

# Inspection report for Whiteleigh Children's Centre

Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	325256
Inspection dates	2–3 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Mark Lindfield HMI

Centre governance	The Governing Body of Wood View Learning Community
Centre leader	Ruth Simpson
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school, if applicable	Whiteleigh Community Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Whiteleigh Wise Owls Nursery

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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 maintained nursery 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 of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with representatives of Wood View Learning Community's full governing body, the centre's management and advisory boards, the local authority, partnership agencies, members of staff and users of the centre.

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

## Information about the centre

Whitleigh Children's Centre is located within the Wood View Learning Community, a federation which also includes a secondary school, a primary school and a centre for young parents located on a campus in north Plymouth. There is one governing body for all the provision other than for The Centre for Young Parents and a campus director is responsible for promoting collaboration between the various partners. The Children's Centre is managed by the campus on behalf of Plymouth City Council.

The centre's designated Early Years Foundation Stage childcare provider, Wise Owls Nursery, is managed through Wood View Learning Community. Wise Owls Nursery provides a breakfast club, an after-school club and a holiday club operating 50 weeks a year. Wise Owls Nursery was previously inspected on 18 November 2009 and was not inspected as part of this coordinated inspection.

The centre's Early Years Foundation Stage education for children aged 4 to 5 years is provided by Whitleigh Community Primary School. This provision was inspected in a coordinated inspection, which found that children's attainment on entry into Reception is very varied, although for many it is much lower than that expected for

their age, particularly in their speech and language and emotional development. The report for this inspection is available separately on the Ofsted website.

Whitleigh children’s centre is a phase one centre and provides the full core offer of integrated childcare and early learning, health, family support, outreach, Jobcentre Plus and childminder network. It serves a deprived socioeconomic area which includes the second highest number of vulnerable families in the North West of the city and the highest proportion of parents or carers who are mentally ill or depressed. The proportion of families receiving benefits, including those relating to worklessness, is the highest in the locality. The large majority of families are White British.

The acting children’s centre manager is covering during the secondment of the permanent manager to the local authority until the end of the year.

## 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**

3
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### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3
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## Main findings

The centre provides satisfactory outcomes for users overall and in the majority of areas. The current acting manager has reacted quickly to improve the centre’s safeguarding arrangements. Staff recruitment procedures have improved and all appropriate checks are completed prior to appointment. The full board of governors have adopted a common safeguarding policy across the Wood View Learning Community. This year, senior leaders have introduced formal recording procedures where there are child protection concerns and trained staff in the use of the Common Assessment Framework. Currently, despite improvements, safeguarding is inadequate because these procedures are not consistently applied by all staff.

The managing body has recently reorganised and provides a satisfactory focus on the work of children’s centre. This reorganisation has resulted in clearer roles and lines of responsibilities for the governing body, management board and advisory boards with parent representatives. However, these recent changes have not yet had time to provide sufficient monitoring, challenge and support to raise outcomes for all users. The centre has worked hard by varying timings and location of meetings, to

improve parental attendance at Parents' Forums, but this remains low. As a result, parents and carers are not fully involved in influencing and shaping the centre's services.

The centre's provision is satisfactory and is inclusive and equally welcoming to all. Planning of activities and events is thorough and includes clear objectives using a common format across the centre. Particularly well-planned outdoor Forest School activities also include details of the learning and development that children will make. Parents and carers are regularly expected to evaluate their involvement and provide comments about the activity. Where these comments and evaluations provide specific information, the centre is more able to adapt services to meet users' needs and increase participation rates. For example, the centre has made good adaptations for adults who are keen to participate in literacy and numeracy courses. They are able to choose from a range of times and their attendance is encouraged by a crèche facility on site.

The numbers of users accessing the centre is satisfactory overall, but attendance across the sessions and activities varies. Activities aimed specifically at groups such as fathers and young parents show regular or increased take-up by users. The centre has clear action plans aimed at adapting services to more closely meet the needs of vulnerable groups of users in the area. Targeting of services is effective where more accurate data and information from the local authority have provided a clear picture of local needs. Precise local health data have led to a more proactive and successful approach from health workers in raising the number of referrals to smoking cessation support services. The centre is making increasing use of its data on the numbers of adults accessing the centre's services to evaluate its engagement of vulnerable groups of users.

The centre works satisfactorily in close partnership with a range of other agencies to provide an inclusive environment. Staff are sensitive to the needs of parents and carers and work diligently to ensure that all groups of adults and children are made to feel welcome. Partnerships across the Early Years Foundation Stage and with key staff help to ensure that children make good progress in their learning and development. The Parent Support Advisor from the primary school works closely with staff from the centre to support parents' involvement in their child's education and to refer parents to the centre's services. Health partners provide midwifery and health clinics based at the centre and work alongside centre staff to support families. Links with infant and child mental health agencies provide support for parents and carers to improve their emotional well-being. However, the local authority recognises that partnerships with some financial support services and with employment and careers advice are less well developed to meet the needs of the local community.

