

Inspection report for Fleetwood Children's Centre

Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	362588
Inspection dates	1 – 2 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Jean Kendall HMI

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Richard Kerans
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	NA
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	YTOTS Nursery, EY285518 Flakefleet Satellite Centre, EY355676

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 early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with senior managers and staff, advisory board members, health care professionals, childminders, representatives from a wide range of partner agencies, outreach and family support workers, local authority representatives, volunteers and groups of parents and carers. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Fleetwood was designated a Phase 1 Children's Centre on 13 July 2005. It is a former Sure Start Local Programme which has been operating in the area since August 2002. It serves a community that experiences relatively high levels of social and economic disadvantage, including ten Super Output Areas. The reach area includes 828 children living in the Pharos, Mount and Park wards. The remaining area of Fleetwood is covered by West View Children's Centre which opened in September 2006. These centres are managed as one operational unit with all staff and managers working across the combined areas. All services and activities are available to all Fleetwood families. Cleveleys and Poulton-Le-Fylde Centres opened in 2010 and are under the same management. Governance is through a federated advisory board that has broad representation from partner agencies, parents and carers and the voluntary sector.

The centre provides the full core offer including childcare and early learning, family support and health and childminder network support. A Jobcentre Plus lone parent adviser is located in the centre, supporting parents into employment and providing financial advice. A 56 place nursery for children from birth to five years operates from the same building and provides the commissioned childcare for the centre. The nursery is part of a registered charity, managed by a committee working in partnership with Sure Start. It was last inspected in June 2010. The centre provides crèche facilities at Flakefleet Satellite Centre located at Flakefleet Primary School. This provision was inspected in November 2009. Most children enter early education

with knowledge and skills that are below expectations for their age. Inspection reports for the childcare provisions can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

The population of Fleetwood is predominantly White British. A small proportion of families are from minority ethnic groups, many of whom live in the area temporarily whilst they complete courses at the Nautical College. There is a higher than average level of unemployment following the decline of the local tourist trade and fishing industry.

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

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Fleetwood Children’s Centre provides good quality services. It has some outstanding features. Outcomes are good overall, with particular strengths in the well-being, learning and personal development of adult users. Outcomes for children in the main commissioned childcare setting are satisfactory and improving. Provision across the full range of services is good overall with excellent care and support to families facing difficulties. The centre manager provides excellent leadership and is very well supported by an established and experienced leadership team and staff. Parents and carers were keen to share their positive experiences with inspectors, stating for example, ‘there is always a lot of interesting things to do’ and commenting that their children have ‘come on in leaps and bounds’.

The centre is welcoming, highly inclusive and very much at the heart of its community. Extremely thorough safeguarding procedures mean that all users feel very safe, secure and well supported. Parents and carers make an excellent contribution to the centre’s work and rightly take pride in their achievements. They have a strong voice on the advisory board and take full advantage of the many courses and education opportunities available. Volunteers add greatly to childcare and family services as well as developing their own skills. The active childminding network supports good outcomes for both adults and children.

Centre managers take every opportunity to reach out into the community, publicise services and involve a wide range of groups in planning and evaluating provision.

The innovative 'participatory appraisal' approach is highly effective in engaging the community in meaningful consultations. Centre staff and parent volunteers can regularly be found in communal areas with their eye-catching posters and post-its! The resulting evaluation reports have prompted several improvements to services and are guiding work to engage harder to reach groups.

Centre staff have high levels of professional expertise and provide good quality services to meet the needs of the local community. Provision is enhanced through highly effective partnership working with health, children's social care, childminders and Jobcentre Plus. The on-site Jobcentre Plus adviser provides excellent support and advice to help adults into employment and in managing finances. As one parent wrote '(the advice) has been invaluable when I really didn't know where else to turn.'

