

# Inspection report for Amy Johnson Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	London Borough of Sutton
<b>Inspection number</b>	404530
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 March 2013
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joan Lindsay

<b>Head of centre</b>	Melanie Eley
<b>Centre leader</b>	Sarah Phillips
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Amy Johnson Primary School URN 102988
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Amy Johnson Day Nursery EY 333253

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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**Report published:** March 2013



## 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 head of centre, centre manager and staff, representatives from the local authority, and the advisory board. They also spoke to partner representatives from health and family support agencies, parents and other users of the centre. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the development plan.

## Information about the centre

This phase two centre was designated in September 2009 on completion of the purpose-built property, which houses a full range of centre services, including the on-site day nursery. It meets the full core purpose. It is located in the grounds of Amy Johnson Primary School. The headteacher is the head of centre and there is also a centre manager responsible for its day-to-day running. The centre is responsible for the management of the on-site day care but this facility was not inspected at this time. The governing body manages the centre on behalf of the local authority. Following a local authority reorganisation, this centre is also now the lead centre for High View Children's Centre. A joint advisory board was established in 2010. Services are available from 9am until 6pm, Monday to Friday, and on one Saturday each month, for 50 weeks of the year. Services are also delivered throughout the community from Hillcrest Halls on the Clockhouse Estate, Phoenix library and High View Children's Centre.

The centre sits in the heart of the Roundshaw community in Wallington, which is highlighted as the most deprived area within the locality. Of the eight Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the reach area, three are ranked in the top 20% most deprived in England, with one being the most deprived in Sutton. There are currently 32.8% of children living in households dependent on workless benefits, which is well

above the borough and national average; 16.9% of eligible families benefit from the childcare element of Working Tax Credit, slightly below the national figure and largely in line with the borough. The area is ethnically diverse with 30% of families from minority ethnic groups, the largest of which are Asian Indian families. English is spoken by 78% of school children in the reach area followed by 5.2% who speak Tamil. White British heritage families account for approximately 70% of the population.

There are 761 children aged under five years living in the reach area; 80% are registered at the centre and 53.5% have accessed services. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years provision are typically below the level 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

This warm and welcoming centre provides a good service to families. Safeguarding of families is outstanding because there are excellent systems of recording and monitoring any concerns, staff are very well trained and it is a constant focus of all the centre's work. A rising proportion of families from all target groups are improving their confidence and parenting skills, and the centre is proactively encouraging more to do so. Families feel that they and their children are safe at the centre because they trust staff wholeheartedly, and this is reflected in their comments such as: 'Nothing is ever too much for them.' They appreciate the staff's knowledge and expertise as well as effective signposting to the wide range of strong partnerships that have been established. Consequently, the care, guidance and support families receive are good.

The centre is particularly successful in understanding the community it serves, reaching out to those who need help most (70% of children registered come from homes located in the most deprived LSOAs) and in adapting services to meet their needs. Families have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lives, and engagement is good as health services are based in the centre and there is nearly

always a specific health focus such as 'Smile for Life' or healthy cooking. The centre has some difficulty measuring its success in improving health outcomes, however, as it is not provided with regular up-to-date data relating to its specific reach area.

There is a very strong focus on developing children's early skills and parents say their children's interpersonal skills improve well from their time at the centre. However, the benefits of this current work are yet to filter through to outcomes for children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, where 2012 results showed a decline overall and a widening of the achievement gap. The centre provides stepping stones for some adults to further their achievements and improve their social and economic well-being. For example, some have used volunteering opportunities to go on to work at the school or the centre. However, it is not following up the longer-term outcomes or wider benefits for adults, especially where they are supported or advised other than by the centre itself.

