

Inspection report for Hungerford Children's Centre

Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	383456
Inspection dates	8–9 March 2012
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Date of previous inspection	29 November 2010
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Linked school if applicable	Hungerford Primary
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Hungerford Road Primary School Early Years Foundation Stage

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 senior leaders, members of the advisory board, local authority representatives, a range of providers, teachers and other staff, health practitioners and parents and carers.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centre's operation plans, evaluations, key policies and safeguarding procedures. They visited Robert Blair Outreach Centre, Caledonian Park, Goodinge, Hilldrop Community Centre, Hungerford Primary School and Hungerford Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the centre

Hungerford Children's Centre shares a site with Hungerford Primary School; it is managed by the governance of the school. The centre operates from four other sites and Caledonian Park. These outreach centres include Goodinge, Robert Blair Outreach Centre, Hilldrop Community Centre and John Barnes Library. The centre serves families mainly in the Holloway area of Islington.

The centre has been open for four years and is a phase one children's centre funded by the local authority. The headteacher leads the centre and the school, and is supported by the head of Early Years Foundation Stage, the Families and Community Support Outreach Manager and the Under Fives Service Coordinator. There are operational links with the local primary school, Robert Blair Primary School and the

Bridge Special School. The advisory board is made up of representatives of the local council, parent governors, centre users and centre staff.

Childcare is provided through the centre’s day-care crèche and stay-and-play sessions, and the full-time nursery, baby and toddler unit. There are a variety of courses and activities provided for parents and children. The centre also signposts families to partner centres and specialist facilities. It works in partnership with a range of social, care and health agencies and voluntary organisations. The centre opens from 8.00am to 6.00pm each week day for 48 weeks of the year. The majority of families in the area use the centre: the average number of parents and carers who use the centre each week is 374 and the average number of children seen is 384 per week.

There is a high level of unemployment and a high proportion of families move in and out of the area throughout the year. Levels of deprivation range from the bottom 10% nationally to families who are not deprived. Many families come from homes with some level of social disadvantage including homes where no one is currently in work and where families are in receipt of benefits. There are many families living in temporary housing and a small minority of lone parents and a few teenage mothers live in the area. The area is very diverse; families come from a wide range of ethnic groups; the largest group is White British.

Children’s levels on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage provision are much lower than those expected for their age.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

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

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

The children’s centre provides good support to children and families in its reach area. Outcomes are good and there are effective partnerships with a range of professionals from health services, the local authority and voluntary organisations. Children achieve well in all areas of learning and make good progress over time. Trusting and strong relationships throughout the centre and outreach areas

contribute effectively to the good provision. The environment is safe and secure. Target groups and those children and parents identified as in most need of support are making good progress in overcoming barriers in their lives. All families comment on the warm and welcoming environment and the quality of the support they receive from all staff who work in the centre.

Adults appreciate the good range of activities at the centre and they talk positively about the benefits. As one said, 'I feel more confident now that I have learnt a range of strategies that will help me be a better parent.'

Good leadership, strong drive and clear vision to overcome barriers are provided by the headteacher. He is well supported by the other senior centre leaders, the local authority and senior leaders of local schools. Leaders and families evaluate the effectiveness of the centre well and from this they identify what needs to be done to improve. The good self-evaluation and implementation of effective decisions ensures that the centre is continually improving and demonstrate the centre's ability to be sustainable. The centre has made good progress in involving the governing body and advisory board in the running of the centre.

The centre's good capacity to improve is evident in the way leadership and governance have expanded the centre's influence across its reach area in tackling disadvantage and narrowing the achievement gap. The centre recognises the challenging job of establishing contact with families whose circumstances have made them hard to reach in a diverse and transient population. However, the centre perseveres in utilising 'word of mouth' communication extremely well in a responsive community. Monitoring and evaluation are rigorous but the centre's evidence and method of recording assessments are less well developed.

Good communication with families directs them to help and advice from those who work in the centre and also from other agencies. Local service providers speak highly of the centre, which is well known in the local area. The centre provides good opportunities for parents to improve their parenting skills, develop confidence speaking English and to gain further skills which help them gain qualifications. Communication with potentially vulnerable members of the community, such as lone parents and those who do not speak English as their first language, is good and as a result they attend regularly and benefit from activities such as 'Strengthening Families.'

The centre works extremely well with local schools and has strong partnership links with specialist services and health professionals. Families are engaging more frequently with the centre in higher numbers. The needs of individual groups are carefully considered and the centre ensures dedicated care and support is matched to the needs of groups and individuals. Community cohesion is strong because groups value and respect each other.

