

# Inspection report for Haydock Children's Centre

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Local authority	St. Helens
Inspection number	366388
Inspection dates	23 - 24 February 2012
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Centre leader	Mrs Janet Waterhouse
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Legh Vale PS 104782
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Holyrood Nursery EY401572

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.

**Report Published:** March 2012

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## Introduction

The inspection covers 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 the head of centre, staff, service users, partner representatives and representatives of the local authority. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Haydock Children's Centre operates from shared premises with Legh Vale Primary School. The centre started as an Early Excellence centre. It was designated as a phase one centre in 2005. There was a significant restructure of the local authority in May 2011 and since then Haydock Children's Centre has operated with new management and a new staff team, which works across both Haydock and Newton-le-Willows children's centres. Haydock Children's Centre provides the full core offer of services with the support of the early intervention team and partners. A range of supporting services, including health and adult training courses are on site or within the reach area. Crèche provision is regularly provided to support families in accessing services. The centre operates some services from Garswood clinic. The majority of the population in the Haydock ward is of White British heritage with a small percentage of minority ethnic groups. Recent figures show that 1,505 children under five years live in the reach area and 18% of these children live in families dependent on workless benefits. The centre is within the 30% of most deprived wards in the country. This is an area with pockets of deprivation and some more affluent areas.

A high proportion of children enter school with skills below those expected for their age. The centre has close links with the on-site Holyrood Nursery, which provides full childcare provision and early years education. The nursery is subject to separate early years inspection arrangements. The inspection report can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). The

centre has an established advisory board, which is made up of representatives from the local community, professional agencies and parents. The advisory board structure is in the process of changing to form a joint advisory board with Newton-le-Willows Children's Centre.

## 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**

**3**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**3**

## Main findings

Haydock Children's Centre provides satisfactorily for the children and families it serves. The centre provides a welcoming environment. Families appreciate the good quality of care, guidance and support the centre provides and the difference it makes to their lives. Recent restructure has resulted in a greater focus on meeting the needs of families who are most vulnerable because of their circumstances within its reach area. Children's centre early intervention workers now work alongside social workers and other early intervention workers based on the centre's premises. Although it is too early to see a significant impact on outcomes, there is evidence that this closer partnership working is having a positive effect on meeting families' needs and improving outcomes.

The centre provides a range of services to meet the needs of the families in the reach area, some of which are successfully improving outcomes for target groups such as teen parents. However, the centre does not have an accurate view of the extent to which those registered at the centre are engaged in its services, or the extent to which all target groups are engaged. The available data indicate that the percentage of families accessing a service at the centre has increased from approximately 20% in 2009 to between 33% and 61% currently. This represents a minority of families in the reach area.

All outcomes are at least satisfactory. The centre places a high priority on encouraging adults to contribute to decision-making and to developing their confidence, knowledge and skills through participation on the centre's volunteer scheme. As a result, parents are involved in the governance of the centre and make a positive contribution through the volunteer role.

Safeguarding arrangements adequately meet requirements. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process is used to provide effective support to families and help to ensure that children are appropriately safeguarded. Systems for ensuring that the staff are appropriately checked are in place, but there is some lack of clarity in understanding protocols regarding checks for staff from other agencies working on site.

Leadership and management of the centre are satisfactory. Since the local authority reorganisation in May 2011 new arrangements are becoming established. Governance arrangements are clear. The advisory board has a satisfactory understanding of its role and provides support to the centre leaders. Centre leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the centre. The local authority provides the centre with a range of data about the reach area but these do not include clear information about the engagement of target groups with the centre's services. Centre leaders do not make sufficient use of data to inform evaluation or develop targets against which progress can be measured. This makes it difficult for the centre's leaders to evaluate the impact of its work and for the advisory board and responsible bodies to hold the centre to account. Systems to evaluate families' and children's progress towards outcomes are being developed. At present, these do not give a consistently clear picture of the impact of the centre's services on outcomes for its families. The local authority acknowledges that this is an area for development and is committed to working with the centre to make improvements. This, together with the centre's own resolve and existing actions to respond to priorities, mean the centre's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - more robust systems are developed to monitor and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of service provision and the impact on outcomes for users
  - the local authority provides more relevant data about levels of user engagement to inform more precise priorities for development
  - measurable targets are set with clear success criteria to enable the accountable bodies and the advisory board to hold the centre to account for its work
  - safeguarding protocols in relation to checks on staff from other agencies working on site are clearly understood
  - outreach work is further developed to improve the level of user engagement.

