

# Inspection report for Staghills Children's Centre

Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	362577
Inspection dates	8 – 9 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Joanne Smith HMI

Centre governance	Local authority
Centre leader	Linda Connelly
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Staghills Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	The Hedgehog Club EY317825

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.

## 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 additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the acting head of centre, senior centre staff, front-line workers, parents and carers, local authority representatives and partner agency representatives. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

This is a phase one children's centre providing the core offer. It is co-located with a maintained nursery school site in Rossendale. Services are provided to the Whitewell and Hareholme communities in Rossendale, which are in the 20% most deprived wards in the country. The centre provides a range of integrated services including: health; nursery education; on-site Early Years Foundation Stage registered day care; family support; and employment advice and support. It supports families from five local schools and takes referrals from a range of partners, self-referrals and health agencies. Outreach provision is delivered in a range of community venues within the reach area.

The acting head of centre manages the services provided by the centre and coordinates those provided by its partners. The local authority is responsible for performance management of outcomes in the centre. The Primary Care Trust and Acute Trust are responsible for its staff who provide some of their services from the centre. The strategic management and development of the centre is the responsibility of the local authority with local support and challenge from the children's centre governing body.

Within the community served by the children's centre the majority of children aged under five years are living in families dependent on workless benefits. The large majority of families are of White British heritage, with a small Asian community.

Evidence indicates that the skills and knowledge that children have when they enter Early Years Foundation Stage settings is below those expected nationally 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 users and the wider community**

2
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### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2
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## Main findings

‘Just couldn’t do enough, fantastic really’, is typical of the comments made by parents who have benefitted from the support and services offered by Staghills Children’s Centre. Children are at the heart of the centre and this is obvious in the very safe and welcoming environment it offers to them and their families. Alongside this, the centre is highly effective in taking services into community venues. This is because the centre knows the local community very well and it enables those whose circumstances have made them hard to reach access support and services.

The centre staff are highly skilled and they have a thoughtful and caring approach to their work with families. They appreciate that all families respond to and need support in different ways, and work closely with them and with other agencies. As a result, they bring about positive changes to the lives of those families. The centre is highly effective at raising aspirations in families and increasing the confidence of adults in their parenting role. This success is reflected in the number of adults who access accredited courses and subsequently move into employment, or further training to help them to support their children’s learning.

Strategic oversight of the centre is the responsibility of the local authority and this is delivered well using the lead officer and school adviser. Staff in the centre benefit from the clear and robust management structures that are understood by all. This supports a climate of evaluation and development, underpinning the centre’s good capacity to improve further. Service users are involved in the evaluation of the centre through a wide range of methods and some are on the sub-committee of the school governing body that takes a lead on children’s centre business. The centre is working hard to obtain the views of all service users, including the children in the day care and nursery provision, to bring about improvement.

Learning, development and achievement for the individual are exceptionally strong in the centre. Children in particular are nurtured and supported to learn in ways that are individually appropriate to them and as a result the gap between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and the rest is narrowing. They behave in ways that are safe, and leave the centre very well-prepared to move into the next stage of their learning. Diversity is celebrated well and the centre reflects the local and wider community in its displays and resources. Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported to attend the centre either at special support groups or those open to the community.

Extremely well-developed partnerships are central to the success of the centre and the effectiveness of work carried out to safeguard children. These have been well maintained by managers at the centre despite restructuring within some services. As a result, service users have not been adversely affected. This leads to outstanding provision and extremely positive outcomes for centre users. The very strong commitment to joint working has brought about a sharing of skills that has greatly enhanced the support that can be offered to families through the centre staff. This, coupled with the highly effective information sharing systems, means that problems experienced by some families have been prevented from escalating. The centre is less clear, however, of its impact in the immediate reach area of some aspects of its work: for example, the static childhood obesity figures, and the admissions to accident and emergency departments. This is the result of data not being provided and gathered at a local enough level.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the data used to plan and demonstrate the centre's impact by:
  - obtaining centre-specific data from partner agencies
  - developing evaluation and tracking systems in the centre to assess the longer-term impact of services and courses.

## How good are outcomes for users?

<b>1</b>
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The impact the work of the centre is having on the lives of families is extremely positive. Comments such as, 'we are proud of where we are now' and 'the centre helped me 100%' are a clear reflection of the depth of feeling held by parents. Very young children in the centre are highly confident and their behaviour and attitudes demonstrate their feelings of safety and security. This is very well supported by parents of children who are more vulnerable, for example those who have communication difficulties, who expressed high levels of confidence in the centre's ability to keep their child safe. Family activities provided in the school holidays in partnership with other Rossendale children's centres had a significant impact on the number of families referred to children's social care. There was a reported 50%

reduction compared with the same period in previous years.