Parents appreciate greatly the good quality of the childcare provided and the support and knowledge they have gained from using services provided by the centre. Six

parents now sit on the advisory board but the parent's forum is less well developed and the centre acknowledges more innovative ways need to be found to extend parents' involvement in the running and decision making of the centre.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Strengthen the parental representation and create innovative ways to help as many parents as possible to be involved in decision making.
- Develop an incisive method of recording assessment.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Most families have a good understanding of how to provide a healthy lifestyle and diet for their children. The centre successfully promotes healthy lifestyles through a range of activities, support and guidance. These make a positive impact on the physical, mental and emotional health of its families including target groups and those identified as in most need of support. Parents thoroughly enjoyed the 'Pram Attack,' they all said how much better they felt after the weekly session of exercises and pram pushing in Caledonian Park.

Data are showing good improvement in breastfeeding and oral health. Most mothers successfully breastfeed their babies because health practitioners guide and support them well. Parents have good access to a wide range of integrated services. The centre successfully involves them in activities, such as healthy cooking. Parents commented, 'The healthy eating course changed my life I have stopped buying sweets and crisps, I know what to look for on food labels, my children now eat fruit rather than crisps.' Children in the crèche and nursery develop their physical skills well through activities such as climbing, balancing, jumping and sliding.

The environment is safe and secure for all users. Vulnerable groups receive both practical and emotional support and families feel safe enough to openly share their concerns with staff. Children are safeguarded well. Home visits ensure support is tailor-made for vulnerable families. Those who are subject to a child protection plan, priority referral or Child in Need referral are effectively supported and consequently their outcomes are good. Intervention for children on child protection plans is effective and the support for children subject to Common Assessment Framework processes is good.

Help for lone parents is effective and this group says that they have been well supported with good advice on domestic issues, income support and in coping with their lives. Parenting courses such as 'Strengthening Families' are popular and well attended and support parents' understanding well. One grateful parent commented, 'This has been a lifeline for me, I now know how to tackle my problems.'

The development of all areas of learning, including children’s personal and social skills, is good This equips them well for the future. Parents report improvement in their children’s behaviour as a result of the help and support they receive from staff. Families enjoy the many activities provided by the centre; consequently, outcomes for children and adults within the centre’s reach area are good. Primary school data show very clearly that children who have attended the centre make good progress by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Profile books for children provide a very good record including annotated photographs of activities attended. However, staff miss opportunities to record assessments in the profile books, which would help to strengthen their evidence of the impact of the activities. Vulnerable children are well cared for and consequently they learn to consider the needs of others; for example, one child thought Fluffy dog Jack would be sad if he was not put back into his house.

Adults access a wide range of activities and opportunities for learning, gaining confidence and qualifications which support them to prepare for future employment. Parents are grateful for the help they receive to gain extra housing points to enable them to bid for a council property. Over one third of families using the centre are engaged in training and adult learning. Data show good improvement over time for target groups and families most in need. Families have good opportunities to develop parenting, creative and academic skills through courses in the centre and in partner centres. In one group the parents were observed enthusiastically discussing how to discipline children in a positive way.

Centre activities provide families with good opportunities to play and learn together. In the singing session children had good opportunities to develop their singing and coordination skills performing simple actions to the songs such as ‘Row the boat’. Children are encouraged to develop their early writing skills after a trip to Highgate Woods. They glue photographs into their profile books and are encouraged to draw pictures and write about their trip. Photographic evidence shows parents and children all helping to improve the outdoor environment at gardening club. Parents are very positive, one enthusiastic parent said, ‘I think the services are fantastic.’

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	2

parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment	
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How good is the provision?

2

The centre knows its families well and it collects data about the attendance, the take-up of services and the increasing reach area. Photographic evidence of engagement is extremely rigorous but opportunities to record written assessments of progress made by children and adults, which would help forward planning and provide evidence of the impact that the centre is having, are less well developed. Health and education professionals work closely with the centre to assess and review the needs of users and target groups. There are good links with local schools, nurseries, children's centres in the area and other agencies that effectively inform assessments to meet learners' individual needs well; however, these would be greatly improved if they were recorded in a useful way.

The provision to help children learn and achieve is good. Activities, trips and sessions to help children prepare for school are good. Children who have attended the centre make a smooth transition to the primary school.

