

# Inspection report for Maytree Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	London Borough of Lambeth
<b>Inspection number</b>	383326
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 May 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joan Lindsay

<b>Centre leader</b>	Bettina Wilhelm-Exley
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Maytree Nursery School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	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.

An inspection of the maintained nursery was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre leader and staff, senior leaders of Maytree Nursery School, representatives from the local authority, the governing body and the advisory board. They also spoke to partner agencies, such as health services, Family Learning Partnership and services delivering adult education, parents and other users of the centre. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centre's improvement plan.

## Information about the centre

This phase two centre was designated in November 2007 and fulfils the full core purpose of services. It is managed by the governing body of Maytree Nursery School on behalf of the local authority. Services are available 48 weeks of the year at the nursery school site and also at Glenbrook Primary School and the Agnes Riley One O'clock club. Over the last few years, due to ongoing refurbishment, the centre has had to operate out of several temporary premises.

The centre's area comprises eight super output areas (SOAs) all in the London Borough of Lambeth and is situated in the Clapham Park New Deal for Communities area, an estate that has two SOAs within the 6% Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index.

There are 935 children under five in the reach area. Some 27% of families are White British and the remaining largest Black and minority ethnic groups are Black African and Black Caribbean. Around a quarter of those registered at the centre do not declare their ethnicity. At 21%, the percentage of children aged 0 to 4 years living in

households dependent on workless benefits is similar to the national average and the number of eligible families benefiting from the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit is 8% above the national figure of 18%. Children’s skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years provision across the reach area are well below 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

Maytree Children’s Centre provides a good service to families. Several aspects are outstanding. These include the extent to which families feel safe. This is because safeguarding is an extremely high priority, staff are highly trained and vigilant, and work very effectively with other partners to ensure excellent levels of care, guidance and support for families. Also outstanding is the positive contribution made by families and, linked to that, their excellent engagement with the centre and their unanimous views that staff have families’ best interests at the core of all they do. A comment that sums up the opinions of all those spoken to is, ‘They have done an amazing job to take me from what I was to what I am now.’

Since opening, the numbers using the centre from most target groups have increased rapidly. The centre has responded well to the needs of the community, including those from the most vulnerable sectors such as families who have no recourse to public funds and those in the most deprived areas. However, it is not yet consistently assessing the longer term outcomes of the work with adults in order to measure the impact on improving their lives or meeting their needs.

Leadership and management are good overall and the centre manager is highly effective. The advisory board is relatively newly formed and there is not yet enough representation from partner agencies on this body. However, it is already contributing to the centre’s improvement plan. This document identifies clear, appropriate priorities; however available data are not used to consistently set targets to ensure the centre’s impact can be measured precisely.

The centre has a good capacity for sustained improvement because it has already improved outcomes in all aspects for a high number of families, there is a very clear understanding of its strengths and areas for development, and it has identified those most in need of support and is increasingly having a positive impact on their lives. Additionally, staff are very well trained, have developed excellent partnerships and are committed to the ongoing concerted effort to extend the work they do to those in the community who need it most.

## What does the centre need to do to improve further?

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop a consistent method to track the achievement of adults who have accessed the centre, to measure the longer term impact and identify where to target further services.
- Strengthen the role of the advisory board so that it is more involved in the centre's self-evaluation, and enhance the centre's improvement plan so that targets are measurable and specific by:
  - increasing the number and range of partners on the advisory board
  - using data robustly to measure the full impact of the centre's work.

## How good are outcomes for families?

<b>2</b>
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Childhood obesity levels in the local wards average 10%, which is below the local authority average of 12%. Data about breastfeeding have only recently been available for the whole local authority but show an improving picture on a quarterly basis, averaging 67.8%. Immunisation rates are good compared to other parts of the borough. Health authority figures show the very large majority of families are engaging with health services. The centre's drive to improve the health of the most vulnerable families is evident through the work done with the 'Community Food Worker', providing healthy snacks, cooking sessions and encouraging children's developmental movement through play. Very good links with health services such as speech and language therapists, and mental health services, result in good outcomes for families with specific needs including children with disabilities or special educational needs. As a result, a large majority of families feel they have healthier lifestyles due to accessing the centre.

Emergency hospital admission data are only available for 2009 but are lower than national average figures. Parents from a full range of target groups, including the most vulnerable, show a very clear improvement in their confidence to support and keep their children safe. They are unanimous in their views that they trust staff completely, succinctly explained by one parent, 'It is like a safety net and a good place to be.' Families have been given an excellent understanding of how to ensure the safety of their children through parenting courses and first aid classes with examples of where parents had been able to put their knowledge into practice. Children using the centre consistently behave in a very safe manner. Staff work very

closely with the large majority of families in the reach area where children are subject to child protection plans and, in several cases, this support has enabled children to remain in the family home and for plans to be downgraded to child in need status. In addition, staff's instigation of and participation in the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process has led to positive outcomes for many families, such as improved housing and access to specific support for children with complex needs.

