

# Inspection report for Douglas Valley Children's Centre

Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	362468
Inspection dates	1 – 2 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Chanan Tomlin

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Catherine Ardern
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Douglas Valley Early Years Centre and Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Douglas Valley Day Care and Out of School provision

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.

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 two additional inspectors.

The inspectors visited a range of provision across the centre. They also held meetings with senior managers from the centre, parents, members of the advisory board and a number of partners including health and education professionals. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Douglas Valley Children's Centre provides early years provision and childcare services for children aged 0–11 years and children's centre services for families including early years provision for three to four-year-olds, full day care for up to three-year-olds and out-of-school care for 3–11-year-olds. The centre serves a reach area which covers 12 super output areas and is diverse in the levels of prosperity. Five super output areas are classed as being in the 0–30% most deprived. The most recent data available indicate that 23% of children aged up to four years live in households dependent on workless benefits. The majority of families within the reach are White British; currently 10% of children under five registered with the centre are non-White British/Irish. Achievement data for children at the end of the pre-school year indicate that 99% of children make satisfactory or better progress with 84% making good progress.

Long-standing partnerships are in place with local health professionals including midwives and health visitors, both of whom deliver universal services from the centre. The centre also works in partnership with speech and language therapists, the local authority quality and inclusion team and other multi-agency teams such as Action for Children, to provide an integrated approach to the education, health and

welfare of young children. The centre continues to work in partnership with local schools and other community groups within the reach area through the newly-established management and governance arrangements of a collaborative leadership committee.

## 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

Douglas Valley Children’s Centre meets the needs of users well and provides good support for children and families. It is well led and managed and provides high quality activities for children and families. Outcomes for users are good. Multi-agency partnerships are strong and particularly responsive to meeting the needs of families. The centre provides a good range of services that are effectively raising the knowledge of parents and carers about healthy lifestyles and keeping their children safe.

Support for new mothers is excellent and is provided through regular midwifery clinics and facilities that are fit for purpose. The centre is an inclusive setting and provides well for a wide range of users, so promoting equality of opportunity effectively. It provides good support to vulnerable families and children, and those who need support in times of crisis, through close multi-agency partnerships. Fathers are well supported and motivated through ‘Dad’s and Kids’ Science’ sessions and the centre arranges activities at weekends in order to encourage working parents to attend. The centre disseminates information about benefits, activities and services available in the community. However, the information centre is not readily accessible.

The centre is outstanding in the ways that it promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users. It provides a wide range of activities that are geared towards all members of the family unit. Parents and carers greatly enjoy and make good use of opportunities to socialise, receive guidance and learn about child-rearing. Parents improve their literacy and numeracy skills through activities that also help their children to develop highly effective skills for their future learning. By the end of the Reception Year, most children have made at least good progress

across the areas of learning, with particularly rapid improvement in their personal and communication skills. Evidence shows that the children's centre is making a very positive difference for the children whose families use it. As a result of learning alongside their children, many parents also improve their confidence and skills markedly. A number of them have become volunteers and have then gone on to further training and employment. However, the centre does not have a systematic approach to evaluating the impact of its work in this respect. Support for teenage parents is good and delivered through an effective link worker and health professionals.

The ways in which the centre assesses the individual needs of children and their parents are good. These make a significant contribution to ensuring that outcomes for children and families are good. However, it has not as yet developed a robust system to regularly collect and analyse evidence that will help evaluate the impact of the centre's work. Parents and carers value the range of provision that the centre offers and speak very highly of staff and the activities offered. Staff listen to what parents and carers say, whether formally through the parents forum, through written feedback from participants, or informally. This information is used well to plan future activities. Parents are offered information about employment opportunities. However, most are unaware of this facility and attend the local Jobcentre instead.

A collaborative leadership committee was established in May 2010. Members include the head of the centre, headteachers and governors from schools in the reach area and representatives from the local community including the link midwife. The committee meets termly and all members are involved in making strategic decisions. This governing committee, although inexperienced, has a clear vision for the future. The parents' forum provides an effective for involving the community in identifying priorities and shaping developments.

Staff have a good understanding of child protection procedures, are well trained and share their concerns with each other. As a result, the safety of those who use the centre's facilities is ensured. Centre users and parents and carers of children who attend the early years provision unanimously feel that they and their children are safe at the centre. They are unanimous in the praise that they have for the centre and its staff.