## How good are outcomes for families?

3
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Partnership programmes to promote healthy eating and exercise have improved health outcomes. Obesity levels for reception year pupils have reduced from 11% in 2009/10 to

8% in 2010/11. Activities organised by the centre, such as 'Active Tots' and 'Weaning Party', help to develop parents' understanding of the importance of healthy eating and exercise. The centre promotes breastfeeding through offering a weekly support group, but this is poorly attended at present. The data indicate that the percentage of mothers breastfeeding at 6 to 8 weeks fell from 23.9% in 2009 to 6.2% in 2010. The centre acknowledges that this is an area for improvement and is beginning to tackle the issue.

Parents say that they feel safe at the centre. The centre can point to instances when it has helped families to improve home safety through providing equipment such as safety gates and smoke alarms. There is a strong commitment to preventative work. Case studies identify times when outcomes for children subject to child protection plans have improved as a result of the centre's intervention. The CAF is used well for the early identification of children's additional needs and to ensure that there is co-ordinated service provision to meet them.

Families and children benefit from some good quality activities such as 'Friday Fun Time' drop-in play session and 'Peep O's' learning session for parents with babies under one year. Parents value the social interaction, and report that the activities help them to promote their children's learning at home. One parent commented, 'I now feel confident in helping shape the activities my children are involved in'. The centre has recently introduced a system for establishing children's starting points and tracking the progress of individual children attending sessions, but at present it is unable to demonstrate clearly the progress of children attending the centre's services. The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scores indicate that levels of achievement have remained stable in recent years. However, the percentage gap between the lowest achieving 20% and rest has recently shown a reduction from 32% in 2010 to 29.5% in 2011.

The centre has a well-planned volunteer programme, which has effectively developed the self-esteem and confidence of its participants. Volunteers have a clear induction procedure and supervision during their time as a volunteer to enable them to develop the skills and confidence to make a positive contribution. For example, one volunteer has become a breastfeeding counsellor, and four male volunteers have helped to set up the 'MATCH club' (Men and Their Children), which has become a self-funding and self-organised group for fathers and their children. Some parents have been helped into further training and employment, with positive effect on their economic well-being. Evidence from evaluations of targeted parenting courses demonstrates the positive impact of these courses in developing parental confidence and their skills as parents. Several parents are involved in the governance of the centre through their roles on the advisory board. The centre also has a parents' forum, 'FACT', which has a very small but committed membership which feedback parents' views and are proactive in supporting the work of the centre.

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>
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<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>3</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>3</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>3</b>

### How good is the provision?

<b>3</b>
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The centre provides effective support to families in times of crisis. Case studies demonstrate clear examples of where families have been supported through crises, such as domestic violence, with positive outcomes for families' well-being and safety. A parent commented, 'The impact on my life has been amazing and immeasurable'. Teen parents are supported to continue their education and care for their children. They receive a good level of advice regarding issues such as sexual health. The centre provides a satisfactory range of services, some of which are planned to meet the needs of target groups; for example, the teen parents group and 'Early Steps' respite group. The centre can demonstrate that these services are having a positive impact on outcomes for these groups. The fathers' 'MATCH club' currently caters for men with children aged four years and over and no families with children under five years attend at present. Fathers with younger children are signposted to a similar group held at Newton-le-Willows Children's Centre, but the centre does not have evidence of how the impact of this is tracked and, therefore, to what extent it is meeting the needs of these fathers. The data provided by the centre indicate that other target groups such as lone parents are not as effectively engaged.

The provision to support children's learning and development is satisfactory. The centre evaluates the impact of its services, such as parenting courses and the volunteer programme, on adults' confidence and skills. Adults take part in a range of learning opportunities provided by Adult and Community learning. However, the systems to monitor and track their progress and set targets for adults' achievement are at an early stage of development.

