

# Inspection report for Denton Children's Centre

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Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	383425
Inspection dates	8 - 9 March 2012
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	106221 Linden Road Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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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## 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.

An inspection of the co-located primary school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with representatives of Tameside Council, members of the advisory board and parents' forum, a broad range of users and a number of partners, including health and social care. They observed sessions at the centre, looked at the centre's work, and a range of documentation.

## Information about the centre

Denton Children's Centre is a phase two centre located in the grounds of Linden Road Primary School in Denton, serving the neighbourhoods of Denton, Droylsden and Audenshaw. In 2011 there were significant staffing changes in the centre following a restructuring process integrating children's centres within the wider 'Youth and Family Services Team'. The centre is networked with Denton South Children's Centre where staff work as part of a neighbourhood team. An advisory board provides advice and assistance to Denton Children's Centre and two other centres. It is made up of representatives from the local authority, private and voluntary sectors.

The population of families who live within the area of the centre is predominantly of White British heritage. The centre serves some areas with high levels of social and economic deprivation, with clusters of unemployment and families dependant on benefits. The proportion of teenage parents is low. Families live in homes that are a mixture of social housing, and social and private rental accommodation.

Governance of the centre is provided by the local authority and is supported by an advisory board and a parents' forum. A range of health, social care, family support and education

services are provided at the centre and from other outreach accommodation across the area.

Play sessions for children are provided through a range of activities at the centre including 'Stay and Play'. Crèche facilities are provided for the children of parents attending parent-focused sessions. Childcare provision is available from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. during term-time and is delivered by the childcare provision at the school. Most children enter childcare and early years provision with skills and knowledge lower than those expected for their age.

## 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**

<b>3</b>
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### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

<b>3</b>
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## Main findings

Denton Children's Centre is a satisfactory centre overall. The centre is well known by families in the borough due to its long established practice in delivering a range of programmes that have supported families in the past. As a result of significantly reduced staffing levels, the centre has focused its priorities on providing more tailored support to those most in need. The range of programmes and its impact on the numbers of families it is now able to work with are satisfactory.

A key strength of the centre is the care and support that families receive from the centre staff and their partners. The centre manager has created a positive culture where centre staff work well together as a team and are motivated to continue improving the work of the centre. 'Stay and Play' activities are interesting, meeting the needs of families and children to come together to have fun and to learn. Trained volunteers are now supporting these sessions. However, sessions observed had too many children attending for the staff to be able to demonstrate quality learning activities.

Overall, safeguarding policies and procedures meet legal requirements and underpin good practice. However, there are gaps in the information the centre receives when some other service may have taken over supporting families, particularly where child protection issues may cause concern and where further intervention may be needed. Users' views are heard through the centre's sound work with their partners and parents' forum. The centre provides

an appropriate range of activities that contribute to improving the lives of families in the area.

The impact of the centre's provision is satisfactory through sound collaboration with other professionals and the positive use of information from course evaluations and data. Self-evaluation and data are used appropriately to identify the centre's priorities and users' needs. The local authority provides a sound framework from which the centre can draw information and respond to the needs of different target groups in its area. The centre works well with some of the schools in its area, but there is little communication taking place with the co-located primary school, which inhibits the centre's ability to support the transition of local children into this school. As a result, the centre demonstrates a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

Parents and children benefit appropriately from the range of services which promote healthy lifestyles and keeping children safe. Midwives and trained volunteers provide sound support for breastfeeding mothers. Through this support, and that provided by health visitors, the number of mothers initiating breastfeeding is improving, but almost half do not sustain this. Maternity services have a clear plan and a range of support systems to continue to provide mothers with choices, and to ensure that more of them have better information before birth on the benefits for children's longer term health through the good start that breastfeeding provides.

As part of the significant changes made to partnership working towards a clearer vision of 'Think Family', better arrangements are now in place for referrals to employability programmes. This provides users with routes to training to enable them to become more work ready and to employment. Several adults have achieved qualifications and progressed into volunteering and employment.

