

Heathbrook Primary School and Children's Centre

St Rule Street, London, SW8 3EH

Inspection date 17–18 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Outstanding	1
The quality of practice and services		Outstanding	1
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is an outstanding centre.

- Heathbrook Children's Centre is a well-established 'one-stop centre' for families with young children. Most benefit from regular attendance at many of the exceptional quality services to seek help and develop skills to improve the quality of their families' lives.
- Professional workers from many fields in the public and voluntary sector work highly effectively to identify the families and their needs. Based on the strong and varied evidence they plan services meticulously to support vulnerable families and those with children under five. Almost all the targeted groups such as Black Caribbean boys, young and lone parents, fathers and those at early stages of learning English take part in the activities and benefit from services.
- The centre has a profound impact on the lives of the families and their children. Through their regular and sustained contact parents find stability in their lives and improve their self-confidence as well as developing strong personal and social skills. Most adults engage in a variety of learning opportunities and use them very effectively to support their children in healthy living and in preparation for school.
- Staff, managers and governors know their community exceptionally well and have high ambitions for their families and the children. They have created a strong culture of trust and work extremely well together to motivate parents and provide services that are constantly improving.
- The local authority has set challenging targets for the commissioned services. Managers are extremely thorough in monitoring, tracking and evaluating all services, underpinned by robust data. However they do not routinely evaluate why the services are so effective and precisely what the impact is on families. They do not challenge staff sufficiently to reflect on their practice and record the desired improvements.
- Equality and diversity is a model of excellence at the centre. Staff, parents and children from various ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural groups join in the activities at the centre in a safe and harmonious environment. They demonstrate respect for each other and enjoy learning from different cultures.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children’s centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. The inspection was carried out at the same time as the inspection of Lark Hall Primary School and Children’s Centre.

This inspection was carried out by one Her Majesty's Inspector and an additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, the head and the deputy head teacher of the primary school, advisory board members, governors, outreach workers, senior officers from the local authority and partners from health, adult education, social services and early years.

The inspectors visited all three centres in the cluster. They also met parents and representatives of the advisory board. The inspectors involved the centre leader and the local authority's strategic lead officer for children's centres in all team meetings.

They observed the centre’s work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Harmesh Manghra, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Elizabeth Dickson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Heathbrook, a phase two children's centre, opened in January 2009 and is linked to Heathbrook Primary School. It works in collaboration with children's centres at Lark Hall Primary School and Clapham Manor Primary School. All three centres are conveniently located within walking distance of each other. Consequently families make use of services provided at all three centres. Due to the close proximity of the local authorities, families from both Wandsworth and Lambeth use services of each other's children's centres such as the Yvonne Carr Children's Centre in Wandsworth.

The centre management and advisory board is shared between Clapham Manor and Heathbrook centres; however the governance arrangements are overseen by Heathbrook Primary School. The local authority has commissioned a range of services to include Citizens Advice Bureau, adult education, provision for the disabled and those with special educational needs, health service and breastfeeding support. The local authority has taken part in the Payment by Results trials.

The local community is culturally diverse with contrasting social factors, within a deprived and economically disadvantaged area of South London. The centre is located in one of the highest 30% deprived nationally. Heathbrook area has a significant gap in income between the highest and lowest earning families. Some 75% of families are from minority ethnic backgrounds and 33% of families speak English as an additional language. In addition to English, families speak a broad range of languages such as Arabic, Somali, Portuguese, Spanish, French, Polish and Bengali. Lambeth has a high proportion of its population that is transient and 24% move away from the authority each year.