Clearly-targeted campaigns, run in conjunction with health partners, have resulted in improved uptake of immunisation programmes and reduced dental cavities in young children. There has been less of a positive impact on obesity levels in young children. Despite this, the centre's concerted efforts to bring about lifestyle and diet changes in families have resulted in a growing understanding of this. Parents commented that they 'have more healthy eating for the family' as a result of attending Ready, Steady, Cook. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that the prevalence of breast feeding at six to eight weeks is improving and this is also the case in respect of increasing the number of smoke-free households. This cannot be confirmed, however, due to the limited reach specific information available to the centre.

Children who attend the day care and nursery provision make extremely good progress. They are exceptionally well prepared for school, described as, 'aspirational and ready to learn and do their job'. Adults who access learning and groups at the centre keenly use their enhanced knowledge, confidence and skills in a variety of ways. Some have gone on to gain employment, whilst others take pleasure from using the low-cost play ideas they have learned about at home with their children to strengthen their relationships. Users clearly enjoy and embrace the learning opportunities offered at the centre. Attendance on courses is good and sustained, and feedback taken at the end of courses is overwhelmingly positive, even when participants find the learning challenging. Parenting courses are having an extremely constructive impact on families. Attendance on these has, for some families, contributed to ensuring children and their parents continue to live together as a family unit.

The very strong nurturing ethos enables users to feel confident to make their views known. Some parents are members of the school governing body sub-committee that oversees the work of the children's centre and they participate fully in the evaluation and planning for the centre's development. There is a real sense of some users wanting to give something back to the community through volunteering roles and this is particularly well supported by the centre. Relationships are very strong and the work done by staff to ensure all members of the community feel welcome is very strongly demonstrated by the growing use of the centre by the small, but established, Asian community.

Early intervention work with families is a very strong feature of the centre. This is brought about by the early notification registration form completed by midwives or discussions through the Common Assessment Framework procedure. This means that families receive very timely, appropriate and well-matched support before they reach crisis points. Families who have had more intensive support at a child protection level respond well to the support and services given through the centre's work. As a result of the strong relationships they form with staff, they have a growing confidence to use the children's centre services independently and to approach its staff or partners when they recognise they need help or advice.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</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 users 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 users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How good is the provision?**

<b>1</b>
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There is a wealth of support available to centre users. This ranges from leaflets and signposting to groups or partners such as Jobcentre Plus through to intensive family work that is delivered in the family home. Support and guidance for families of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is especially strong. An example of this is the thorough work undertaken to ensure that transitions from nursery into school make the process as comfortable and seamless as possible for vulnerable children. The quality of the care, guidance and support offered to users, whatever their level of need is excellent. It is delivered in a non-judgemental way and this was commented on by parents and partner agencies alike.

There has been a very strong focus on identifying the needs of the local area and ensuring that the services on offer meet those needs in the right place at the right time. As a result, there is highly effective use of local community buildings such as schools and churches to deliver a variety of services. These include: carer and child exercise sessions such as Tatty Bumpkins; parenting classes; and ante- and post-natal classes through the Bumps, Birth and Beyond programme. Additionally, some courses and opportunities are offered in the evening or at weekends. This has resulted in more male carers accessing the centre either with their partners or their children.

The centre is rich in information for users that is delivered in attractive and easily accessible ways whilst thoughtfully taking into account the nature of the information. A large, eye-catching display around toy safety in advance of the Christmas period was carefully positioned for adults' attention, whilst information about sexual health or domestic violence is more sensitively positioned to ensure that it can be accessed

in privacy.

The centre takes referrals from a number of sources, including parents themselves. Assessment of users' individual needs at the centre is excellent. It is particularly strong in the Early Years Foundation Stage where children's learning and development opportunities are very carefully matched to individuals. The very good range of learning and development opportunities is shaped by the centre's secure knowledge of reach and local need based on their feedback from users and strategic information from partner agencies. Those who access the sessions and courses on offer at the centre are extremely positive about their experiences and often go on to access further opportunities.

The multi-agency working that takes place is highly thought of by all partners and is very much appreciated by the recipients of the support packages. The work of the centre is deeply embedded in the Common Assessment Framework process with staff often taking the lead professional role. The outreach team is credited with establishing 'green shoots' of relationships between agencies and parents who are reluctant to engage using sessions such as Chat and Chill in different venues. There are excellent strategies to ensure that all those involved with a family, including voluntary partners such as Home Start, are involved in the team around the child meetings.