Liaison with local schools is at varying stages and is most effective with those schools with representatives on the advisory board. However, childcare and school settings do not have a consistent approach to transferring information to ensure children build on what they know and understand or to evaluate the impact of the pre-school provisions. Partnership working with the commissioned childcare provider is developing through the support of the qualified teacher employed by the centre. As a result, the satisfactory Early Years Foundation Stage provision in the setting is steadily improving. Partners recognise the need to bring about further improvements, particularly in using assessment consistently to plan the next steps in children's learning and development.

The local authority provides good support and robust challenge through regular monitoring visits, good quality monitoring reports and comprehensive data sets. Monitoring approaches are constantly evolving and improving although the volume of information currently contained in the data-set makes it difficult to discern key messages easily.

Leadership and management are outstanding in the key areas of safeguarding, governance, the use of self-evaluation, partnership working and the engagement of parents and carers. Staff have a high level of professional expertise and partners collaborate effectively to secure improving outcomes for service users. Centre leaders recognise where further improvement is needed, for example in improving the quality of childcare provision. These strengths secure good capacity for sustained improvement in provision and outcomes.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

For the local authority:

- Further rationalise data so that it provides a succinct overview of key measures, trends and benchmarks against which the centre can evaluate strengths and

identify development areas.

For the centre:

- Develop transition arrangements and transfer of information between early years settings and schools to secure continuity in children's learning and enable the centre to evaluate the longer term impact of provision on children's achievement.
- Build on the partnership working with the commissioned childcare setting so as to accelerate improvement.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Good or improving outcomes for all groups are supported by the centre's inclusive approach. Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are effectively supported so they make good gains in their learning and well-being across all outcomes areas.

Partners work effectively together to ensure that health outcomes continue to improve as midwifery services are reorganised. The initiation of breastfeeding has significantly increased with good peer support from 'Star Buddies' and health trainers. A range of services and activities provided by the childcare settings, various baby clinics and groups, and 'wiggle and jiggle' classes have a positive impact on children's health. There is a high take-up of vaccinations in the locality and the percentage of obese children in Reception classes is reducing, although still above average. There is a strong focus on the promotion of health and safety in the home, effectively supported by home visits from health visitors, family support workers and the outreach team. The promotion of smoke free homes shows some success, although smoking cessation remains a high priority for the centre.

Parents, carers and children say they feel extremely safe at the centre and confident to share information with staff. There are well-established lines of communication and highly effective integrated working between professionals enabling them to make an excellent contribution to improving the safety and well-being of children in the home. Families with child protection plans are well known and receive outstanding integrated support to keep children safe. Use of the common assessment framework (CAF) is well established with partners cooperating effectively to provide timely intervention which helps prevent difficulties escalating. The incidence of children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents is low and the rate of children's emergency admission to hospital is lower than the district average.

Children make satisfactory progress in the nursery setting. The most recent assessments indicate that achievement is steadily rising with support from the centre's speech and language therapist and qualified teacher. Children's language skills develop well in the 'Chatterbox' sessions run by the therapist. Children thoroughly enjoy the various stay and play activities and crèche facilities, where staff are knowledgeable and have a secure understanding of how to raise children's

achievement across all areas of learning. The active childminder network also makes an excellent contribution to children’s learning and development by providing childminders with good quality professional development.

There are indications from one local school that children who have accessed the centre’s childcare provision go on to make good progress in the school setting, with an increasing percentage gaining at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scales, with six or more points in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development. The gap between the lowest achieving and the rest is being reduced. However, there are no systems to measure long-term outcomes in other school settings. Children’s outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile in the area as a whole are below average.

In all the early years provisions there is a strong emphasis on promoting positive behaviour and constructive relationships. Children are excellently behaved because their personal, social and emotional development is extremely well supported. Adult users of the centre have very positive and mutually respectful relationships with staff and with each other. They make an excellent contribution to the centre’s work through a whole range of initiatives as well through governance and in decision-making.

The well coordinated support for adult users makes an excellent contribution to the economic stability of families. For example, the ‘Start Now’ employment project has helped over 200 adults into employment and further education or training. The many volunteers engaged in the active volunteer programme have made significant gains in their personal development and achieved qualifications which have helped them develop skills and move into employment. Children’s skills are developing satisfactorily and school settings report that children are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	1
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	2

How good is the provision?