The children's centre serves seven lower super output areas in the Clapham Town Ward. After the revision to the catchment in July 2012 the number of children under five living in the catchment area went up from 354 to 693. The centre is located in a purpose-built building with limited space. It makes use of different sites such as the school hall, the school meeting rooms and the local One O' Clock Club. There is no formally linked early years provision in the community; however two private and voluntary sector providers of childcare operate in the reach area. Heathbrook target groups are Black Caribbean boys, young parents, children with disabilities, lone parents, fathers, children subject to child protection plans, children assessed as in need and workless families. Many families live on benefits and are unemployed. The majority of families live in local Housing Trust properties. Housing is a key need identified for all vulnerable families in the catchment area. Attainment on entry to early education provision highlights that learners' knowledge, understanding and skills are below nationally expected levels.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Fully embed evaluation in all aspects of the centre's services by:
 - ensuring that the local authority contract specifications expressly require the commissioned services to comment on the impact of the services they provide on the users at the centre and cluster level
 - requiring all staff to evaluate what has worked well and why, as well as encouraging them to identify how their practice can be improved further
 - recording their reflections in relevant quality improvement documents and/or their personal journals.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Outstanding

- The centre works exceedingly well with various agencies using local knowledge, information and data to identify all families. Extensive data from the local authority and the health service give the

staff a comprehensive view of the parents with under fives in the reach area. Attendance levels at the centre have continued to improve and are now outstanding with parents attending between eight to 12 sessions.

- Highly effective joint working with midwives and health visitors has greatly increased the take-up of a broad range of health services such as healthy eating, exercise, baby routines, sleeping, breastfeeding and the take up of immunisation. In addition to the information from ante-natal and post-natal classes, staff identify new parents quickly through a variety of sources such as the 'Milk Spot' and 'Baby Zone'.
- Outreach workers are very sensitive and highly knowledgeable about the families in the area. They establish a trusting relationship rapidly with the families and use a range of strategies to make and then maintain contact with them. One-to-one support, mentoring, home visits, telephone and text messages are some of the successful techniques used to increase the take-up of early childhood services by families.
- Parents receive exceptional peer support from other parents and through volunteer Family Learning Champions; inspectors observed a superb example of an ex-teacher who is a granny and a child minder translate for a recently arrived French speaking Caribbean mother to participate in nursery rhymes and cooking lessons with her child.
- By close networking, the support workers work successfully with almost all of the priority groups in the area. For example, the centre has offered free two-year nursery placements to almost all eligible two year olds. Planning for early intervention is highly effective and prompt to identify and support all children at risk, including those being supported using the Common Assessment Framework procedures, those subject to a child protection plan or assessed as in need.
- Staff are highly proficient at identifying the needs of each child and their parents. At first registration they work thoroughly with the parents to set progress milestones for the child and identify any additional needs. These are checked through regular observations of the children in crèche sessions to monitor progress and provide additional support if needed.
- Access to the services by targeted groups is excellent. For example, all teenage parents and parents with children with a range of autism difficulties are using services. The centre's successful work is increasing significantly the number of fathers engaging with children's centre activities. The large majority of workless families are engaged in the early childhood services and the engagement of Black Caribbean boys and families learning English as an additional language is very high.

The quality of practice and services

Outstanding

- The range of services, including centrally commissioned services delivered through firmly established excellent partnerships, is very broad. In recent months managers have further consolidated planning through an outstanding 'Mapping and Gapping' exercise that involved a comprehensive range of partners. Managers are responsive to local needs and use parents' voice well to design programmes and enrich experiences such as cookery from around the world.
- The impact of these services has been extremely positive both for the parents and their children in improving life chances and reducing inequalities. 'Parents as Partners in Early Learning' has helped to support bilingual parents to promote their child's learning and development very well. This has resulted in their love of books, rhymes, songs, creative ideas and play and improved relationships and family bonds. Popular weekly sessions of 'My Music' improve children's listening skills, attention levels and turn taking and encourages them to make new music.
- The Speech and Language Therapy service helps parents to develop greater knowledge of language and speech development and provides them with the tools to extend these skills with their children at home. Help with the early identification of autism has led to parents seeking help early on. Through extensive support many families and schools have been able to help these children attend mainstream schools.
- Most children receiving help make consistent improvement in reaching a good level of development. The development for boys is excellent. A weekly 'caring committee' meeting between the managers

of the centre and Heathbrook Primary School is a shining example of the smooth integration of children into school. As a result transition to Nursery and Reception Year for the children is excellent. The centre provides good support to the child-minders group in the cluster through 'Every Lambeth Child A Talker' group training to improve communication and language of the children.

