomises the good work of the centre in her work to provide a positive experience for local families. The local authority and the housing association provide effective support to the centre's leadership. The well-qualified staff feel valued by senior managers and there are robust procedures in place to ensure their supervision and continuous professional development.

The centre, run in conjunction with the community centre, is very carefully managed and supported by the housing association through the existence of two committees which include the 'community development group' which includes the involvement of parents. Governance is robust as a result of careful financial oversight and detailed performance management. The centre's self-evaluation is accurate and staff and partners are clear about the centre's strengths, weaknesses and future priorities. The resulting action plan includes ambitious targets which are clearly linked to the priorities identified by the centre. User engagement is very effective. These features demonstrate the centre's good capacity to sustain improvement.

The centre has been significantly developed over recent years; placed at the heart of a very deprived area it has become a focal point for most residents. All activities, including commissioned services, are evaluated and monitored. Feedback from partners and families helps secure high-quality provision. Effective use is made of the wide range of resources available, for example a patch of ground adjacent to the centre has been turned into an allotment for various groups using the centre. Consequently, the centre provides good value for money.

Equality of opportunity is effectively promoted with services meeting the needs of the majority of users well and enabling good and improving outcomes. Centre staff were extremely supportive when they acted as an advocate for a user who was racially abused on his way to the centre. Staff were able to work closely with other agencies to resolve the situation to the satisfaction of the complainant. The centre is effectively narrowing the achievement gap of children and adults. It has a warm and friendly environment and all users feel included and at home. Despite much good

work regarding equality and diversity the centre does not currently provide an effective service for disabled children or for children with disabled parents.

Partnership working is good and users benefit from the many activities being run at the centre. Staff are confident in directing users to other agencies, knowing that their needs will be addressed. Service level agreements are robust and reviewed on a regular basis. The centre works extremely well with partners to promote community cohesion. A recent problem relating to a large group of threatening, boisterous youths was very swiftly dealt with by centre staff working closely with local police and the housing association.

Safeguarding is good. Robust risk assessments ensure all activities conducted are run safely. Families whose circumstances make them most vulnerable receive good support during times of crisis through the effective use of the centre's equivalent of the Common Assessment Framework process. Staff's knowledge of safeguarding ensures that families receive the support they need at the time they need it most. A single central record provides evidence of appropriate Criminal Records Bureau checks alongside rigorous vetting and recruitment procedures. Staff training concerning child protection is relevant and up to date.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	2

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

Not applicable.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Old Oak Community and Children's Centre on 27 and 28 November 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

As part of the inspection we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's documentation, and talked with a range of children and adults including parents, staff, and partnership representatives. We really enjoyed talking to you at the centre and in the various activity sessions you were engaged in. You expressed your views very clearly and we appreciated you telling us how things really are.

We were delighted to hear how you have benefited from coming to the centre, increased your confidence and become involved in the many worthwhile activities available to you. The centre is working well with partners to improve the outcomes for you and your families.

We were pleased to see that an increasing number of mothers are breastfeeding their babies. Obesity for children, although declining, is still just above the national average so it was good to learn that many of you are attending the 'Baby Boost' and 'Toddler Boost' six-week courses; we are sure that these will benefit both you and your children. However, we have asked the centre to work more closely with health colleagues to provide you with more frequently run health clinics as many of you said you didn't want to travel to White City where most clinics are currently run.

The centre is effective at helping you to increase your knowledge about how your children learn through the many play activities and parenting sessions on offer. We noted how much both you and your children enjoy learning and were pleased to note that the centre always celebrates your success. The skills children have when they enter school are good and improving; educationally, your children receive a good start in life.

The centre manager is clearly focused and enthusiastic about the work of the centre. She is well supported by senior managers from the local authority and the committees, on which some of you serve, which help run the housing association, community centre as well as the children's centre.

Centre staff work very hard to make the centre as good as it can be. They make very good use of information about families living locally; as a result registrations have increased year-on-year. A large majority of families are now registered with the centre. We are particularly pleased that so many dads and also young mums are involved in centre activities.

The centre's self-evaluation is very accurate and clear targets are set in order to improve services for you. It is pleasing to find that you feel welcome at the centre. The inclusion of most children and families is good and the centre is a pleasure to visit. Despite all this good work the centre needs to improve the involvement of disabled children and of children whose parents are disabled as too few are currently attending the centre.

Safeguarding arrangements are effective and the centre makes good use of risk assessments and ensures all activities are safe for you and your children. It was pleasing to learn that you were also confident and more aware of how to keep both you and your family safer as a result of what you had been taught at the centre.

It was also encouraging to learn about how those of you who have undertaken training have increased your confidence and developed your skills, which should help you find employment in the future. The provision of good crèche facilities has enabled many of you to take part in activities such as the exhausting to watch 'African Dance' sessions, which are used well to improve health, self-esteem and fitness.

Thank you once again for your welcome and your willingness to share your views with us. We can see why the staff enjoy working with you so much and wish you every success in the future.

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