The Early Years Foundation Stage profile results have strongly improved over the past few years and, at 67% in 2011, are 8% above the national figure. However, the gap between the lowest 20% and the rest increased from 24.7% in 2010 to 38.6% in 2011, 7.2% above the national figure. Close analysis shows that the children who achieved very low scores in 2011 had not accessed children's centre services. Without those children, the gap would have been 29%. Where the centre has tracked children who have accessed their services, there is a notable improvement in their progress. Children are very well prepared for transition to school due largely to the weekly Stay and Play sessions that are integrated with the nursery school. In addition, the extremely close working relationship with the nursery school, very clear focus on early years development in the planning and delivery of services, and work with parents have all had a positive impact on children's personal development and skills. Enjoyment levels are high with a parent voicing the views of many by stating, 'The only argument I get is when they don't want to leave!'

The centre has helped a large number of adults to develop their confidence and self-esteem. Over a third of families using the centre are engaged in training, adult learning or other activities. Job club sessions, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes, and especially Family Learning sessions have all contributed to positive outcomes for families across all target groups including the most vulnerable, such as those without recourse to public funds. Consequently, the majority of families are improving their independence, with some notable successes for those seeking employment, for example, being well supported to become childminders. However, the longer term impact on their economic well-being is not consistently followed up.

Children demonstrate exceptionally positive relationships with adults and with each other, and they behave very well. A very active parents' forum, which represents a good cross section of target groups, is fully involved in decision making. This means that families are fully engaged in shaping the services by suggesting improvements such as using signing in 'Wriggle and Rhyme' sessions. Several, from a range of target groups, have gone on to volunteer in the centre and in other community services such as 'Homestart', which not only benefits these organisations but also has a very positive impact on their personal development.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
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<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How good is the provision?**

<b>2</b>
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Staff have a very good knowledge of the local community and use this effectively to ensure services meet the needs of the large majority of children and adults using the centre. This knowledge and targeting of services to meet specific needs means that outcomes are good or outstanding across all areas. Participation and retention rates are very high. The centre has been especially effective in working with children subject to child protection plans, disabled children and families in workless households. The percentage of fathers and teenage parents who access the services, while still adequate, is relatively lower than for other groups but the outcomes are just as positive.

The provision to help children learn and develop is good because of detailed planning that covers all areas of early learning. Well-located activities across the three sites are effectively engaging most target groups. Where the needs of specific groups such as teenage parents can be better met at other children's centres, they are signposted there, although the impact of the services they access is not consistently followed up. Personal development and achievement are celebrated well through using 'Special Books' and high levels of praise for children, and for adults, awarding certificates and having celebratory lunches. Consequently, aspirations are raised and built on effectively through continuing training or volunteering.

There is outstanding care, guidance and support because of the highly effective tailored help that staff put in place promptly utilising the excellent partnerships that the centre has fostered. This is especially so in times of crisis, such as the threat of eviction, or where children are at risk of being removed from the family home, or there is no money for food or household necessities. All families, but especially the most vulnerable, such as those subject to domestic violence or without any state benefits, feel they can turn to the staff for support. Many have been empowered to improve their own circumstances through being given a strong sense of self-worth. A parent's comment that sums up the views of all those who spoke to inspectors is, 'Many a time I've been in tears and they have helped me cope.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>1</b>

## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

<b>2</b>
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Leadership, management and governance at all levels are good. The day-to-day management of the centre is excellent and there is a very strong team ethos amongst all those involved with the centre, strongly focused on improving outcomes, especially for the most vulnerable. The local authority provides good levels of support and challenge. Governance and accountability arrangements are clear, and the governing body and the advisory board are becoming increasingly involved in the centre's strategic planning. However, available data are not being used to consistently set targets and to measure impact precisely.

Effective monitoring of the centre's work, and evaluations that involve all parties including families who use the services as well as partners, mean that self-evaluation is accurate and that families' views play an important role in shaping the services. Consequently, outcomes are at least good across all areas, for all groups including the most disadvantaged.

The centre uses and manages its available resources, including staff, well, although there are some restrictions in the use of the temporary site at Glenbrook House as rooms are small and located on two levels, which makes access more difficult. The numbers accessing the centre have risen substantially since it opened and the centre is engaging the majority of families from most target groups in the area. For example, 93% of minority ethnic groups and 85% of children from workless households access services. However, the percentage of fathers and lone parents is lower and more work remains to promote their wider participation. Consequently, the centre gives good, rather than outstanding, value for money.

