

Inspection report for Plaistow Children's Centre

Local authority	London Borough of Newham
Inspection number	383796
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Plaistow Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if 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 co-located/partner primary school 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.

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

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager and staff, senior leaders of Plaistow Primary School, representatives from the local authority, the governing body and the advisory board. They also spoke to partner agencies, for example health services and those delivering adult support, 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 delivery plan.

Information about the centre

This phase two centre was designated in June 2009 and fulfils the full core purpose of services. It is managed by the governing body of Plaistow Primary School on behalf of the local authority. Services are available from Monday to Saturday, 48 weeks of the year, from the purpose-built premises adjacent to Plaistow Primary School. They are also delivered at various locations in the area including other primary schools that are part of the E13 Learning Community, which is a soft federation of seven primary schools, one secondary school and the children's centre.

The centre is located in the south west of the London Borough of Newham, which is one of the 20% most deprived super output areas in England in relation to income, housing, health, disability and crime.

There are 1,269 children under five in the reach area. The area is very multicultural and the population is very transient. The largest single ethnic group is made up of Bangladeshi families (14%). White British heritage families account for 6% of the

total. At 28%, the percentage of children aged nought to four years living in households dependent on workless benefits is well above the national average. There is no up-to-date figure available for the number of eligible families benefiting from the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit. Children’s skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years’ provision across the reach area are well below expected levels 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

Plaistow Children’s Centre provides a good service to families. The extent to which families feel safe is outstanding because they have very high levels of trust in staff who have ensured that they have an excellent understanding of how to keep their children safe. ‘Without it I would be lost’, summed up the views of many. Furthermore, safeguarding is an extremely high priority; staff are highly trained and vigilant and work very effectively with other partners to provide high levels of care, especially for the most vulnerable.

Although open for less than three years, the centre has already rapidly increased the numbers benefiting from its services and most of the outcomes for those families are good or better. The centre has responded well to the needs of the families and especially to the way parenting skills and children’s early learning have been developed, for example by putting on Just Playing sessions.

However, while the centre has had considerable success in preparing adults for work, the numbers actually returning to employment are limited. Also, although it provides parents with initial skills well, the centre is not yet following up the longer-term outcomes for those it signposts elsewhere for adult learning after providing those basic foundations.

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. Furthermore, while the board

reviews the centre's development plan it is not yet fully involved in evaluation and strategic planning. However, the centre has already improved outcomes in the great majority of aspects for a high number of families. There is a very clear understanding of its strengths and areas for development. 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. They have developed strong, effective partnerships and are committed to the ongoing concerted effort to extend the work they do to those in the community who need it most. All of this demonstrates that the centre has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the economic well-being of more families by:
 - developing further opportunities for families to build on their basic skills and become more enterprising or to return to work
 - monitoring the impact of families who are signposted to adult learning or training elsewhere so that the centre can measure the longer-term economic impact for those families.

- Strengthen the role of the advisory board so that it is more involved in the centre's strategic development by:
 - increasing the number and range of partners on the advisory board
 - ensuring a more robust system is in place to monitor, review and challenge the centre's self-evaluation and development plan.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Childhood obesity levels are on a consistently downward trend because the centre has made healthy eating a key priority, working very closely with nutritionists and providing activities such as Super Snackers. Other strong links with health services have had an impact on sustained breastfeeding rates which are at a very high level of 85% in the reach area. A large majority of families engage well with health services and good immunisation rates reflect this. The centre's drive to improve the physical and emotional health of the most vulnerable families is evident through various activities and drop-in sessions, for example Bin the Bottle, weaning parties and close links with speech and language therapists. Consequently, a large majority of families using the centre have a good understanding how to live healthy lives.

Emergency hospital admission data for the borough are largely in line with national averages. 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 saying, 'I didn't have family here; now the staff are my family.' Families have been given an excellent understanding of how to ensure the

safety of their children through parenting courses, first-aid classes and because staff are very well trained to provide advice, for example for home safety. Children consistently behave in a very safe way.