The centre has a good capacity to continue to improve because strong and effective leaders and managers have secured outcomes that are good overall. Numbers accessing the centre from all target groups are increasing rapidly because of the proactive approach to meeting their needs. The whole staff team is committed to improve the lives of those in the community. The advisory board is knowledgeable and supportive but the membership includes a relatively large number of governors and staff, and so its membership is too narrow at present to provide a high level of challenge for the centre. Nevertheless, there is a clear and accurate understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for development. Those are reflected in the development plan, although this document is limited in how much the centre's impact can be measured by the amount of data that are currently available, especially in relation to health outcomes.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Work closely with schools and other partners to improve achievement at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, narrow the achievement gap for children, and enhance the achievements and outcomes for more adults by:
  - continuing the focus on early years development in all the centre's work
  - tracking children and monitoring adults consistently to show the impact of the centre's involvement.
- Work with the local authority, health services and other partners to ensure reach area data are recent and accurate; use these data to ensure the development plan sets targets that are consistently measurable and clearly evidence outcomes.
- Widen membership of the advisory board and ensure a clear distinction between it and the governing body so that the level of challenge matches the level of support provided for the centre.

## How good are outcomes for families?

2
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The centre has difficulty sourcing recent health data at a reach-area level. For example, childhood obesity figures showed a very significant annual drop of 10% to 9.3% but relate to 2010. Breastfeeding rates relate to 2011 but the centre has only just been provided with them. They show a good improvement over three years, however, up from 29.5% in 2009 to 39.4%. Families feel well supported in how to lead healthy lives because this is such a strong focus of the centre's work and is significantly reinforced by health specialists who are based there for at least some of the week. As a result, a large majority of families are engaging well, with 1,223 visits recorded to baby clinics and specialist drop-ins. High numbers participate in activities such as the gardening club and 'Mini Munchers' sessions. Focus activities like the be healthy consultation week, immunisation week and sleep workshops all have had a positive impact on families' health and emotional well-being.

Most families are confident to share concerns with staff because they feel safe at the centre and state that the 'fantastic' staff know them well. They have their parenting skills developed well through structured courses and one-off workshops that give them the tools to handle specific behaviour incidents such as how to deal with boys' needs. First aid sessions, and the stay safe consultation week where children were involved in identifying possible hazards in their play, ensure that all ages have a good understanding of dangers and how to keep themselves safe. Robust use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) ensures that from initial contact, families are given the most appropriate multi-agency support. For example, 21 families have been helped to access free nursery places for two-year-olds over the past 12 months. The majority of children subject to child protection plans who have received centre support have achieved good outcomes and have been able to step down to lower levels of supervision.

Children are helped to prepare for moving on to school through 'Ready Steady School' sessions and close relationships with the link school. Parents feel their children's personal development and confidence are enhanced through coming to the centre and especially being able to experience the excellent outdoor resources. However, the centre's good work has not yet had an impact on longer-term outcomes as the proportion attaining a good level of development, 56.3%, is below borough and national figures of 68.7% and 64% respectively. The achievement gap for the most vulnerable children has widened over the past three years and at 46% is much wider than the borough and national levels of 30.1%, reflecting the changing nature of the cohort. The centre is working closely with the link school to analyse where support is needed most and is beginning to track children who have accessed the centre to back up the anecdotal evidence that those children make better progress than their peers.

Adults' achievement is also not being tracked consistently in the longer term, although the centre can point to some notable success stories. There are adequate opportunities for adults to improve their skills and education in partnership with Sutton College for Adult Learning (SCOLA), workshops and focus weeks, and approximately 26% do so. Furthermore, signposting to the employability coordinator

to support families looking for work or help with their finances has had a positive impact for some, but the centre is aware of the need to ensure more use these facilities and they monitor the longer-term benefits.

There is no formal parents' forum but there are many opportunities for families to air their views. All of those spoken to during the inspection feel they have a voice and shape services evidenced through comments such as: 'They really listen to you.' Sessions such as 'Coffee Chill and Chat' that are held in an area where there is a large Tamil-speaking population ensure this group's views are heard. Families can suggest ideas for Easter activities and the 'You Asked, We Did' board keeps families up to date with the outcomes of their suggestions. Five are currently on the structured volunteer programme and provide valuable support as well as enhancing their own skills. Parents are represented on the advisory board, although some are no longer users of the centre though still linked to the school. The centre is very much part of the local community and has mutually beneficial links with various community organisations as well as the housing association.