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>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</b>

<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.</b>	<b>2</b>
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## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

<b>3</b>
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Governance and accountability arrangements are clear and are becoming more firmly established following the recent reorganisation, although the advisory board is not yet fully challenging or holding the centre to account. The systems to ensure that evaluation is firmly based on evidence of impact are still developing. The centre's development plan accurately identifies key priorities, such as increasing the level of engagement and breastfeeding rates. However, there is no clear definition of engagement and few targets against which success can be measured. This makes it difficult for the advisory board to hold the centre to account for its performance.

The centre provides a welcoming and safe environment. The procedures to protect children and vulnerable families are satisfactory. All centre staff hold Criminal Record Bureau checks. Protocols for sharing information about checks carried out for partner agencies delivering services from the centre are not always sufficiently clearly understood. Through regular training, staff have a comprehensive awareness of safeguarding issues. The CAF is used effectively to safeguard and support families whose difficult circumstances make them vulnerable. Value for money is satisfactory because of the satisfactory outcomes achieved by those who use the centre.

The centre is meeting its equality and diversity duties satisfactorily and there is evidence that the achievement gap is narrowing. The centre can demonstrate that it is improving outcomes for some of the target groups, although this represents a minority of those in the reach area. The centre has 82 disabled children registered with it, although the extent to which they are engaged in the centre's services is unclear. The centre is welcoming to all. A number of disabled adults take part in the centre's volunteer service. The centre has a satisfactory awareness of the different groups in its reach area and takes positive action to engage groups who are traditionally hard to reach. For example, the centre has recently engaged two teen parents from traveller families.

Partnership working has a satisfactory impact on improving outcomes for children and families. Partner agencies report clear communication and an improving level of information sharing. Partnerships demonstrate some improvement in outcomes for individual families. For example, the partnership between early intervention workers and social workers based at the centre since reorganisation has had a positive impact on outcomes for families whose circumstances make them vulnerable and the partnership with the high school has benefited teen parents who wish to continue their education.

The centre values the views of parents and has acted on these to shape its services. Parents' views are sought through evaluation services and the parents' forum. In March 2011, the centre held a formal consultation with all parents. The results of this helped to



reshape services. For example, a session on Friday had grown too large and in response to parental comments was split into two groups.

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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>3</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>3</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>3</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>3</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>3</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>3</b>

## Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

None.

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Haydock Children's Centre on 23 February 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We enjoyed our visit to your centre and meeting so many of you. We would like to thank those of you who helped us with our work. You told us that the centre is friendly and welcoming and values your views on its services. We know that the centre has taken into account your reviews in the parent consultation and made changes to service as a result.

We found that the centre staff assess any difficult situations well and provide you with good support in times of crisis. We know that some of you have found the parenting courses provided by the centre to be helpful in developing your parenting skills and confidence.

We were pleased to see how the centre encourages you to become volunteers. The centre prepares you well for your volunteer roles and we know this has helped some of you to go on to further training and employment. The centre provides you with a range of activities which you told us you enjoy. You have told us that you particularly enjoy the opportunity to meet one another at the 'Friday Fun Time' group, and that this group gives you some ideas about developing children's learning at home. We know some of you have attended adult learning and first aid courses. We have asked the centre to make sure that they keep better track of how well the services they provide are improving learning and other outcomes for you and your children.

We know that you feel the centre is safe and that it encourages you to be more aware of healthy lifestyles. We agree that the centre is a safe place to be. The centre managers make sure that staff working at the centre have suitable checks. We have asked the centre to further develop its systems to make sure that information about checks on other adults providing services at the centre are properly shared and understood.

The centre's planning outlines what the centre wants to improve, but it generally does not say by how much services need to improve or how many people will benefit. Because the plan is not very precise and clear, it is hard for staff to know how much difference the provision makes in helping families to move forward in their lives. We have asked the centre's managers to make plans more precise so that the centre will know better what progress it is making. To help the centre to do this we have asked the local authority to provide more clear data about which groups of people in the reach area are regularly using the centre services. The centre is keen to encourage more people to use the centre services and we have asked them to further develop plans to do this.

Thank you for speaking with us and best wishes for the future.

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