Health partners are key to the centre's work in making contact with families in the reach area. The delivery of midwifery services at the centre means that parents have contact from a very early stage. Their commitment to ensuring completion of the early notification form has resulted, in some cases, in the Common Assessment Framework process being used antenatally. The early notification form has also resulted in the centre having a much clearer picture of the new pregnancies and births in the reach area and has allowed them to start to work with pregnant teenagers and teenage parents.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<b>The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The acting head of centre skilfully coordinates the work of the centre and its partners to ensure delivery of cohesive and timely support packages to vulnerable families in the reach area. Procedures to ensure the suitability of adults to work in the centre are extremely robust. This starts during the recruitment process when searching questions relating to child protection issues are asked at the interview stage. There is an extremely strong mechanism for checking and recording the identity, qualifications and suitability checks of employees, with routine renewal of Criminal Record Bureau disclosures and self-declaration suitability statements completed by staff. Volunteer and partner agency workers' details and Criminal Record Bureau disclosures are seen by the centre for added security alongside their employer or agency confirmation of suitability letters.

Very strong and robust partnership working with other agencies results in extremely well-matched packages of support for children and families. The approach to multi-agency working at the centre is excellent. They work hand-in-hand with voluntary and statutory partners to deliver well-planned sessions and courses in a range of outreach venues across the reach area. The centre also shares resources locally such as use of the grounds to deliver Forest Schools learning, or the allotment to grow and share produce with families. This illustrates the centre's ability to deliver services that are very good value for money. The outreach team are very active in their work and are vital to the centre's success. Their obvious commitment to improving the lives of children and their families shows in the way they so willingly share and develop their skills and knowledge with other agencies. This is something that partners are highly appreciative of. There are very strong links with the domestic violence team through the extended services manager's regular attendance at the Multi-agency Risk Assessment Committee meetings. This means that the centre is aware of and can support families who are at risk in a sensitive and timely way in an attempt to prevent escalation.

The community served by the centre is not a diverse one. The centre is keenly aware of this and has worked hard to engage families, particularly those from the small Asian community, in centre life. Resources and displays have a good range of representation of diversity in the wider community, and males in caring roles. Inclusion of all is embedded in the work of the centre. Parents of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities feel especially well supported making comments such as, 'without help from the children's centre I wouldn't have got through'.

There is a clear management structure in the centre that is understood by all. There is an obvious expectation from managers that the highest quality service will be delivered at the centre with children and families being the main priority. Staff have regular and relevant professional supervision that has strong links to the centre development plan. There are clear links between strategic planning and service delivery. This, coupled with the robust local support and challenge from the governing body sub-committee leads to good governance and accountability in the



centre.

The centre development plan is based on solid knowledge of strategic and local need. Analysis of local need is strong. Staff, partners' and governors' views along with service users' evaluations are used to shape service delivery. The centre is particularly good at talking to children and obtaining their views. The centre uses what data it has well in its planning and evaluation cycle. However, some of the data available to the centre is too wide-ranging. In addition, the centre's own evaluations of the impact of services over a longer period are limited to a small number of services. This lessens the acting head of centre's ability to demonstrate and build on any success the centre has.

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 extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community</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>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>1</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision</b>	<b>2</b>

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Staghills Children's Centre on 8 and 9 December 2010. We judged the centre as good overall.

We found that your children's centre provides a very safe and welcoming environment for families to go to for outstanding care, guidance and support. The agencies involved in supporting and guiding families with young children work extremely well together at the centre. Their staff are skilled at recognising when a family is in need of help. They are very good at planning and providing individual programmes of support to help those families through their difficulties. Those of you we spoke to said that this work is making a positive difference to their families.

The centre works extremely hard to improve how well the children are doing when they start school. The information they have is that this is working extremely well and children who might otherwise struggle are doing as well as they possibly can. Centre staff are also working hard to improve the health of children and their families through activities such as promoting breastfeeding. They are also working with you to reduce the number of children who have to go to hospital because they have been injured either by accident or on purpose. They do not know how well they are doing with this because the information they have covers all of the local authority. We have asked the local authority and its partners to give the centre better information so that they know how successful the work they are doing is. We have also asked the acting head of centre to find out how much difference the courses and groups that you attend at the centre continue to make over a longer period of time. This will help her to see how well the centre is doing.

We spoke to people who work with the centre, such as Home Start. We found that the way the centre works with other agencies involved with children and their families is excellent. It means that the centre can provide a very good range of activities and support to you. They do this very well, using community buildings such as churches and schools. They do this because they know that it can be difficult for you to get to the Staghills Children's Centre building. This also means that the centre is doing its best to provide services that are good value for money.

The acting head of centre is good at finding out what you like about the centre and how you think it could be better. She uses this information well to plan what services and courses to offer in the future. We saw that parents and children who go to courses and sessions at the centre enjoy them very much. Some parents we spoke to told us that attending courses has helped them to become better parents. Other parents told us that the centre has helped them through particularly difficult times and some have become volunteers or have got a job.

We found that the centre is welcoming to all members of your community. We found that a lot of work has been done to find out where families with young children live and to make sure that they know about the centre. We were pleased that some sessions are arranged in the evening or at weekends when dads find it easier to attend with their children.

Thank you very much for your welcome and talking to us. We enjoyed listening to what you had to say and wish you all 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).