The centre promotes equality and diversity satisfactorily. It is an inclusive setting and all users feel welcome and valued. Support is provided to those families and children who are made vulnerable by their circumstances and parents describe this as being life-changing. 'Dads and Tots' sessions are offered on Saturdays monthly to provide opportunities for fathers to enjoy special time with their children. Overall, the leadership, management and provision of the centre are satisfactory. Consequently, outcomes for children and their families engaged with services are satisfactory.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve communication with the co-located primary school to ensure children's transition into school is better supported.
- Improve the planning and assessment of play activities to better support child development.
- Develop better methods for updating the centre on cases that may need some further intervention, to ensure ongoing support for those made vulnerable by their circumstances is able to be provided.

## How good are outcomes for families?

3
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Current users of the centre are happy about the service they receive, saying that it has given them confidence and provided an opportunity to make new friends. They appreciate the friendly approach of the staff. They say they feel comfortable and welcome at the centre. Parents and children enjoy opportunities to play together. However, although staff use assessment tools to record the development of children planning and assessment of 'Stay and Play' activities do not fully support children's progress towards the early learning goals of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The targeted approach to working with those families most in need and work with its partners ensures the work of the centre is providing measurable benefits for its users. The centre has worked hard to ensure that the majority of children are well prepared for nursery and mainstream school, some from a low starting point. This is due to the emphasis on early learning, through such programmes as 'Baby Babble' and 'Rhyme Time'. Children enjoy learning and form positive relationships with parents and other children. Data show that, whilst there was a slight decrease in the profile scores for 2011 for the achievements of children in some schools in this area, most remain above the local and national figures. Attainment for children in the lowest 20% has increased and the gap in achievement with the rest is narrowing. However, although the centre works well with some of the schools in its reach area there is little communication taking place with the co-located primary school. As a result this impacts on the centres ability to support children's transition into this school. The mental health outcomes for families with circumstances that make them vulnerable, including disabled children and those with special educational needs, looked after children and those children who are subject to a child protection plan are satisfactory.

Parents report that they have developed better relationships with their children through programmes delivered in the outreach settings. Case studies and discussions with parents provide clear evidence that having access to programmes on strengthening families helps

parents form appropriate relationships and to trust others. This enables them to better support their children's communication skills, learning and behaviour.

Sound partnership-working between health professionals and family support workers results in positive outcomes for new mothers. 'Bumps and Babies' and 'Infant Massage' sessions contribute towards early attachment and bonding with their babies. Immunisation rates are high. The designated centre midwife and trained volunteers support mothers who are breastfeeding. There are further arrangements planned to continue the focus on encouraging more mothers to breastfeed. Appropriate healthy eating programmes take place with those parents attending feeling more confident and developing their understanding of the long-term benefits of healthy eating. These programmes are supporting the centre's drive to tackle some high rates of obesity in school-age children. However, it cannot be said to be meeting the needs of all families in the reach area because the centre is focusing its work on those in most need. Safety in the home is satisfactorily supported with practical help, as well as delivery of infant first aid courses. Specialist services for promoting language and communication and behavioural management are providing some parents with appropriate skills to support their children more effectively.

All services offered in the centre appropriately help to keep users safe. The centre's positive relationships with families and their children allow staff to identify any concerns within families and intervene appropriately, often through one-to-one activities. Play sessions successfully engage parents by involving them in the running of the groups and more training for volunteers is planned. Parents contribute satisfactorily to the evaluation of the activities delivered by the centre both through the parents' forum and one-to-one discussions.

Users benefit from the support received from other service professionals who provide good and relevant information and guidance, including housing, benefits advice and debt management. The centre signposts parents to local providers and employability programmes to enable them to access help to become more work ready. As a result, some users are improving their skills to prepare them for work and are improving their life chances.

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>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>3</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>
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## **How good is the provision?**

<b>3</b>
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Staff are improving their understanding of users' needs, and targeting provision, as a result of sensitive personal contact. Overall, the assessment of individual cases is robust, and the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used successfully to ensure teams can be assembled quickly to support children and families when needs are identified. Good quality care, guidance and support provided by the centre staff and other professionals, is valued by those whose safety may be at risk as a result of domestic violence and others who, for a variety of reasons, are isolated and those who have experienced acute trauma in their lives. Parents commented how they now stop to think about the best method to adopt before dealing with difficult situations.

All interventions are child centred. Outreach activities are delivered in a range of settings across the area to better ensure families have access to services. Learning, development and enjoyment are appropriately supported through inclusive and supportive strategies to support all learners as well as a range of activities, such as 'Stay and Play'. The centre has a good outdoor play area with many elements to stimulate learning. Sessions for fathers are held monthly to engage those who are unable to attend sessions through the week. The centre's qualified teacher is currently supporting the development of staff and volunteers to improve the learning experiences and achievements of children. Feedback from some local schools includes comments on the higher levels of confidence and abilities of children who have accessed learning and development activities through the centre.