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>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</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>3</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>2</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>3</b>

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

<b>2</b>
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The numbers who make use of the centre from all target groups are growing each quarter and are particularly high for families of minority ethnic backgrounds and those living in workless households. This is as a result of the centre's good knowledge of the local community and so where to target services. For example, following a community audit, every member of staff has specific LSOAs to target, promoting the services there and contacting families who have not attended. Services are taken out into more isolated areas such as the Clockhouse estate, and productive links have been made with the Traveller community. This ensures that the needs of the large majority of families, including those who most need support, such as families where children or adults have a disability, are met.

Children's and adults' achievement is celebrated well through photograph displays of certificates' award ceremony and the 'Magic Moments' board where children are praised for completing a puzzle on their own, for example. Activities are well planned, based on children's early learning and development, and activity and ideas cards encourage home learning well. The lead early years practitioner makes sure that sessions such as 'Little Learners' immerse children in learning, such as the numbers session observed where excellent use was made of indoor and outdoor activities with numbers scattered everywhere! Well-located facilities, with Story Time in the library and use of community halls, also encourage families to attend.

'If I'm struggling with something, I know I can get support from here,' sums up how parents feel about the level of care, guidance and support they receive. Staff are very alert to any possible concerns because they are well trained and approachable. This ensures that the most vulnerable families, including those who are suffering a personal crisis such as a mental health problem or incident of domestic violence, are provided with swift, impartial, well-tailored support. The 'early intervention identified system' which records and monitors this support makes sure that it is ongoing and at an appropriate level until families are deemed able to have less help.

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>2</b>

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

**2**

The centre leader ensures that there is a shared vision and commitment to improve families' lives through high-quality services and strong effective partnerships. This has already had a positive impact on outcomes. Day-to-day management of the centre is smooth and professional supervision at all levels is a positive aspect of the leadership. The advisory board carries out its supporting role effectively and understands the centre and its community well. However, there is a large duplication of membership with the governing body and a limited number of partners involved in governance despite the best efforts of the centre. Parents are represented on the board but the spread of parents across target groups and from those currently using centre services is narrow. Self-evaluation is accurate and the development plan has appropriate targets. However, a lack of pertinent, recent data has limited how measurable the actions being taken are on some outcomes.

Resources are managed well with staff working across two children's centres. A full timetable of activities and centre-based health personnel makes sure the high-quality, well-resourced accommodation is fully utilised. The excellent outdoor area

giving children space to run, investigate and develop their skills and the recent addition of two 'lodge' rooms providing additional meeting space add greatly to the welcoming and safe environment. The centre is very mindful of sustainability and is aiming to be carbon-neutral shortly. The majority of families from target groups are engaging well with this very inclusive centre and the mix reflects the community it serves in relation to ethnic and social background. Disabled children have their needs met well through specific support for autism, for example, or through the centre working with portage and other agencies. Monthly Saturday sessions and the provision of a crèche for adult learning ensure accessibility for all parents, including fathers and those who work. The centre's community audit and range of targeted services are helping to close the gap between different groups, although the good work it is doing with children's early development has not had time to make a demonstrable impact. Nevertheless, the centre is improving outcomes across many areas, and so it gives good value for money.

Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding and include excellent colour-coded records of any concerns, robust risk assessments, and in-depth and varied training for all staff. For example, all staff are trained to support domestic violence victims following an increase in cases. Staff are keenly alert to all child protection matters and attend multi-agency meetings for such children, as well as for any looked after children or those considered to be in need. Staff vetting systems are rigorous. The regular sharing of information, especially between the link school and the nursery, ensure families are monitored and supported very effectively. Good partnerships are also crucial to the excellent safeguarding as staff can swiftly galvanise the support of a wide range of agencies, including the Early Intervention and Prevention Service. Having health services working out of the centre means that families benefit from often instant support and advice. Close links with Book Start, community associations, childminders and other children's centres are positive features in supporting the good outcomes for families, including the most vulnerable.