Staff work very closely and effectively with the large majority of children in the reach area who are subject to child protection plans. In many cases this has led to the plans being downgraded to child in need status or removed altogether. In addition, the centre participates fully in the local authority's fortnightly multi-agency Every Child Matters meetings, where Assessment and Intervention Reviews have replaced the Common Assessment Framework process. This has led to very positive outcomes for families, such as accessing specific support for those with multiple and complex needs.

The average Early Years Foundation Stage Profile results for the schools in the reach area have improved strongly over the past few years, although at 49% in 2011, they are still below the national figure of 59%. However, the gap between the lowest 20% and the rest, at 29% in 2011 is better than the national average of 31.4%. Tracking of children who have accessed centre services shows that they make good progress. This is especially so for children who have special educational needs or English as an additional language as there is a strong focus on developing children's speech through Chatterbox sessions and the Home Talker package. Children are very well prepared for their transition to school because several schools are used for centre activities so children are familiar with the locations and staff. 'He settled in seconds', summed up the way many parents described their children's first day at school. There is also a very clear focus on early years education in planning and delivery of services, such as Messy Play, and in the crèche. Adults and children show high levels of enjoyment at all the activities.

The centre has helped some adults from all target groups develop their confidence and self-esteem through ongoing English language classes, parenting programmes and initial childcare courses. Support and training for childminders is particularly strong. However, although the centre can point to several successes in getting families 'work ready' through workshops and drop-in sessions for help with job applications, there are fewer examples of those who have actually gained employment or set up their own enterprises. This is partly due to the short time the centre has been open but also because it is not following up those it has signposted to further learning in order to evaluate the outcomes.

Children behave well and their personal development is good because adults model good relationships. Although relatively new, the parents' forum is already well attended by all target groups and is an effective voice in shaping services. For example, a childcare course was run at the request of parents. The valuable work done by volunteers, for example helping in the crèche, not only benefits the centre but also has a very positive impact on their personal development. The centre has played a key role in bringing the local community together, for example through multicultural events such as the Kaleidoscope Day and through its work in the E13 Learning Community. Consequently, everyone treats each other with respect.

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	1
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	3

How good is the provision?

2

Staff have a very good understanding of the needs of the local community. However, the local authority has not been able to provide baseline information for some target groups, for example, the number of fathers there are in the reach area. Where this information is available, such as for children in minority ethnic groups and teenage parents, the centre can show that its targeted services, for example the Young Parents' Group, are reaching a very high percentage of that group. Disabled children and those who have special educational needs are well catered for with specific Movement and Play sessions. Weekly Saturday sessions, for example children's gymnastics and football, make activities accessible for fathers and those who work, meeting their needs well.

Achievement is celebrated well and families are rightly proud of the array of certificates they and their children receive, with some presented formally at the town hall. Consequently, aspirations and confidence are raised and adults are effectively given the foundations to improve their lives. Additional activities, for example toddler groups and music and movement sessions held in other schools, are well located and mean that, despite limited space, the centre is effectively engaging most target groups.

Families who use the centre, including those whose circumstances make them most vulnerable, benefit substantially from the good support, care and guidance provided by all centre staff. This is especially so in times of crisis for example, when there is the threat of eviction or families suffer bereavement or illness. The support is tailored well to their needs because of the good multi-agency links in place and because very effective outreach works ensures that families who are reluctant to seek help are reached and supported well. Consequently, the outcomes for many families have been improved.

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, 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 among 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 and is aware of the need to continue to improve the amount of reach area data provided for the centre. Governance and accountability arrangements are clear. However, the advisory board's involvement in the strategic planning of the centre is not yet fully evolved.

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. Key priorities for improvement are based on good knowledge of families' most pressing needs. Consequently, outcomes are good or outstanding across most areas for all groups, including the most disadvantaged.

