

Inspection report for Noel Park Children's Centre

Local authority	London Borough of Haringey
Inspection number	383707
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Paul Armitage

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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected.
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	New Age Childcare Services Limited at the Noel Park Day Care 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.

Report published: December 2011



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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 the centre leader, other staff, health and outreach professionals, representatives of linked bodies, parents, carers, and representatives of the local authority. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Noel Park Children's Centre is located in the Wood Green area of the London Borough of Haringey. It opened in 2005 as a Phase 1 centre. It was given full core status in 2009 so that, working closely with linked organisations, it now offers the full range of health, family support, education, childcare and other facilities in its main buildings and at several other locations in the community. In recent months, the local authority has been working with centres to rationalise provision as a result, primarily, of financial cuts. The intention is that Noel Park and Woodside children's centres will merge, probably in April 2012. Noel Park's leader is now also leader of Woodside and both centres run a joint programme of activities. In addition, children's centres in the borough will work in clusters, sharing provision.

The centre serves some of the most deprived areas in the country. The reach area is ethnically diverse. Alongside White British, there are families of Polish, Portuguese and Somali origins. There is a very large Turkish population, a growing Chinese population and many Travellers, mostly of Romanian origin. There is very high mobility in and out of the reach area. This, together with a rapidly changing economic situation, means that it is very difficult, at any one time, for the centre and local authority to know the precise circumstances of the reach area. This adversely affects the reliability of data.

The latest data available puts unemployment at 7.7% and families on income support at 10.5%. There are a large number of families who are not receiving or

who are not entitled to benefits. The best estimate for the number of children under five is 1,027. Children’s levels on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are below those expected for their age. There is a large amount of social housing and an even larger amount of privately rented accommodation which is used by the transient population. Many homes are occupied by more than one family, sometimes considerably so. One estimate from a housing support charity puts the number of homeless families in the borough at 4,000.

The centre is governed on behalf of the local authority by an advisory board consisting of four parents and carers who use the centre, the local authority’s head of safeguarding, a midwife, the health visitor team leader, the manager of an organisation offering tenancy support and the head of the local primary school. It has been operating for just over a year and meets four times a year. There are also parents’ and volunteers’ focus groups which support governance.

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

Noel Park Children’s Centre is located in an area of London where people’s needs are many and where there is constant change. This represents a considerable challenge to the centre in terms of identifying families in need of support and in meeting their needs. The centre does this well, supported by the local authority and in collaboration with a large number of partner agencies.

Outcomes for children, parents and carers are good. Lifestyles are improving as a result of staff working with families at the centre and in their homes. Families in trouble where children are at risk are suitably helped and the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and child protection plans used to good effect. The safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults in both the community as a whole and in the centre is good.

Children and adults achieve well, sometimes in small ways such as how to prepare some food or read successfully with their child; at other times, achievement may be

completion of the centre's English as a second language (ESOL) course, a return to work or a move into further education. A successful volunteers' course provides excellent outcomes.

Staff at the centre take great care to develop children's basic skills to prepare them for school. Children respond very well; their attitudes and behaviour are good. Children's achievements are recorded in portfolios but the assessments lack a precision so they are not as helpful as they could be in identifying children's needs.

Families at the centre participate well in the way it is run. There is a parents' forum and also one for volunteers. They have representation on the advisory board and their views are taken into account.

Leadership and management of the centre are good. Self-evaluation is good and the development plan has ensured good outcomes for target groups. However, in its identification of groups and success indicators, it lacks the sharpness necessary to ensure that outcomes are improved further.

Managers are very much aware of current financial restraints. With the local authority, they are determined to continue to meet the needs of people in the reach area well. They have credible plans for the future. Given the current good quality of all aspects of the centre, the capacity to improve is good.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- To contribute to further improvement in the outcomes for target groups, improve the quality of the development plan by identifying groups more precisely and specify success criteria more precisely.
- To define more precisely children's learning needs and provide schools with more useful information, sharpen the assessment of children's achievements by using 'development matters' in the Early Years Foundation Stage practice guidance.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Outcomes for families are consistently good. Despite the demographic and other complexities of its area, the centre, together with its partner agencies, does very well in identifying those in need of support and ensuring positive outcomes.