2

Good quality services and excellent care, guidance and support for families in difficulty are promoted through strong partnership working. Many parents and carers speak of the 'invaluable support' they have received in financial management, parenting, and to promote health and well-being. They know they can turn to the centre when they are most in need and receive constructive advice and guidance. The support is seamless, with centre staff and partners working collaboratively to ensure that needs are met in the most effective way. Families' needs are thoroughly assessed through first contact visits and subsequent visits to the centre.

The centre provides well for children and families who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Representatives from the Wyre Special Kidz support group report good levels of support to facilitate their regular meetings and good access to services for children under five. The childcare provisions provide well for children with a range of special needs although the assessment and early identification of additional needs has rightly been identified by centre leaders as a priority for further development.

There is a wide range of adult learning opportunities resulting in qualifications and support into employment. The highly successful 'Start Now' programme has helped many into employment and 60% of volunteers have achieved a NVQ childcare qualification within 12 months. Childminders have access to good quality training and courses which extend their own learning as well as improve the quality of provision for children. The positive impact of this is indicated by the fact that the proportion of childminders judged to be providing good and outstanding care is increasing. Parents also report very positive outcomes from a range of parenting courses, health visits, family support and the stay and play sessions.

Children gain from the many sessions run by the centre, including good speech and language support and the highly enjoyable 'wiggle and jiggle' sessions. The nursery is steadily building on the satisfactory provision and developing assessment. The introduction of new tracker systems support staff in accurately assessing what children can do and planning next steps in their learning. However, assessment information is not passed to other settings and schools. Centre staff make best use of the outdoor play area, but it does not currently enable children to learn across all areas outdoors.

Services meet the needs of users and the wider community well because staff go to great lengths to gain their views about the quality of services provided and any gaps. Activities are well attended, with registrations and attendance rates increasing year on year. Centre staff make good use of attendance data to review provision for the hardest to reach groups such as dads and the transient ethnic minority population. These groups are under represented despite the centre's highly inclusive approach

and plans are under review.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	2
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

The centre is very effectively led and managed by an able senior team. Governance and accountability arrangements are strong at all levels. The advisory board is well informed and has an in-depth understanding of local need and the centre's priorities. Parents and carers have strong representation on the board, and together with the broad range of partners, they provide good levels of challenge and support. Strategic planning is based on thorough self-evaluation involving all staff and partners. It is supported by clearly understood line management procedures, good quality professional supervision and a strong emphasis on training and professional development. As a result, staff are able to develop and use their professional expertise to best effect.

The constructive partnership working means that families receive fully integrated services. Family Support and Outreach workers liaise effectively with social care, health, Jobcentre Plus (JCP) and voluntary partners to ensure families at risk or facing challenging circumstances receive support tailored to their needs. This helps to ensure children are kept safe and adults at risk receive the support they need. Good quality training and regular updates ensure that all staff are fully aware of safeguarding and child protection procedures. Many parents reported the positive effects of this 'joined up' support stating for example, 'I didn't know where to turn and they helped me get back on my feet' and 'when we had to leave the home because of violence they helped me find somewhere to live and sorted out my claims'.

Many parents and carers also commented on the positive impact of parenting courses, saying they: 'feel like a better parent' and they 'get praised all the time for good manners'. The robust safeguarding procedures, including exemplary recruitment and site safety checks ensure that centre users are kept safe at the centre.

Equality and diversity are actively promoted in all aspects of the centre's work.

Services and activities are well signposted and group sessions are very well attended. Users are very influential in shaping services because they are engaged in meaningful consultation and evaluation through 'participatory appraisal' approaches. Staff go to great lengths to reach out into the community and ensure the needs of all are known and met in the centre and through outreach work. All groups are made welcome at the centre and there are good strategies in place to engage those who are under represented such as 'dads' and the transient ethnic minority population. Every effort is made to ensure that families from ethnic minority groups receive language support where needed. The centre is fully accessible for children with disabilities and all activities are inclusive. The soft play and sensory rooms are fully used and provide opportunities for family interactions.