The centre provides good value for money because it uses and manages its available resources, including staff, well. Although open for less than three years, the proactive approach of centre staff has led to rapidly increasing numbers using the services. For example, 63% of all children under five are engaged with the centre, with 84% of those children coming from Black and minority ethnic groups.

All families appreciate how welcoming and safe the centre is and the centre is very inclusive, accurately reflecting the very mixed cultural make-up of the community. Equality and diversity are promoted well and the centre has been very effective in including children and families with specific needs, for example, those with autism. The many families who have English as an additional language are fully included by multilingual staff and access to language and literacy courses. The provision of a crèche means that more families are enabled to access courses and children benefit from the high levels of care provided by very experienced staff.

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. Close links with the Asian Women's Refuge also help safeguard families. Policies and procedures are constantly reviewed

and thorough regular risk assessments ensure families are kept safe. All appropriate Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are carried out or verified on anyone working with families. The excellent system of colour-coded visitor badges ensures everyone knows who has undergone CRB checks. The centre works extremely well with a wide range of key agencies, such as health services and social care as well as the school and co-located private day care provider, to ensure children and vulnerable adults receive the most effective, tailored support. This is especially so for children subject to child protection plans and looked after children. This has a very positive impact on how safe and secure families feel.

Good and improving links are in place with other partners and services, such as health visitors, and a greater sharing of information is enabling the centre to be even more effective. However, connections with agencies to enable families to access employment are more limited. The centre has been very proactive in developing links with local childminders which has enhanced opportunities for families within the area to access childcare and enhanced the childminders' role. All of this has a positive impact on good or improving outcomes achieved by the centre.

Families are regularly asked to evaluate the services and provision at the end of courses, through the suggestions box and via the popular parents' forum. They have very high levels of satisfaction with what the centre offers and feel confident that their views are listened to and shape services. 'What this centre is doing is amazing', summed up how many feel. Targeted mailshots, home visits or phone calls after referrals from other agencies mean that the centre is increasingly reaching out to those who are not yet accessing services to identify and meet the needs of the most disadvantaged groups.

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	1
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

<p>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</p>	<p>2</p>
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Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

Findings from the concurrent Plaistow Primary School inspection in relation to children’s skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early education, leadership and management, and safeguarding were taken into consideration.

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 the Plaistow Children’s Centre on 22–23 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 development 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, for example Messy Play, toddler groups and Baby Massage, 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 safeguarded. Because of this, you all feel extremely safe and secure there. Typical comments made to us were, ‘They have changed my life so much... I can’t believe how far I have come’ and ‘What this centre is doing is amazing.’

Outcomes are good overall. Input from the centre means that many of you understand how to lead healthy lives and benefit from access to health and specialist services such as the nutritionist. You and your children obviously greatly enjoy the popular activities, many of which are oversubscribed. In the relatively short time the centre has been open, it has greatly increased the numbers using the services. People come from all different groups in the community because they feel very welcome, and as the staff treat everyone with respect, those who use the centre do so too, so many of you feel it is like a family to you.

The strong focus on helping children learn and develop, and parenting classes that give you the skills to support them, mean that children make good progress,

especially in how confident and independent they are. Sessions such as Just Playing and Chatterbox are very effective in helping you to understand how children learn. You are also aided well to improve your basic skills and to get ready to return to work, although at the moment, the centre is not able to show that many of you have done so. This is something we have asked the centre to improve. We have also asked it to follow up those of you who progress on to higher level courses elsewhere so that it can see the longer-term outcome of the support it originally gave you.

You all feel fully involved in the centre through the parents' forum and because staff are so easy to talk to. Where you have asked for specific courses, for example in childcare, the centre has responded positively.

Leadership and management are good overall and the centre manager leads the highly committed staff team very well. The advisory board is relatively newly formed, and 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.

There is a strong commitment from all those involved in the centre to continue to improve and outcomes are already outstanding, good or improving 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.