

# Inspection report for Fountains Children's Centre

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Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	383935
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Reporting inspector	Tim Vaughan HMI

Centre leader	Margaret Mairah
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Fountains Rd Kirkdale Liverpool Merseyside L4 1QH
Telephone number	0151 233 4741
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	fountainscc@liverpool.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	132796 St John's Catholic Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY344412 Fountains Children's Centre

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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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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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 an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre coordinator, headteacher/head of centre, centre staff and a representative from the local authority. Discussions were also held with members of the advisory board, a range of partners, parents, and service users. The inspectors observed the centre's work, accompanied staff on home visits, visited a local hostel and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Fountains Children's Centre is located in the Kirkdale district of Liverpool. The centre developed from a Sure Start Local Programme and was designated as a phase one children's centre in March 2006. It provides the full core offer within purpose-built premises.

The centre is governed by the nearby St Johns Catholic Primary School governing body, which includes parents and a range of different professionals. The school's governing body is the registered provider for the early years provision at the centre. The early years provision was inspected as part of the school inspection in July 2011. The reports are available from the Ofsted website at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). Almost all children enter early education with a much lower range of skills and knowledge than that expected for their age.

There are eleven super output areas served by the centre and each is economically and socially disadvantaged. Seven are ranked in the top 1% of the most deprived areas in the country and the remaining four areas are ranked in the top 30% most deprived. There are 88% of children aged under five who live in households where no one is working. Also, 87% of the local population are in receipt of Job Seekers' Allowance. The majority of local people who claim benefits receive Incapacity Benefit or Disability Living Allowance. A high

proportion of local families are from a White British background with 4.2% of families from a range of minority ethnic groups.

## 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

'Sometimes you feel that there is a tide coming at you but you're not alone, the centre is there with arms around you pulling with you.' This comment, expressed by a parent and echoed by many others, helps to explain why Fountains Children's Centre is a good children's centre. Staff treat each child and family as unique. They are determined to improve the lives of local people and work tirelessly and flexibly to ensure that families can access services and have their needs met including in times of crisis.

Almost all local families are registered with the centre and a large majority are accessing services. This has been achieved, in part, through good partnerships including with health visitors and the local homeless hostel amongst others. A further key factor is the constant and carefully focused effort by the small centre team to reach out to families. As a result, there are a significant number of referrals to the centre and a high number of home visits. The impact of these strengths on outcomes for families is good overall, although health outcomes are satisfactory. The centre is beginning to address the issue of increasing childhood obesity levels; their work has yet to have an impact.

Driven by the passionate commitment of the centre coordinator, staff place a strong emphasis upon parents becoming confident and proud of their community, as well as believing in themselves as capable members of the wider society. Assessment is used well to tailor support to need. Consequently, there are many examples of individuals making progress in spite of circumstances that may have made them potentially vulnerable. Many local people have come to believe in themselves, gain new skills, become less isolated and more able to access training and employment.

The centre delivers a good range of services, a safe environment and high levels of care, support and advice to parents and children on a wide range of issues. There is good

safeguarding practice across all of the centre's work. For example, careful attention is given to ensuring that all centre staff and parents understand how to keep sleeping babies safe. Equality and diversity are strongly and effectively promoted and this is evident in the respect shown for the most vulnerable families. The support given to children with disabilities is excellent because of the flexible approach to meeting individual needs. Furthermore, parents consistently say that their individual identity including heritage, family structure and sexuality are valued.

The success of the centre is underpinned by the good leadership and management of the centre coordinator and headteacher/head of centre. There is a strong and shared sense of purpose amongst staff and the advisory board, high morale and accurate self-evaluation. There is clear evidence of steady improvement and leaders are ambitious for the centre to embed these achievements and are already bringing about good improvement. For example, the centre is tracking children's achievement through the childcare provision and then to the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage in primary school in order to provide reliable data on the impact of their work. Considering the clear evaluation and plans for future improvement and its other strengths, the centre's capacity for further improvement is good.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Work with partners in health services and in local primary schools to reduce obesity in children by the age of five years.

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

2
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Many local families achieve well across outcome areas because of the children's centre. A typical example is the parent who said, 'This centre changed everything for me. It gave me confidence. It helped me to bond with my son. It has had a good impact on my family and my relationships. I got training and then employment because of the centre'.

Health promotion by the centre and its partners has increased parents' knowledge of oral health and the risks of smoking and has led to high levels of child immunisations. However, health outcomes for children and families are satisfactory overall. This is because healthy eating activities such as the 'Yum, Yum, Yummy' group have not yet had an impact upon the centre's key performance indicator for obesity. Levels of obesity for local children by the age of five increased by 6.7% between 2010 and 2011, which was much higher than the local authority average. Increased breastfeeding promotion by the centre has encouraged more mothers to sustain breastfeeding at six to eight weeks. Breastfeeding in 2010–11 was low at 17.6% but this is an increase of 6.7% on the previous year, and current mid-year figures for breastfeeding indicate a continuing trend of improvement.

Families feel able to share their concerns and seek support for a range of needs including parenting, homelessness, domestic violence and safe behaviour. The resulting support is

very effective because of the individualised assessment of need through the Common Assessment Framework, for example, and good links with health and social care. The centre ensures that each local child on a child protection plan, or child in care, accesses the support they need. As a result, outcomes for these children and their families are good. The centre provides a safe environment where parents and carers feel confident to attend groups and to leave their children with centre workers. Hospital admissions have declined over the last three years because of the carefully targeted promotion of child safety at home, home safety packs and access to subsidised safety equipment.