The quality of care and support for vulnerable families is good, as is the care and guidance of children who attend the day-care crèche and the many other activities available. Disabled children and those who have special educational needs are well provided for, both in the physical accessibility of the building and through good access to appropriate professional support. All workers at the centre are experienced practitioners who show good awareness of the management strategies needed to overcome day-to-day problems.

Support and courses for those facing difficulties in their domestic life are good. Borough data indicate good outcomes for those attending the 'Strengthening Families' course. The sessions to support parents who are new to this country and who speak English as an additional language are popular and well attended. Families speak positively about the support they receive. Somali and Turkish speaking parents are helped to access courses and facilities in the centre. There is a good uptake for the 'Fathers Programme'.

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 senior leadership team provides clear leadership with high expectations for the community firmly at the heart of the centre's work. The advisory board and staff share their aspirations and are strongly motivated to provide a wide range of good quality and effective services to the community, particularly for those who are hard to reach and vulnerable. All work together well to ensure that the work of the centre runs very smoothly. The effective deployment of staff and resources ensures good value for money. Leaders' well-informed knowledge of the centre's strengths and areas to be improved underpins their strong commitment to continuous improvement. Outcomes for the large majority of families, including target groups and those in most need of intervention and support are good.

The governors and advisory board provide purposeful levels of challenge to the centre and contribute effectively to ensuring the good quality provision and safeguarding procedures. There are rigorous recruitment checks and arrangements for professional supervision. All staff working at the centre have been subject to an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check. The centre ensures all partners are fully trained and that safeguarding procedures are known to all and effectively carried out. Policies are clear and implemented fully and risk assessments are rigorous and monitored regularly.

Families' evaluations of activities and courses and responses to questionnaires are positive. They comment how much they enjoy visiting the centre and how much their children benefit from the activities. The centre seeks the views of parents and acts on suggestions, for example the installation of the undercover buggy park. However, more innovative opportunities for parents to be more involved in decision making have yet to be fully developed.

The centre promotes the inclusion of all families within the reach area and celebrates diversity well. Children and families with disabilities are fully included and well supported by the centre. It gathers valuable information about the different groups of users and evaluates their engagement. For example, case study evidence indicates that the centre has been very effective in working with children and parents who are experiencing difficulties at home and those from minority ethnic 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	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

None

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Hungerford Children's Centre on 8 and 9 March 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank those of you we met and who spoke to us about the centre and its work. It was a great help to us. We agree with you that the centre and all the outreach areas are a good place for you and your children to attend and that all the staff involved in the centre's work do an effective job to help you all. You told us how friendly and approachable everyone is and how happy you and your children are when they are in the centre. We could see that those of you who use the centre regularly enjoy and benefit from all it has to offer, such as the 'Secret Squirrels,' 'Chatterpillars', Baby and Toddler and the Somali and Turkish speaking groups.

We think the wide range of things that the centre plans for you are good. We were particularly pleased to see how many of you were so enthusiastically involved in the 'Strengthening Families' group and how enthusiastically you talked about different ways to help your children learn and cope with life.

The centre helps you in many ways, for example by the support it provides for lone parents and those of you who are experiencing domestic difficulties. It also provides valuable and practical support to you by such as helping you provide a healthier diet

for your children and providing useful guidance to help you with their learning. Opportunities for you to contribute to the decision making are clearly evident in your responses to courses but we and the centre would like more of you to be involved in the decision making and to contribute more to the parents forum or the equivalent and the advisory board. The centre is particularly good at involving families who are especially vulnerable or may be hard to reach. Your children make good progress in their learning and behave well because they enjoy all the activities offered. The smooth transition from the centre to Hungerford Primary School is good. The 'Stay and Play' and other activities are well organised and popular. All of the people who work at the centre do an effective job and the centre manager leads the centre well. There is a good sense of teamwork, especially among the leaders, advisory board and all those who use the centre. The work that they do to assess what is needed and to put plans in place to make things even better is effective. The centre monitors and evaluates children's and adults' progress well but it sometimes misses opportunities to incisively record assessment so we have asked them to improve this.

The centre ensures that children and families are safe and well protected. Staff are all very experienced, well trained and regularly update their training in safety aspects. Your children's security and safety are of the highest priority and good records are kept to ensure that all who work at the centre are properly qualified and meticulously checked.

It was a pleasure to meet you during the inspection and to hear your views. We hope that you and your children and many more families who live in and around the centre will continue to enjoy and benefit from the many activities and services the centre offers. Thank you again for contributing to the inspection by sharing your comments and thoughts so openly.

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