The centre's satisfactory self evaluation is based on a range of information, including their own data, and includes the views of staff and users. Priorities identified in the centre's development plan are aimed at targeting services at the more vulnerable groups of the community. There are improvements in areas where the centre has previously targeted its actions, specifically in providing for young parents and

fathers. In bringing about these improvements the centre's leaders and managers demonstrate a satisfactory capacity to make further improvements and raise outcomes for users.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement ;

- Ensure that all staff consistently and methodically record safeguarding concerns to ensure that vulnerable individuals are rigorously protected.
- Identify and implement ways to increase participation rates, especially for more vulnerable groups of users in the local area.
- With local authority support, use evaluations from all partners to shape services and in particular to improve outcomes in all areas for groups facing challenging circumstances.
- Increase parental representation on the Parents' Forum groups to more effectively evaluate and shape the centre's services and provision.

## How good are outcomes for users?

<b>3</b>
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Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage gain a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. Children are encouraged to join in with healthy cooking sessions. Parents and carers said they felt more confident to cook at home as a result of attending the centre's healthy eating 'Big Cook, Little Cook' sessions. They report that it has changed the way they shop to include healthy food. Trips to the dental school have helped parents and carers to register with the dentist and encouraged good dental hygiene. There is a strong emphasis in the Nursery and Reception classes on the all-round care and welfare of children. Staff and babies of young parents attending the Centre for Young Parents are able to share facilities with the Nursery.

Centre outreach workers complete a number of home safety checks and organise professionals to make the home safe and provide safety equipment such as fireguards and safety gates. Staff take care to maintain good security, with clear signing-in procedures for both areas. Premises are well maintained and secure and children and users show that they feel safe in the centre. Parents and carers facing challenging circumstances find the centre a safe environment to discuss sensitive issues. Staff training has improved their record keeping of any child protection concerns and in their use of the common assessment framework, but these procedures are not yet carried out consistently by all members of staff. Consequently, the centre's safeguarding arrangements lack sufficient rigour and do not provide sufficient protection for vulnerable children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities or others requiring child protection plans.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are developing their basic skills well and

their achievement is good. Children enjoy sessions playing with treasure baskets alongside adult family members, which led to good discussions between adults and staff. The centre provides valuable advice to parents with young babies. A number of adults make progress in developing their parenting skills through the support and advice of centre staff. Adults attending literacy courses demonstrate good improvement in their educational development. During these sessions they can focus on their studies confident that their children are well looked after in the crèche in an adjoining room. Parents and carers who attend report that their engagement with the centre is enjoyable. This was particularly noticeable as they laughed together as they made decorations from natural materials gathered outdoors in the snow.

Centre staff provide support for families to complete forms and applications linked to finance, benefits and job vacancies. They have formed good links with local housing to provide support for some families facing difficulties with accommodation or finances. The centre has reacted to the cessation of links with Money Advice to ensure that centre staff have been trained to provide financial support and advice for families. The centre is aware that there is an increasing demand for these services from a significant proportion of local families. Newly developed links with the Citizens Advice Bureau has helped families facing challenging circumstances.

*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>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>4</b>
<b>The extent to which all users 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 users 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 are developing economic stability and independence including access to training</b>	<b>3</b>

## How good is the provision?

3

In partnership with providers of adult education, the centre is able to offer a wide range of training and courses, including money management, cooking and home skills, first aid and preparation for employment. The centre makes good provision for adults to access adult literacy and numeracy courses. Parental evaluations have been used to modify session times to suit families and the provision of a crèche ensures that parents with young children can access these services. Parents' and carers' achievements are celebrated and this encourages them to further develop their skills. One parent was proud to share that they had been awarded a certificate by the centre. Another parent on completing a literacy course had gained the necessary confidence to undertake a higher qualification.

Adults are regularly involved in evaluating services and record their comments on evaluation trees. These evaluations have been used effectively to increase or maintain participation rates for a number of activities. For example, young parents have had the confidence to ask for presentations and activities. However, parental and carers' contributions to decision making and in shaping the services is more limited, despite the centre's efforts to invite parents and carers to attend.