All the centre's sites are very welcoming and safe, and consequently everyone who attends this very inclusive centre is made to feel welcome. 'I feel like I belong here' was a common view expressed. Equality and diversity are promoted well and those who use the centre largely reflect the community it serves. The centre has been highly effective in including disabled children, including putting on specific activities such as 'Signing Wriggle and Rhyme', and working closely with portage and 'Contact a Family' to meet needs. The provision of a crèche has meant that families are enabled to access courses, and children benefit from the high levels of care provided by very experienced staff. Families who do not speak English as their first language

have been fully included through the wide range of languages spoken by staff and by the services of the Stockwell Partnership Bi-Lingual Advocacy Service.

Safeguarding is given the highest priority by staff who are extremely well trained in all relevant aspects of safeguarding children and families, for example in spotting possible signs of abuse or domestic violence. Policies and procedures are constantly reviewed and thorough regular risk assessments ensure families are kept safe. All appropriate Criminal Records Bureau checks are carried out or verified on anyone working with families. The centre works extremely well with a wide range of key agencies such as the health services, social care, and charitable and voluntary organisations to ensure children and vulnerable adults receive the most effective, tailored support, especially through instigating and managing CAFs. This has a very positive impact on how safe and secure families feel.

There are also extremely strong and effective links with Maytree Nursery School so that information about specific children can be shared with the school and also with childminders. All of this has a very positive impact on the at least good, and increasingly outstanding, outcomes achieved by the centre.

Families using the centre are fully involved in evaluating and shaping the services, and consequently they contribute very effectively to the centre's management and key decisions. Constant observation and recording of what individual children enjoy ensures their views are fully taken into account. As a result, satisfaction and confidence levels of families are extremely high. Very effective outreach work means that the centre is engaging with all target groups and is effective in encouraging rising numbers from the most disadvantaged groups to access services.

These are the grades for leadership and management

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>1</b>

<p><b>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</b></p>	<p><b>1</b></p>
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### **Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection**

Findings from the concurrent Maytree Nursery School inspection in relation to attainment on entry to early education, leadership and management, and safeguarding were taken into consideration.

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### **Summary for centre users**

We inspected Maytree Children’s Centre on 2–3 May 2012. We judged the centre as good overall. Some aspects of the centre are outstanding.

During our visit, we looked at your centre’s improvement plan and numerous other documents. We spoke to a wide range of partner agencies working with the centre as well as staff, members of the governing body and the advisory board, and representatives from the local authority. We also visited all the centre activities taking place during the inspection, such as ‘Toddlers Stay and Play’ and ‘Wriggle and Rhyme’, and spoke to a substantial number of families using the centre.

Thank you for your participation in the inspection. It was very helpful to have your input and to hear how very positive you all feel about the centre, especially the commitment of the staff and how well you and your children are cared for, guided and supported. Typical comments made to us were, ‘They have done an amazing job to take me from what I was to where I am now’ and ‘I wouldn’t have done it without the support of the children’s centre; I would have been on my own.’ Parenting courses, first aid classes and the support and knowledge of the very well-trained staff mean that you have an excellent understanding of how to keep yourselves and your children safe. This is also as a result of the outstanding partnerships that exist with a wide range of other agencies such as health visitors. These partnerships also have an impact on outcomes for many of you in relation to improving your skills and confidence, such as language skills, how to help your children learn and how to help you return to work or to volunteer. Many of you say how your lives have been transformed through contact with the centre (‘Maytree has changed my life’ summed up these views) as you have gone on to become childminders or to work or further training. We have asked the centre to monitor these successes and achievements in the longer term in a more consistent way so that the impact of all their work can be seen more easily.

You all feel fully involved in the centre through the parents' forum, participation on the advisory board or through having frequent opportunities to voice your opinion and evaluate services. Because of this, your engagement with the centre is excellent and you make a very positive contribution to the centre's development and improved services. For example, families' suggestions to take small numbers swimming to build parents' confidence and to add a signing 'Wriggle and Rhyme' for children with special learning needs were acted on promptly by staff.

Leadership and management are good overall and the centre manager leads the highly committed staff team very well. The advisory board, although relatively newly formed, carries out its duties increasingly effectively, but at the moment, there is not enough representation on this body from all partner agencies so that a wider range of opinions can be canvassed and add to the centre's future development. This is something we have asked the centre to improve. We have also asked them to add more data to the improvement plan targets so that the good work they do can be measured more effectively over time.

There is a strong commitment from all those involved in the centre to continue to improve and outcomes are already good or outstanding across all areas. These features, combined with a clear and accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development, as well as rapidly increasing numbers accessing the centre from all groups in the community, including those who most need the services, mean that there is a good capacity for sustained improvement.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).