Overall, resources are managed very well to engage the most vulnerable groups and secure staff training and development. Outcomes for adults engaging with the centre and for families facing challenging circumstances are excellent. Outcomes for children in the commissioned nursery provision are satisfactory and improving. Outcomes for children in the centre's activities and services for children are good. Value for money is good overall with a strong emphasis on the development of sustainable services.

These are the grades for leadership and management<

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood	1
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	1
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	1
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	1

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

Information from the most recent Ofsted inspections of YTOTS Nursery, EY285518 and Flakefleet Satellite Centre, EY355676 have been taken into account when writing about early years provision and outcomes for children.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the Fleetwood centre on 1 and 2 December. We judged your centre as good overall. It has some outstanding features, including many aspects of leadership and partnership working. You make an excellent contribution to the work of the centre.

During our visit, we looked at the centre's plans and documents and talked with a number of you and the professionals who work with you. Many of you told us how much you enjoy the activities provided through the centre. You told us that staff are friendly and give you excellent support. We agree with you. Fleetwood Centre is highly inclusive and welcoming of families from all the different parts of the community. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported in the various childcare provisions.

The centre does some things exceptionally well. All the professionals from different agencies work closely together to make sure you receive the right advice and support. Families facing difficult times receive excellent support. Many of you told us of the excellent advice and guidance you have received to help you into work and manage finances. We found that families facing particular difficulties receive excellent practical and emotional support.

You play a most important part in the work of centre and make an excellent contribution. We were very impressed by the positive and supportive relationships you have with one another and with your children. You take full advantage of the opportunities you have to give your views, evaluate services and take part in decision-making. This has ensured that the centre provides services that meet your needs. It also means that activities are well attended and resources are used fully.

You take full advantage of the many adult courses and education opportunities that are available. We found that volunteers add greatly to childcare and family services as well as developing their own skills and qualifications. The active childminding network, with its good quality training, similarly helps to improve outcomes for both adults and children.

The centre makes an excellent contribution to keep children safe and protected. There are extremely thorough procedures in place to safeguard everyone who uses the centre. Children are very well behaved as they explore their learning environment. You told us that you feel confident to approach staff for support and discuss any issues. The strong focus on promoting health and safety in the home and community is also having a positive impact on children's well-being.

The centre makes a good contribution to improving families' health. Professionals are working effectively together to make sure that good quality support continues as midwifery support is reorganised. A range of activities provided by the childcare settings, various baby clinics and groups, and the thoroughly enjoyable 'wiggle and jiggle' classes have a positive impact on children's health.

Children's educational achievement in the nursery is satisfactory and improving. Partners are working together to improve the quality of this provision further. Children make good gains in their learning in the stay and play and chatterbox sessions and crèche facilities. Childminders in the area provide good quality services and are welcomed at all activities.

There is effective liaison between the centre and those schools with representatives on the advisory board. However, childcare and school settings do not have a consistent approach to transferring information to ensure children continue to build on their knowledge and skills.

The centre manager provides excellent leadership and is very well supported by an established and experienced leadership team and staff. Leadership and management are outstanding in many key areas. Staff have a high level of professional expertise and partners collaborate effectively to secure improving outcomes for service users. Centre leaders know where further improvement is needed, for example, in improving the quality of childcare provision. These strengths secure good capacity to further improve provision and outcomes.

There are two things that we have asked centre leaders to work on.

- Develop transition arrangements and transfer of information between early years settings and schools to secure continuity in children's learning and enable the centre to evaluate the longer term impact of provision on children's achievement.
- Build on the partnership working with the commissioned childcare setting so as to accelerate improvement.

We have also asked the local authority to provide the centre with more succinct data to help it in evaluating key strengths and areas for development against national benchmarks.

Thank you very much for your welcome and openness with inspectors. We thoroughly enjoyed talking with you and sampling the centre's work. We wish you every success in the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.