

# Inspection report for Grange Park and Layton Children's Centre

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| Local authority     | Blackpool            |
| Inspection number   | 383680               |
| Inspection dates    | 19 - 20 January 2012 |
| Reporting inspector | Elaine Clinton HMI   |

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Centre leader               | Sue Dutton   |
| Date of previous inspection | Not applicable   |
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|   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Linked school if applicable                     | Not applicable                     |
| Linked early years and childcare, if applicable | Grange Park Sure start<br>EY261980 |

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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.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with parents, children and centre staff including the centre's manager and deputy manager. Interviews were held with local authority representatives, partners and members of the local advisory board.

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

## Information about the centre

Grange Park Children's Centre was designated in 2003 as a Phase One centre. In January 2012, it merged with Layton Children's Centre, a Phase Three centre, following local authority reorganisation. The centre, now known as Grange Park and Layton Children's Centre, serves 991 children aged from birth to four. It is located in a particularly deprived area of Blackpool where poor health is a major issue. Life expectancy is significantly lower than nationally, and life expectancy for men in Blackpool is the lowest in the country. The local authority is ranked as the sixth most deprived in the country. It is characterised by high levels of unemployment, exceptionally low wages and high numbers of children living in poverty. In 2010, 43% of all children under 16 were living in poverty and 28.8% of the working age population are claiming out of work benefits. The majority of the population who live in the reach area of the centre are living in the top 10% deprived areas of the country, with 70% of children living in the top 30% most deprived wards in the country. Seventy nine percent of children attending the nursery at the centre are from the 10% most deprived wards. Most children enter early years education with knowledge and skills that are below those expected for their age. A very high proportion of children are living in families who are claiming incapacity and other disability benefits. A significant proportion of families are affected by high alcohol intake and substance misuse.

The centre is accountable to the local authority and is governed by a local advisory board. The centre manager, supported by her deputy, is responsible for the day-to-day

management of the centre, in addition to a network of centres across the authority. At the time of the inspection, the centre manager had been in post six months. The centre runs a range of integrated services, including health, adult education, support for teenage parents and family support. The centre's childcare is provided by Grange Park Sure Start; the nursery is registered to care for 48 children and was last inspected in December 2010. The findings of the report can be viewed at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

## 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**

**1**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**1**

## Main findings

Excellent leadership and management have taken the centre on an exceptional journey since its designation in 2003. A strong culture of continuous improvement is underpinned by rigorous evaluation and supported by a highly motivated and cohesive team. The centre manager continues to improve the already very high standards established by the previous manager. The deputy manager, who has been with the centre since its designation, has provided exceptional stability and strength during a year of significant change. She is, in the words of staff, 'the heartbeat of the centre'.

Grange Park and Layton Children's Centre offers outstanding support to families and young children and serves its community exceptionally well. 'The centre is the best thing that ever happened here....we are truly blessed'. This sentiment was repeated in many different ways by families spoken to by inspectors. The belief that the needs of each individual child and their family are of the highest importance underpins the high quality care, guidance and support that the centre provides. Outstanding partnership work provides universal, targeted and specialist programmes that are highly valued by parents and their children. A persistent focus on target groups by centre managers ensures that equality and diversity are promoted very strongly; indeed equality and diversity runs through everything that the centre does.

The centre exudes a safe and welcoming environment; there is a feeling of enjoyment and purposeful activity. It provides particularly high quality activities and support for children and families, particularly for those who are vulnerable or are at risk of having a poor start in

life. The work of the centre is making a significant difference to the start children are making at school. A project has had a significant impact on raising the number of children who reach the national average in communication, literacy and language by the age of five. Other programmes are effectively improving lives. Outstanding provision is raising the aspirations of adults, providing inspirational and practical help and support for parents and families towards achieving better futures. The safety of families at home, at work and in the centre is a vital part of the centre's work and the safeguarding of children and groups of people in circumstances that make them vulnerable such as women subject to domestic violence, is exemplary.