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>

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

<b>3</b>
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The management team are committed to further developing services and providing the best life chances for local children and their families. They have a clear view of the provision and know where improvements should be made. The centre recognises that more work needs to be done to monitor and evaluate the needs of the whole community to ensure the centre



has the resources, information and the data it needs to set measurable targets with clear success criteria, and to find ways to provide more services for families in this locality. The centre is already working towards improving these areas.

Through the support of the local authority the centre meets all legal requirements for safeguarding and Criminal Records Bureau checks have been carried out for all staff and volunteers. Guidance is provided to staff through a range of policies and procedures, some of which have recently been updated with local staff involvement but some require further updating. All staff and volunteers receive regular update training on safeguarding and feel confident in their knowledge of how to raise any concerns. However, systems to track cases do not have the facility to update staff when there is a gap in the continuity of support, which can lead to some families feeling unsupported. Health and safety risk assessments are satisfactory. Routine checks in the centre are recorded and dates set for further reviews. Safe recruitment is managed through the local authority's human resource management policies and procedures. Regular supervision supports the personal and professional development of staff.

Resources, including a range of good-quality play equipment, toys and books, are used effectively to encourage learning and development. There is also access to a range of accommodation across the wider reach area through schools and other community provision, for those who would otherwise be unable to access services. However, the low numbers of staff does not allow for the full use of all these resources.

The centre promotes inclusivity and tackles any discrimination appropriately. It supports some young parents and those experiencing domestic violence, often in their home on a personal basis. Contact visits take place in the centre for some families supported by a partner organisation to provide a meeting place in a safe environment to re-build contact with parents. The centre leaders continually look for new ways to reach into the local communities and include different groups. Users are treated with respect and staff increasingly use the experiences of parents in learning. As a result of its outreach activity, satisfactory outcomes for families and collaborative work with partners to develop provision the centre provides satisfactory 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>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**

Findings from the inspection were shared with the inspection team for Linden Road Primary School.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Denton Children's Centre on 8 - 9 March 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We talked with many of you, your children, staff and a wide range of partners and members of the local authority linked to the centre. We observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documents. Thank you for making us feel welcome and for taking the time to talk to us about your centre. Your views were very helpful to the inspection. Many of you told us that staff are friendly, welcoming and supportive and this has had a positive impact in improving your lives.

The main job of a centre is to ensure that all the services for children and families work together in your best interests. Your centre is doing much of this in a satisfactory way due to the reduction it has had in staffing levels. Some of the work they support is provided by their partners, such as health professionals and other organisations and is particularly bringing support closer to where you live.

Some of you told us that taking part in the centre's activities has given you the opportunity to make new friends, which has made a big difference to your lives. You have been given the opportunity to learn new skills, to access debt, benefit and housing advice and to develop your confidence, which has transformed your lives. Particularly helpful for many of you has been the support provided through programmes on developing your parenting skills, to support you to continue breastfeeding, and understand how to ensure the better safety of your children. Some of you have started to improve your future employment prospects by taking short courses.

The centre is a safe and easily accessible place where you feel listened to and respected. It offers some local services in response to your needs. The centre has some systems in place that work well. However, the current system used to track the overall progress of you and your children, when you are referred to partner agencies does not always alert the centre when a gap occurs. We have, therefore, asked the centre to look at how this might be improved.

We saw how much you and your children enjoy the activities in your homes and in other locations in which you meet, including the opportunities to play, learn and have fun together. We found that the work of the centre in supporting children to develop their communication and language skills is thorough, especially in their knowledge of letters, sounds and early writing skills. Through these observations we saw that further improvements in the learning activities would be helpful, and we have asked the centre to review how some of these sessions are designed. The centre has established good relationships with some of the local schools which helps your children be better prepared for starting school. However, relationships with one of these are not as good, and we have asked the centre to improve this, so that all children can be supported.

Your honest and frank opinions have helped us immensely during the inspection. We enjoyed meeting you and sharing your joy of learning and hearing about how you have improved the lives of your children. We wish you and your families well for the future.

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