Families are developing healthy lifestyles. For example, all the work with vulnerable families results in the improvement of mental and emotional health, especially the building of confidence. Nutritional issues are also significant and advice given on breastfeeding, weaning, and healthy foods for active three- to five-year-olds is very successful.

Staff work hard to ensure the safety of children and their families. When parents and carers are identified as needing support, very quickly this is arranged involving the necessary range of specialist professionals. Generally, this becomes a 'Team around the Child' and sometimes involves the use of the CAF. The procedures work very well ensuring good outcomes. This is followed up by successful long-term family support and counselling for mothers and fathers and, sometimes, the finding of a nursery place for a child. Overall, processes associated with the CAF and also those associated with child protection plans work well. There is a useful way for a mother who is being abused to seek help. Stickers can be stuck on sample bottles and then handed to the midwives. A small but significant number of mothers has used the system.

The evidence of achievement and pleasure in achieving is strong. Parents and carers exhibit pride in attaining knowledge and understanding as well as pragmatic satisfaction when they are helped with a solution to problems with their children. A good example is the support provided to a mother to engage the father more in helping with their son. This resulted in a new relationship between the two male members of this small family. The mother said that the centre 'has kept us all together'.

There are very successful outcomes from the over-subscribed ESOL and the numeracy for adults courses both provided by the Workers' Educational Association. On both, parents and carers are gaining in confidence as well as improving their skills. After achieving in the centre, parents and carers are usefully helped to achieve more by signposting to the local further education college, Jobcentre Plus and elsewhere. In addition, the centre has developed a very successful volunteer scheme which enables adults to use their knowledge and understanding in bringing up children to help others. One father said that he was using the scheme 'to do good and also help me find a job'.

A good example of children enjoying and achieving is in 'Stay and Play' when children from a wide range of backgrounds spend time together, have fun and develop basic knowledge and skills. A simple portfolio of work is kept for each child to show how they have progressed over time. This works well but there is room for more precision when judging outcomes by using the Early Years Foundation Stage 'development matters' statements. This would better focus activities and, later, provide schools with more useful information than presently. The behaviour of children is good and parents and carers report increasingly positive relationships. When there are problems, the centre involves the right professionals and problems such as school phobia and compulsive behaviour are dealt with successfully.

Reflecting their positive approach, parents and carers have many ideas which the centre takes into account. Parents and carers are members of an advisory forum and they also receive questionnaires after sessions. They also make *ad hoc* comments, which staff take very seriously. The advisory board minutes make very clear how parents' and carers' views are acted upon. The board has four parents and carers as

members thus providing a direct route to the heart of governance.

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

There are a lot of data which are made available by the local authority to the centre and which the centre collects itself; it is sensibly interpreted and used. However, the centre is mindful of the difficulties relating to data given the fluid conditions in the reach area. Thus the centre uses the data with care, supplemented by the invaluable local intelligence from staff and organisations such as schools and nurseries and partner organisations. Information provided by community organisations such as the Turkish Women's Group is also used.

The centre's response to this intelligence about the needs of the reach area is good as are the range of services provided particularly for target groups. Three examples are illustrated here which demonstrate purpose and care on the part of the centre.

For lone parents and children in workless households; and for families on low income with no access to benefits, specific help includes the provision of sessions by the Citizens Advice Bureau on debt and benefits; volunteering as a step to employment; ESOL and numeracy courses; and signposting to further support from the borough's 'No Recourse to Public Funds' team.

For fathers, there has been a successful push to ensure that they feel comfortable in the daily sessions organised by the centre. In outreach, home visits often include a male volunteer and fathers are encouraged to join the 'Dads' group at Woodside Children's Centre.

For parents and carers of disabled children and parents and carers who are disabled themselves, provision ranges from careful selection of toys and images in the early

years; improved access and signage in the centre; early assessment of children's needs by curriculum and inclusion coordinators; the use of 'Team around the Child' or the CAF where appropriate; and regular support in playgroups and other activities. Links with the local Markfield Project enable disabled adults and their families to have access to everyday and other experiences and to take an active role in the community.