Assessment of need is excellent. Data are used very well to record the progress that children are making, and to provide staff with challenging targets to further improve the outcomes for families. Most parents and their children achieve highly, gaining significantly in confidence as a result of the outstanding range of provision that the centre offers. An extensive range of learning opportunities combined with excellent guidance and support are significantly increasing the numbers of parents who are progressing from user, to volunteer, to further learning and/or employment.

The local authority plays a key strategic role through challenging annual conversations and the rigorous self-evaluation undertaken by the centre. The 'Payment by Results' pilot is further strengthening this challenge, enabling all staff to be more incisive about the impact on families of the activities they are providing. The outcomes of data analysis are used well by the centre to enhance and adjust the quality of provision. As a result, most outcomes, including health and children's achievement, are improving dramatically. The pursuit of excellence, based on clear priorities and an excellent understanding of the reach area, combined with highly effective leadership that brings the very best out of staff, are ensuring that the centre's capacity to sustain and further develop this excellent provision is outstanding. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation ensures that the management team remain strongly focused on improving the quality and impact of the services and activities provided. Families are engaged well in the evaluation of programmes and activities. Leaders recognise the need to further increase the involvement of families in the centre's decision making processes, strategic planning and evaluation.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Extend the evaluation of the centre by supporting more parents to contribute to decision making and provide challenge.

## **How good are outcomes for families?**

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| <b>1</b> |
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Staff work tirelessly to improve the health outcomes for children and families with remarkable success. The community café provides a warm welcome, smiling faces and an

ever-ready listening ear for families when times are tough. Delicious breakfasts and lunches cooked on site are healthy and provide families with nutritious and economical meals. Free vitamins and fruit and vegetable vouchers are strongly promoted and available across the reach area. Consequently, uptake is increasing and is higher than nationally. This is particularly important in an area where malnutrition in young children is increasing sharply. At some 96% uptake of immunisations at the age of one is higher than the recommended rate of 95% and nationally. The health of families, particularly their emotional health, has improved significantly as a direct result of engagement with the centre. Mothers on the 'Raindrops, Rainbows and Me' course speak passionately of the impact the course has had on supporting them to manage their post natal depression, and the consequent difference the course has made to them and their families. Children's centre and health workers can clearly articulate the sustained impact of sessions to reduce obesity in early childhood. 'Well Being Wednesday's' provide an excellent range of activities to promote healthy lifestyles to the whole family. Parents talk enthusiastically about the impact of this and other health related activities; for one parent this meant losing over 22 kilograms, gaining employment and significantly improving oral health.

Children and vulnerable adults are effectively safeguarded and show clear improvement in their confidence and skills. Care is taken to ensure that all the activities undertaken are extremely well organised and supervised after thorough risk assessments have been carried out. Parents and children feel safe and protected and several were able to tell inspectors of how the centre has transformed their lives after they had found themselves in abusive relationships. 'It's been a lifeline for me...I came from a really bad place...it feels like home,' are some of the comments made by parents. Partners and families alike are unanimous in their praise for the stunning impact of the centre. Children with disabilities and those with special educational needs are particularly well supported, and partnerships with specialist services allow for personalised support and advocacy.

Activities engage all target groups exceptionally well. 'Stay and Play' sessions at venues throughout the reach area promote early years' outcomes very effectively. Excellent ideas and activities are shared well with parents, supporting them to help their children to achieve highly. Specific language and communication deficits are identified through screening children at the age of two and the 'You Make the Difference' course is having a significant impact on the speech of these children, with some 75% talking almost as well as their peers within three months of starting the course. On joining the Reception Year at school, children, who have attended Grange Park and Layton Children's Centre demonstrate high levels of confidence and independence. An Advisory Teacher from the local authority said that baseline testing showed that those attending children's centre activities performed much better than those who had not. The centre is effectively narrowing the achievement gap between children with different start points. An increased emphasis on the 'Every Child A Talker' programme is ensuring that many children are now achieving six or more points in communication, language and literacy, and personal, social and emotional development. Data confirm that in 2010/11, 10% more children achieved 78 points or more on the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile than in the previous year. Carefully planned individual and targeted support is helping children with disabilities and those with special educational

needs to achieve well, and participate in all activities. Monitoring and recording of these children's progress is exceptionally detailed.

