

Log Cabin Children's Centre

Northfield Avenue, Ealing W5 4UA

Inspection dates	24–25 March 2015
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Good	2
The quality of practice and services		Good	2
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a good centre.

- The centre provides good quality services for the families and children in the area, particularly those in most need. Information gathered from a wide range of sources is used well to continuously refine and improve what the centre offers.
- Centre staff work effectively to encourage families to use the services provided. As a result, a large majority of families from the centre's target groups are now regularly attending the centre and benefit from the good services provided.
- The centre is effective in reducing inequalities, especially for families in most need. This is reflected in the gap in attainment between the children who score least in assessments at school and the rest, which is reducing.
- Good leadership and management ensure that self-evaluation is detailed and accurate. The actions that leaders are taking are significantly improving the outcomes for families and children from target groups. There is good capacity to sustain improvements.
- Governance is good. The local authority is effective in monitoring the work of the centre and sets realistic improvement targets. The advisory board has a clear understanding of the strengths of the centre and what it needs to focus on next. It keeps a close check on its performance.

It is not outstanding because:

- Not enough Somali families and teenage parents are fully involved with the centre, and are therefore not yet benefiting from the wide range of good quality services provided.
- Just under a third of eligible two-year-olds are not taking up their free early education place.
- The centre does not evaluate the full impact of its work by tracking the achievement of children who have accessed services to the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The centre's case files on families it is working with do not always demonstrate best practice in recording.

What does the centre need to do to improve further

- Enable most children and families from all of the centre's target groups to benefit from the support and services offered, especially Somali families and teenage parents.
- Work with early years partners and parents to support the vast majority, if not all, of eligible two-year-olds in accessing their early education place.
- Enhance the quality of services and outcomes for children and families identified as most in need by:
 - developing a coherent approach to tracking children's learning and development from the time they leave the centre to the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - making sure that all family case files demonstrate best practice in recording, in particular the setting of clear targets against which progress can be measured. Make sure that the views of families are included so that leaders can see what the full impact is on improving outcomes.

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.

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre leader, the local authority's strategic lead for children's centres, centre staff, health visitors, parents and representatives from the advisory board.

The inspectors visited the Hathaway, Grange, Jubilee and Copley Close Children's Centres, all of which are used to provide services. 'Stay and Play' sessions, 'Baby Massage', and adult language classes for those new to English were amongst the activities observed at the different sites. A 'Stay and Play' session and an English as a Second Language class for adults were both observed jointly with the centre leader.

Inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including its self-evaluation form, the centre development plan and data, safeguarding policies, procedures and practice and a sample of case files.

Inspection team

Nasim Butt, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Penny Mathers	Additional inspector
Peter Towner	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

In January 2014, a new hub and spoke (locality) model for Ealing's 27 children's centres, was implemented across the borough. There are six centres in the Central Ealing locality: five are managed by the local authority (the Log Cabin, Hathaway, Jubilee, Grange and North Ealing Children's Centres), and one (the Copley Close Children's Centre) is managed by a charity, Empowering Action and Social Esteem (EASE). Each centre has a service coordinator who manages the day-to-day running of the centre. The locality's strategic lead, also the centre leader, is based at the hub, Log Cabin Children's Centre. Some centre staff work across the locality to deliver services. The hub is co-located with the World of Children nursery and the Log Cabin charity, which are inspected under separate arrangements. The inspection reports can be found at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

A new advisory board structure from September 2014 saw the merging of a number of separate advisory boards into a whole locality board to assist governance. This is made up of a range of stakeholders, including professional partners, community members and parents, including those from Log Cabin. The centre works collaboratively with partners and provides family support, 'Stay and play' activities and access to health and parenting programmes. It also provides families with work-related services such as adult training and employability support.

The Central Ealing locality covers a wide area and is very mixed socially, economically and ethnically. Approximately 6,158 children from birth to four years of age live in the centre's reach area. Almost 45% of families are of White British heritage but this proportion has been decreasing in recent years. The rest are mainly families from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds and other White backgrounds, mainly Polish. Around 16.3% of children under five years old live in families that have no adult in work. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years provision are generally below those typical for their age.

The main target groups assessed as in most need of centre services are: families facing economic issues such as low income or where no one is working; lone parents; Black and minority ethnic families (especially Somali); children with disabilities and teenage parents.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The number of families registering and using centre services has increased significantly in the past 15 months. At 86%, most children and families who live in the area are registered. The large majority regularly attend the centre's groups and activities offered at the hub and all five 'spoke' sites. Leaders respond swiftly by making changes to the services provided if attendance of children and families from target groups falls off or if additional needs emerge.
- Staff and partners have established a positive reputation for providing very effective support for most families within the area, including parents expecting a baby. Families who are most in need of services are clearly prioritised and staff make sure they receive good support. This includes those from low income and workless homes, lone parents, families from Polish backgrounds and families who have children with additional needs, including disabled children. These groups engage well with the centre's activities.
- Staff work hard to ensure the centre provides a warm and welcoming atmosphere. This ensures that those less likely to engage feel comfortable coming to the centre to access services and activities. Typical comments from parents include: 'The centre was a safe haven for me and my child when I was experiencing difficulties at home' and 'It's like coming to visit a friend; the centre feels more like a club than a service.'
- Well-planned and focused outreach visits that take place in families' homes are used very effectively

to thoroughly assess the individual needs of families. Staff successfully explain to parents what services are available and how the activities and courses can help them. This makes sure that those who may be reluctant to visit the centre and access services are encouraged to get involved.