The centre provides an inclusive environment and is sensitive to the needs of parents with children who have specific needs. It provides a non-judgemental environment for parents to meet with other parents and carers. It takes care to listen to young parents and provides a service adapted to their needs. Some parents and carers who speak English as an additional language are provided with access to interpreters during visits to the midwife. Close links between the primary school, nursery and the children's centre result in staff being able to work together to support reticent or vulnerable parents. For example, links with the school's parent support worker help adults to improve their involvement in their child's education and to access the centre's services. These partnerships help children to make a smooth transition between schools and across the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The centre's early years teacher works with school staff to plan and assess children's learning and development. Staff in the nursery have been supported to make detailed observations of children's learning journeys. Activities at the centre have increased the opportunities for parents and carers to share their child's achievements at home. Parents and carers appreciate learning how readily available resources can be turned into fun and exciting play opportunities.

The centre's outreach staff make links with a number of agencies to support users in times of crisis. Parents and carers are helped to resolve problems with housing and accommodation through the centre's links with local housing officers. Adults are provided with further support through links with the Salvation Army and can access support and advice. There is evidence that the centre's care, guidance and support are making a discernible difference for some families. The centre is looking to



develop partnerships to support routes into employment and improve the economic stability for the high proportion of users in the local area receiving benefits.

*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>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community</b>	<b>3</b>

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

**3**

Governance and accountability arrangements have been revised and a clear structure is now in place. Governors know the staff and local community well and have a sound understanding of the strengths and areas for development. The reorganisation provides separate management and advisory boards that are focused more closely on the interests and development of the children's centre. These arrangements have provided governors with clearer roles and defined their responsibilities so that they provide satisfactory support and challenge.

The senior leadership team and other leaders are motivated to seek further improvement. Leaders and managers know the centre's strengths and areas for development and are keen to meet the needs of the local community. They are beginning to make greater use of the data and information supplied by the local authority regarding the precise groups of users in the local area. This information is used increasingly to evaluate the centre's effectiveness and ensure that the centre provides satisfactory value for money. Partnership working with local schools ensures that children with special educational needs are well supported and that they make smooth transition from school to school. The centre's promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory; partnerships with a number of agencies, including with adult education and health professionals, provide additional opportunities and have a discernible impact on improving outcomes for a range of users.

The acting manager and deputy manager of the children's centre have brought several improvements to the centre's systems and procedures. Safeguarding arrangements introduced in April this year have improved the centre's recruitment procedures, recording systems and use of the common assessment framework. There are well-organised procedures in place to check staff's suitability to work with children. Despite these improvements, safeguarding is inadequate because these systems are not consistently applied by all staff at the centre.

The two separate areas within the campus building provide suitable accommodation for the activities on offer. In addition the centre has looked to provide a greater range of services by making use of other accommodation in the community. They currently make use of the campus library and local Salvation Army Hall to extend the activities on offer.

*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 extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</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>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>4</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>3</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>3</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>3</b>

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

The inspection of the children's centre was informed by the findings of the inspection of Wise Owls Nursery in November 2009. This inspection found that children in the Nursery's Early Years Foundation Stage made good progress in all areas and that the Nursery provided good education and support for children.

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected Whitleigh Children's Centre on 2 and 3 December 2010. We judged the centre to be satisfactory overall. Despite a number of positive features, we judged the centre's safeguarding arrangements to be inadequate. The centre manager has made a number of improvements and ensures that new members of staff have thorough checks before they start work at the centre. However, the centre's procedures to ensure children's welfare are not used consistently by all staff.

Children who attend the Early Years Nursery and Primary schools make good progress in their learning and personal development. They are well looked after and staff provide them with interesting activities and take care to ensure that they can play and learn happily. Close links between the school and staff at the centre help to make sure that all children, including those children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, learn and develop well. The school's Parent Support Advisor helps to point you to the centre's activities.

The centre is able to provide you with a range of activities that help you and your children to develop. The centre links well with adult education providers to help a number of you to complete a wide range of courses, including English and mathematics qualifications. These courses help you to feel more positive about yourselves and also help some of you to gain higher qualifications. However, the centre's partnerships with other agencies are not as well developed and we have asked the centre and local authority to work together to improve these partnerships.

We found that the centre welcomes in a range of adults from your local area. It is trying hard to work with groups who do not normally take part. We noticed that activities on offer at the centre vary in their popularity. We noticed that a number of you enjoyed the Forest School and the baby physical play sessions, but that other sessions are not so well supported. We feel that the centre provides good support to young parents and fathers and helps them to learn, develop and gain qualifications. However, there are a number of groups in the local area that do not come to the centre. We have asked the centre to do more to increase the numbers of adults who attend the centre's activities and services.

We would like to thank those of you who spared the time to speak with us and were willing to share your thoughts about the centre. You recognise that the centre has helped you to improve your lives. In return we know that the centre would appreciate your support in attending Parent Forum meetings and helping the centre to improve their work.

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