- The impact of high-quality health services on parents and children is very strong. This is reflected in high rates of smoking cessation and exceptionally high immunisation rates. Breastfeeding rates continue to improve from a low base and contribute to reducing high obesity rates in the long run.
- 'Stay and Play' sessions help parents with no garden space at home to engage in messy play. The 'Little Diggers' programme encourages love of nature and environment. The 'Jelly Babies', a programme for six to eighteen months old babies, helps parents to learn about child development, various learning styles and the value of a wide variety of play that stimulates children.
- The centre creates opportunities for the parents to meet new parents, make friends and develop social networks to overcome isolation. Children benefit from greater interaction with other children. A few more articulate parents have had profound impact on raising the aspirations for the less confident ones.
- Parents attend a range of high-quality classes and learn confidently at the centres where their children are well looked after in the on-site crèche. Entry level programmes in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), computer training, Family Learning, English and mathematics, and developing skills for working with children, are very valuable stepping stones to prepare them for learning, employment or volunteering. Advice and guidance for job seeking and development of Curriculum Vitae is first rate.
- The expert advice from the local Citizens Advice Bureau is proving very effective in improving the economic well-being of the families. They understand their rights and entitlements well and claim the right amount of benefits and develop strategies to prevent getting into debt and deal with their housing concerns.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Outstanding

- Leaders, managers and governors have high ambitions for the parents and their children. They are convinced of their ability and passion to make a strong impact on their lives and have set and met challenging targets to engage families in accessing services. The leadership at all levels in the centre is outstanding and has been ably supported by excellent managers.
- Strategic direction by Lambeth is very effective. Working closely with schools, the centre provides a seamless service for children from birth onwards. The central commissioning and evaluation of some key services, including provision of ESOL, has had a significant impact on local families.
- Staff are highly qualified and well experienced. They continue to benefit from strong professional development, including the right level and frequency of supervision and challenge that helps them sharpen their practice. Managers and governors have further strengthened the performance management by including individual targets for ensuring higher levels of personal accountability.
- The centre uses parents' and users' voice very well to design and improve the quality of the services. Parents are highly satisfied with the services. They make their views known through parent forums and surveys although they have not had a stable and regular presence on the advisory board.
- Safeguarding arrangements are extremely thorough. The centre employs the most appropriate staff after conducting stringent checks on their identity, residence and qualifications as well as background checks. Once appointed they benefit from regular training on safeguarding and health and safety focusing on how to keep children safe.
- Quality monitoring is extremely thorough. All staff evaluate their programmes and make necessary improvements to the programmes and services. Managers work closely with the local authority, commissioned services and partners to evaluate services and programmes by using various sources of evidence but rely heavily on data. They do not routinely evaluate why a particular programme, service or approach has been successful and why, and its impact on the users. Staff are not

sufficiently critical in the evaluation of their own practice and how they can improve it further.

- Self-evaluation is robust and the report is accurate. Managers use a very broad range of evidence to identify their strengths and what needs to be done further to make improvements. For example, the centre has robust plans to increase the provision of parenting programmes. The centre manager has increased and improved the provision of adult learning since the inspection of the Clapham Manor Children's Centre.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Practice consistently reflects the highest aspirations for children and their families and as a result inequalities are reducing rapidly and gaps are closing.
Grade 2	Good	Practice enables most children and their families to access good quality services that improve children's wellbeing and achieve the stated outcomes for families.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	Performance is not as good as it might reasonably be expected to be in one or more key areas.
Grade 4	Inadequate	The needs of children and families in its area are not being met and/or the leaders and managers are not providing sufficient challenge to bring about improvement to the quality of services.

Unique reference number	21432
Local authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	427554
Managed by	The governing body of Heathbrook Primary School on behalf of the local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	693
Centre leader	Jane Christofi
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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