Parents have very positive views of the centre and feel fully involved in evaluating and shaping the services. Reviews at the end of sessions record what children have enjoyed and include quotes from parents about what worked well and what they would like to see happen in the future. Good outreach work is ensuring that families who have not accessed services are encouraged and given opportunities to do so.

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>2</b>
<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>	<b>2</b>

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

The findings of the last inspection reports of Amy Johnson Primary School conducted in December 2010 and Amy Johnson Day Nursery from November 2009 were taken into account in relation to the safeguarding, leadership and management judgments, and attainment on entry information.

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### **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Amy Johnson Children's Centre on 13–14 March 2013. We judged the centre as good overall.

We thoroughly enjoyed our time at your centre. Thank you for being involved in the inspection and for taking the time to tell us about the centre's work and how very positive you are about how staff have helped you and your children. It was very enjoyable and useful to visit the activities taking place, such as Story Time and Rhyme at the library and the Little Learners session in the centre. Thank you for welcoming us so warmly into your groups.

Safeguarding arrangements are excellent, and staff are very well trained in spotting any concerns and then acting quickly to help you. This is because they are very well trained and know who can give you the best well-tailored support to improve your lives. There are really good systems to track and monitor what help you are getting, and this is having a big impact on the lives of the people who need it most. You all feel safe and secure in the centre and have high levels of trust in the 'fantastic' staff, summed up by comments you made such as 'Nothing is ever too much for them' and

'They are so easy to talk to, I feel I can tell them anything, even quite confidential things.' There are a good range of courses to help with your parenting skills and how to protect your children such as through first aid courses and the Stay Safe Consultation Week.

Outcomes are good overall because the staff know you and the local community well and they make good provision for your needs. You told us you have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lives and you appreciate having the health visitor, midwife, and speech and language specialists based in the centre. Activities such as 'Smiling for Life', the immunisation week and be healthy consultation week, gardening and healthy cooking all make sure you have lots of useful information and support to be healthy. Unfortunately, some of the information that the centre needs to measure its impact, such as childhood obesity and immunisation rates, is either out of date or not specific to the local area. This is something we have asked the local authority and health partners to work on. When the centre has more information, we have asked them to use it in the development plan to measure how well it is doing.

Most of the sessions, like 'Little Learners', have a good focus on helping your children learn and grow in confidence. It is obvious that adults and children really enjoy the activities, especially the lovely outdoor area and all the resources that are available, including the story sacks. However, the good work that is being done at the moment has not had time to filter through to the levels children in the area reach when they finish in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is something we have asked the centre to work on improving in conjunction with schools in the area. Also, although some adults are helped to improve their skills and achievements through adult learning and other courses, there is scope for more to do so, and also for the centre to monitor the longer-term outcomes of this work.

It is clear that the centre is inclusive and everyone gets a warm welcome. More and more families from all groups are using the centre as activities are now taking place in different parts of the community such as the library, High View Children's Centre and on the Clockhouse estate. This is having a positive impact on outcomes for even more families and is ensuring that those from the Tamil community are fully involved. You all feel that you have a voice in deciding what services the centre offers and things like the 'You Asked, We Did' board show how you are listened to. Lots of opportunities to put forward your opinions make up for the fact that there is not a formal parents' forum. There are parents who sit on the advisory board, although they do not all currently use the centre. We have asked that the membership of this body is widened to include more partners who work with the centre and also more parents who use the centre at the moment. You can help your centre a lot by offering to be a part of this board.

The leadership and management of the centre are effective overall and it gives good value for money. Staff work hard to ensure that the centre continues to improve and build on the successes achieved so far. Everyone has a clear understanding of the centre's strengths and where the centre can still improve. They have been successful

in creating good partnerships and in making significant improvements in the lives of those who need it most. As a result, the centre is well placed to continue to improve.

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

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