- The centre works closely with pre-schools, schools, and health and social care partners to identify and meet the needs of families who are experiencing major difficulties. Robust assessments, speedy actions and positive interventions assist children's safety and well-being. Most families continue to attend centre activities independently once their needs have been met by specific one-to-one support.
- Although there has been a significant rise in the number of Somali families and teenage parents accessing services, the involvement of these groups with the centre is not yet good enough.
- The very large majority of three- and four-year-olds take up their free education place. However, at 62%, the proportion of eligible two-year-olds accessing their funded early education place is below the level seen nationally. Those that are taking up their place are in good or better quality early years provision in the area, which includes the Log Cabin hub's co-located nursery.
- The concerted effort of centre staff and local authority partners to encourage and support families to take up their two-year-old child's place is proving effective, but more work remains to enable more children to receive a good start in education.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The centre offers a wide range of good quality and relevant services for most target groups, including outreach support for parents and children most in need. As a result, those who use the centre's services improve their well-being over time. Excellent support for mothers who are breastfeeding ensures that 67% in the reach area continue at 6–8 weeks, well above the national average.
- Effective courses help parents develop self-confidence and build positive parenting skills. Paediatric first aid, healthy eating and bespoke parenting courses are well attended and success rates are high. These include workless families known to the centre, who also benefit from the Work Club run weekly at the Copley Close site. A few parents spoke very enthusiastically to inspectors about the positive impact of the healthy eating course on the lifestyle of their children.
- The centre runs a range of groups to promote physical fitness; for example, the well-attended 'Fizzical Fun' at the North Ealing site. Oral hygiene is also promoted using the 'Tooth Fairy' idea and modelling the process of brushing teeth properly. Levels of obesity among young children are reducing and are currently below the national average.
- The centre has an exemplary volunteering programme that helps some parents to develop their employability skills. Volunteers' skills and aspirations are matched very well to placements and the majority of volunteers go on to further training and employment. One volunteer remarked, 'I am treated like a member of staff, there is no difference.'
- The quality of 'Stay and play' sessions at the different sites has improved through ensuring greater involvement of parents in their child's learning. As a result, parents are confident in talking about what their child can do, and what they need to move on to next.
- The planning of sessions and evaluations of how well they have gone and what could be improved are all of good quality. Centre staff track children's progress, including for those with additional needs, during centre-led groups and use the information to plan what the children need to learn next.
- Children's achievement is good and the gaps in the learning between different groups of children are closing. However, the centre does not show the full impact of its work by tracking the achievement of children from its priority groups once they leave the centre, up to the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The centre's support for children and families most in need is excellent, in particular those on low incomes living in the most deprived parts of the area served by the centre. As a consequence, most families receiving one-to-one support continue to engage with the centre's universal services after their specific needs are met.

- Although case file record keeping provides a clear trail of the care, guidance and support provided, the targets for families are not always sufficiently clear, hence progress cannot be sharply tracked. In addition, the views of families are not always evident and this limits leaders' ability to show the full impact of the centre's work in improving outcomes for families.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The centre is led effectively and efficiently by the centre leader, who is supported by a well-trained and highly committed team of service coordinators. Decisions about which services to run, and where, are the result of the accurate analysis of a range of information about the difference services make to improving the outcomes for children and families from the centre's priority groups. All resources, including staffing and 'spoke' sites, are used efficiently and effectively to meet priority needs.
- Governance is good. The locality advisory board holds the centre to account effectively, for example through the creation of three subgroups which ask the right questions and ensure that agreed actions are followed up. The local authority regularly scrutinises the centre's performance against key indicators and agreed targets. The analysis shows that the centre has made good progress towards meeting most of its challenging but realistic annual targets. Local authority managers also use data effectively, for example to compare the engagement levels of different priority groups.
- Performance monitoring usefully includes an annual peer monitoring review led by an external consultant. Outcomes for families, such as workless families, and contact data on all priority groups are closely monitored to ensure the centre continues to work effectively to reduce inequalities. As a result, a high proportion of adults from the most deprived parts of the locality have been successful in acquiring the training and skills needed to get them back into employment. Leaders rightly recognise that securing the further engagement of Somali families and teenage parents is a key area for further improvement.
- Safeguarding and safer recruitment policies, procedures and practices meet current requirements. The team's knowledge and understanding of e-safety are also secure. Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding arrangements and know when problems need to be referred to social care professionals. The centre is quick to act if any concerns about children's safety are raised, including for those subject to a child protection or child-in-need plan.
- Staff use the Early Help Assessment procedures effectively to ensure families with the most needs receive the support they need. Because assessment of need is thorough and the well-matched support is strong, there has been a reduction in the number of children deemed to be at risk of harm.
- Parents actively contribute to the centre's work. The centre leader has been successful in recruiting a highly motivated parent from the Log Cabin reach area as the chair of the advisory board. Parents on the advisory board have contributed purposefully to important decisions about the shaping of health, early childhood and adult education services. The parents' forum for the Log Cabin hub meets regularly to share views to support the centre's development.

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.

Children's centre

Unique reference number	21843
Local authority	Ealing
Inspection number	454050
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	6,158
Centre leader	Amanda Foley
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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