Parental involvement in the governance and development of the centre is good, although during the recent period of change it has declined slightly. The centre encourages parents to become volunteers, with a new training programme providing excellent training and support for a growing number of volunteers. An excellent range of courses, developed in collaboration with partners, provide progressive learning opportunities from entry level to level 4 for adults. For example, in September 2011 four parents, who started on this journey three years ago, began foundation degree courses at the local further education college. A 'work focussed project' with Jobcentre Plus engaged 98 parents in 2010, with 62% progressing into further learning, education or employment, 35% progressed to the highest level of the programme with all except one progressing at least one level.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

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| <b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>  | <b>1</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>1</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>1</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>1</b> |

## How good is the provision?

**1**

The centre works in close partnership with the wider team in the local authority and other services to rigorously assess the needs of the most vulnerable children and families. Detailed assessments lead to an individual plan for the child and their family, avoid duplication of services and minimise the risk of the most vulnerable families falling through the net. Plans are regularly reviewed to ensure that services continue to meet the needs of the family and also to, where possible, gradually withdraw services to reduce dependency. Parents are treated with sensitivity and respect and they very much appreciate this. The centre has an extremely high level of contact with targeted groups in the area and has exceeded its target baseline for working with families in the 10% most deprived communities, reaching some 90% of these in the last year.

Participation rates and attendance levels are very high. For example the programme for teenage parents consistently has over 90% attendance. Parents speak extremely positively of the parenting programmes and especially enjoy the activities where they can play with their children and talk with staff about any areas of concern. Snooker tournaments, activity days and trips to the cinema are increasingly attracting fathers and their children. Families enthused about the Mother's Day event which brought together whole families at the centre, truly providing mother's with a special day. Feedback from parents and children is very good with a very large majority of children saying that they enjoyed spending special time with their parent or carer.

The level of care, guidance and support is exceptionally high. Lone parents, teenage mums, dads and families who have young children with disabilities, all receive outstanding support to overcome a wide range of personal and social problems, such as domestic violence, debt and potential homelessness. Advice, support and guidance are personalised to meet the needs of individual users with very effective signposting to other agencies as appropriate. Family support services have been streamlined and coordination between services is excellent. This approach is particularly effective when meeting the needs of families and individuals in crisis.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

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| <b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>      | <b>1</b> |
| <b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b> | <b>1</b> |
| <b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.</b>  | <b>1</b> |

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

**1**

The centre manager and her deputy are highly effective and highly regarded by staff, other professionals and families alike. The leadership team as a whole focuses on excellent service delivery, and has the highest level of commitment and pride in its work. Governance and accountability are particularly strong and focused on outstanding outcomes for all families. Self-evaluation is thorough and effective, and the pursuit of excellence is at the heart of all activities, leading to commendable improvements in provision and outcomes. Progress towards meeting targets is monitored regularly and staff are clear about their responsibility towards achieving these. The key target of reaching all the families in the 10% most deprived areas is visually displayed on a large map in the centre's reception area. Progress towards meeting this is updated monthly. Opportunities for professional development are based on a clear understanding of the needs of the centre and of its staff. The central focus of the centre to promote consistently outstanding outcomes is making a profound impact on the community and ensuring outstanding value for money. Although there are excellent



opportunities for users to voice their opinions at activity level, they are currently not fully engaged in strategic planning and evaluation.