By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, outcomes for children in the reach area have improved by 31% over three years. Crucially, this increase has occurred at the same time as the achievement gap between different groups of children has narrowed. In the centre nursery, children make good progress from their starting points. Many local families are developing their skills through activities and courses at the centre or other local settings. Consequently, groups such as teenage parents have improved their support for children at home as well as improved their own skills and educational achievement.

Parents say that the centre seeks their help in deciding what provision is to be made for families. They also contribute regularly through the parents' forum and the advisory board. As a result, parents feel valued, respected, and able to make a positive contribution to the centre. Their confidence is further enhanced by the very effective advice and support provided about housing, training, gaining qualifications and returning to work. This has helped to reduce the level of unemployment across local super output areas.

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>3</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>2</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>2</b>

## How good is the provision?

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Staff know the area well and understand many of the challenges that local families face regarding housing, health, crime, income, achievement and well-being. At times of crisis such as the absence of any income or benefits, families know that the centre will support them. Close links with other organisations mean that staff ensure that assessments are tailored and that services are adapted to need.

Good support for families is provided through extensive information, many centre-based activities, home visits and activities in the local homeless hostel. As a result, the centre has high participation rates by target groups of families, for example minority ethnic families, homeless families and teenage parents. The reach area has a high number of lone parents who access the centre's services. There are difficulties in estimating how many fathers are in the local population. However, the centre is not complacent and the number of fathers using services is increasing year-on-year through activities such as 'Bring your dad to nursery day'.

Parents of disabled children feel fully included within the children's centre. Through group activities and personalised support from the staff, they consistently praise the excellent quality of support that they and their children receive. Take up of these activities is high. The quality of this support is illustrated by the parent who said, 'I came because my child has got developmental needs. I didn't even know what that was until the centre explained it to me'.

The on-site nursery was judged good when inspected in 2011. Other provision to support children's learning and development, such as the 'Stay and Play' sessions, is good. The personal development and achievement of children, parents and staff are celebrated and a range of new skills and qualifications is being achieved, for example the European Computer Driving Licence.

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
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The centre coordinator leads with drive and passion. She is deeply committed to development for the community and for individuals. Regular staff meetings are well used as a forum for evaluating centre activities and learning from one another. The centre is linked with a local primary school, which means that the centre coordinator is line managed by the headteacher/head of centre. This is a strong, collaborative relationship which is enabling the sharing of different strengths and expertise and supporting the centre to improve further.

Inclusion is central to the centre's work. Consequently, users feel valued and included and the take-up of services is high. Gaps in attainment between groups of children by the end of the Reception Year are narrowing. Imagery used in displays throughout the centre reflects the commitment to equality and diversity and helps a wide range of people, for example minority ethnic groups, to feel valued and respected. Services for disabled children are well coordinated and the centre has a clear understanding of how to improve their life chances.

The centre has a clear safeguarding policy and staff have a good understanding of their roles in identifying and reporting concerns. The centre has good systems in place for recording information related to the vetting and recruitment of staff. All staff have undertaken appropriate safeguarding training and senior staff have undertaken safer recruitment training. Those staff involved in home visits are trained in recognising the signs of domestic violence. There is regular discussion about child protection within the staff team and at advisory board meetings. Partnership links with health and social care, including those with the local homeless hostel, are very effective. The centre sensitively and successfully supports families experiencing domestic violence and those with emotional health needs.

The centre has very effective governance and accountability arrangements. This is because of the strong, supportive link with the local primary school governing body, with parent and community board members and the parents' forum. The board acts very effectively to support improvements or to question proposals.

Self-evaluation of the centre's effectiveness is good because there is systematic reflection on practice and regular reviews by senior leaders and the advisory board. Data and a deep knowledge of other local services are used well to inform development planning. This is strengthened by good opportunities for the engagement of users in shaping services and evaluating the effectiveness of provision. The very effective use of staff expertise and space across the centre, the careful scrutiny of proposals by the advisory board and the good outcomes achieved, indicate that the centre provides good value for money.



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 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>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>2</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 registered Early Years provision Fountains Children's Centre EY344412 was last inspected in July 2011 and judged good. The inspection report and RAISE online report for the local primary school were used to gather contextual information about the centre.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected Fountains Centre on 8–9 February 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We spoke to several of you about the centre's work. We really enjoyed chatting with you during your activities, around the centre, in home visits and at the local hostel. You expressed your opinions very clearly and they were very helpful to us. Thank you. We were delighted to hear your positive views about how approachable and understanding you find the staff. We particularly liked the comment from a parent who said, 'Sometimes you feel that there is a tide coming at you but you're not alone, the centre is there with arms around you pulling with you.'

You told us how much you value the activities on offer and that coming to the centre has given you more confidence and helped you make new friends. We were pleased to hear that, as a result, many of you feel less isolated in the community and feel more confident as parents. One parent told us: 'This centre changed everything for me. It gave me confidence. It helped me to bond with my son. It has had a good impact on my family and my relationships. I got training and then employment because of the centre.' We found that the centre is helping many children and parents to achieve as much as they can. We were pleased to find that many of you are learning about healthy eating, child development and gaining new skills to help you to access employment.

The centre works effectively with a wide range of partners including the homeless hostel and health workers. We were pleased to find that the way that the centre keeps children, families and staff safe is good. We were also pleased to hear about the good support being given to children who have disabilities.

We were encouraged to see how hard the centre is working to make sure that it is a place for the whole community. We know how much you appreciate the fact that staff go out of their way to get to know you and your families and visit you in your homes or at the hostel.

We can see how the centre is making a positive difference to your lives. We have suggested that the centre work with schools and health workers to reduce obesity for local children by the age of five years old.

The staff work hard to make the centre as good as it can be. We know that they regularly ask for your views so that the centre can find ways to improve.

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