Not all provision is aimed solely at target groups. For example, a local 'healthy eating' charity provides courses and catering facilities for everyone to use. Similarly, the several types of play sessions are aimed at all.

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

The quality of leadership and management at all levels is good. Daily management of the centre works smoothly. There is a good, supportive relationship with the local authority as well as with other partners. The centre leader provides inspiration and challenge as well as a pragmatism based on what is feasible within the resources available.

The advisory body is relatively new and it is developing well. Its role in evaluating the performance of the centre and contributing to the development plan is just beginning. Families and volunteers also play a significant role in determining the role and future of the centre. The centre is also open to the views of the wider community. This is most obvious recently in the case of local authority-inspired consultation on the future organisation of children's centres.

Self-evaluation is good and has been important in ensuring the good outcomes. The centre manager and other staff have a very good idea of strengths, weaknesses and points for future development. There is a useful development plan in a style that has worked well, contributing to the good outcomes. However, because of the way it is written around relatively general objectives, it lacks sufficient focus on identifying target groups and their needs if outcomes are to be improved still further.

The good self-evaluation and good outcomes ensure that resources are well used. In the present economic climate, all parties are very conscious of the need to get the most from the resources available. The strong volunteer programme is just one

example of this. The centre offers good value for money.

The centre promotes equality well. Interviews with members of the Turkish, Somali and Portuguese communities indicated how comfortable they feel when attending the centre. They also confirm that their faiths and cultures are respected and celebrated. Fathers interviewed also said they felt comfortable in the centre. Outcomes for parents and carers of disabled children and parents and carers who are disabled themselves are good. Provision and outcomes for dealing with tenancy and other housing issues when they involve members of the Romanian and Traveller communities are handled well.

The centre works very well with partner organisations. Regular meetings of professionals and record systems including the ESTART database ensure coherence in what is done to help vulnerable families and adults and keep them safe. Safeguarding at the centre is good and parents and carers and their children feel safe. Personnel records in the centre are very well organised and indicate that all necessary checks including Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are undertaken. There is no central register but one is being prepared so as to conform to best practice. All necessary risk assessments are undertaken and findings are properly recorded and evaluated.

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

The Noel Park Day Care Centre Ofsted inspection report at: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/CARE/EY303155>. The overall the quality of the provision was judged to be good.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Noel Park Children's Centre on 1 and 2 December 2011. We judged the centre as good overall. We met and spoke with many of you and we thank you for your help when speaking to us. We have taken your views into account.

We can see that people are being helped with bringing up their children, learning how to live healthily and in obtaining state benefits and finding work. We also see that a lot of work goes into helping families in trouble and children who are at risk. The safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults in both the community as a whole and in the centre is good.

We like the way that people are helped in small ways such as how to prepare some food or read with their child. We are also impressed by the considerable effort that parents and carers are putting into improving their knowledge and understanding by taking courses such as the centre's English as a second language (ESOL) course. Some of you are also helped to take other courses at the local further education college. We are particularly impressed by the opportunities you are given to volunteer and so expand both your experience of and your opportunities for getting a paid job.

Children at the centre develop their basic skills well and so are becoming well prepared for school. They get on very well with each other; their attitudes and behaviour are good. One improvement that we have suggested to the centre is that the way children's achievements are assessed should be more precise to aid teachers both in the centre and, later, in schools.

We are very impressed by the opportunities you have to participate in the governance of the centre. You have parents' and volunteers' forums and representatives on the advisory board. You also often complete questionnaires on the courses and other activities you take.

We consider that leadership and management of the centre are good and effective. The centre leader, the advisory board and other staff understand what the centre does well and what it needs to do to improve. Management is very well prepared to take the centre into its next stages of development. There is a development plan which has worked well in guiding the centre to good outcomes for everyone. However, we think it lacks a sharpness which will ensure that the current good outcomes for target groups are improved further.

Thank you again for your help and my best wishes for the future.

Paul Armitage
Lead inspector

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