Safeguarding is of the highest priority and all policies and procedures are consistently implemented. Robust vetting and recruitment processes are in place for staff, members of the management board and volunteers. Training in safeguarding and child protection is of paramount importance. The centre plays a pivotal role in seeking to ensure that children are safe and, where necessary, child protection plans are implemented effectively, as well as working to ensure that victims of domestic violence are protected. Case studies demonstrate that staff take swift and appropriate action when safeguarding concerns are identified.

Outstanding partnerships provide an integrated approach ensuring that families, and target groups in particular, have more opportunities in life and greatly improved outcomes. Superb displays and photographs throughout the centre celebrate diversity. An extensive range of events, including Chinese New Year celebrations and Burn's Night, celebrate local, national and international culture. Staff are tenacious in their determination to reach all families in the area, particularly those in the most deprived areas and those from under-represented groups. In consequence, over 70% of families from the 30% most deprived areas are regularly attending sessions and increasing numbers of fathers are engaging with the centre. The inclusion of children and families is promoted strongly and discrimination is tackled with vigour. Members of all the local communities are welcomed, supported and empowered. 'No-one judges you here...everyone is welcome' sums up how inclusive the centre is. Highly effective strategies are in place to narrow the achievement gap as indicated by the improving outcomes on the Early Years Foundation Stage profile.

These are the grades for leadership and management:

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| <b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>                     | <b>1</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures 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>1</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>1</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>1</b> |

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

Information made available from the December 2010 inspection of Grange Park Sure Start Early Years provision was taken into consideration

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Grange Park and Layton Children's Centre on 19 and 20 January 2012. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

We would like to thank all of you who made us feel very welcome and spent so much time talking with us during meetings and activities, particularly to those of you who welcomed us into your homes. We thoroughly enjoyed meeting with you and both of us feel very privileged to have inspected such an exceptional centre. The massive effect that the centre has had on your lives and the ways in which it has helped you to turn your lives around is stunning. It is obvious that the centre is hugely important to all of you who use the centre and to the wider communities of Grange Park and Layton.

Throughout the time we were at the centre we only heard positive comments about the groups, activities, support and staff. All of you were extremely enthusiastic about the welcome that the community café provides, through the friendly faces, the excellent, value for money food and the feeling of safety that it provides. All of you say that the centre is a very warm and welcoming place to be where you and your children can make new friends and take part in activities. Many of you told us how much you enjoyed attending sessions such as 'Little Friends'. We also heard how much dads enjoyed the snooker tournaments, visits to the cinema and to the illuminations. Many mums told us how wonderful the Mother's Day treat was; that the pampering was wonderful, and having a meal cooked for them by their partner was very special, as was the chance to eat as a family without the worry of washing up! Everyone we spoke to said that staff listen to what you have to say, particularly when you would like to try a new activity. You say that they go out of their way to put on activities that you want and also to improve those that you feel are not so good. Throughout the inspection we were constantly told by children and parents of the difference that the centre was making to them. One of the very good activities that we heard about was 'Rainbows, Raindrops and Me' and the help it gives to improving self-esteem and supporting you to be a good mother.

We were particularly impressed by the way that the centre ensures that you are safe both at the centre and at home, through the information it provides you with on home safety and the way it helps you to keep you safe. The centre works really well with partners and organisations across the area to make sure that the centre can provide as many opportunities for you as possible. It provides excellent information for new parents about how to manage children's weaning and healthy eating and is very good at making sure you know about free vitamins and fruit and vegetable vouchers. The centre supports those of you who want to move into employment through its excellent work with Jobcentre Plus and the local education providers.

The team that lead the centre are highly motivated and know exactly what they want to do to ensure the centre continues to improve. We have asked the centre to be even more involved in providing feedback on what they can do to be even better. They really want you to be even more involved in this too and are already looking at the best ways to achieve this.

Thank you all once again for your time and enthusiasm in talking to us. We would like to wish you all the very best in the future.

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