The centre has strong partnerships with the local authority, other agencies (particularly health services) and with parents. Staff are proactive in identifying, developing and implementing services that support families and the community. The centre is reaching out to more and more people each year. It demonstrates good capacity for sustained improvement because its actions result in greatly improved outcomes for increasing numbers of families and children.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Develop data collection procedures to ensure that the services provided are appropriate and to further promote the use of the services.
- Improve and develop accessibility to the information centre.
- Advertise, develop and evaluate the effectiveness of the advisory service relating to jobs, benefits and other work-related services, in order to extend adult users' access to further education and employment.
- Ensure that the collaborative leadership committee becomes more established in order to further improve governance and accountability.

## How good are outcomes for users?

<b>2</b>
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Centre users are very positive about the impact of partnerships and the ways that they promote their physical and emotional well-being. Parents are enthusiastic about the ways that the centre encourages them to bond with their children and the guidance that they are given. Strong partnerships with child and family health services ensure that many families benefit from the wide range of activities offered. This includes baby massage, Child and Mental Health Services (CAMHS), 'Well-Baby' clinics and 'Parent Craft'. Centre practitioners signpost or refer parents and carers to activities and services that they can assess and so improve family health such as the local counselling service, Action for Children, Wigan Family Welfare and the Active Living Team, among others.

The centre promotes healthy lifestyles well. Parents and carers who come to the centre are encouraged to try healthy foods and the link worker discusses healthy eating and lifestyles informally during 'Chill and Chat' sessions. The centre is particularly successful in the ways that it promotes breastfeeding and has achieved the 'Breastfeeding Friendly Award'.

The centre works with health visitors and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) to successfully raise children's and families' awareness of safety in the home and their communities. The extent to which children and young people enjoy and achieve is good overall. However, the appointment of a qualified teacher to support the development of early years work has had a significant impact on rapidly increasing children's achievement in their personal, social and emotional development as well as communication, language and literacy. The centre ensures that the needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are met well.

Behaviour across the centre and in the early years setting is good. A number of parents commented on how their confidence as parents had improved as a result of their participation in a number of activities offered by the centre. In the 'Chill and Chat' session it is clear that young children and their parents bond well and children develop their play, exploration and communication skills. Parents all feel that they have a voice within the centre and that the services meet their specific needs.

As a result of sessions at the centre, parents' learning has grown rapidly enabling many to make great gains in independence and in their skills and knowledge as parents. Some have also progressed to further training and employment. However, systems to monitor impact are not well enough established to evaluate this systematically. The centre has actively forged links with local training providers, but recognises there is scope to build on this partnership with other adult education and vocational training providers. There is a computer kiosk that links with local agencies and a free phone on site that can be used to contact local services. These are located in a closed room, separate from the building where most of the centre's activities take place. As a result, access to information is limited.

<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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</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>2</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?**

<b>2</b>
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The centre provides its core offer well. Centre staff and their partners have a very good understanding of individual needs through the parents forum, consultation with users, referrals, and some data, especially relating to children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Multi-agency partnerships ensure that the individual needs of children and their parents who are referred to the centre are assessed quickly so that interventions and support can be targeted appropriately. Assessment of individual cases is strong and the Common Assessment Framework ensures that teams effectively support children and families identified as in need. The centre's link worker is especially effective in supporting vulnerable families at home and at encouraging them to attend the centre and use its services.

The centre's activities provide support from birth onwards and include support and

guidance from the health services and activities for parents, babies and young children. Examples of these are 'Crafty Tales', 'Physibodies', 'Jo Jingles', 'Chill and Chat', baby massage and 'Baby Sign'. The centre now provides childcare for children aged up to four years old on site and this enables mothers to attend activities while their children are well cared for.

Good partnership working with childcare providers raises parents' aspirations. The centre helps children and their families to learn, develop and enjoy these experiences exceptionally well. Parents, including young parents, speak glowingly of the impact that the opportunities provided by the centre have had on them and their children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Case studies and evaluations from parents about interventions demonstrate the difference their experiences have made to their own and their children's development and well-being. Users say that they value the centre greatly; two mothers interviewed said that 'If it were not available, we could become housebound and depressed!'

The range of provision available is good. Participation rates in activities are good because the centre ensures that activities meet the range of needs and interests of the community. Parents report the centre's very strong impact on their own and their children's learning and how it has helped them gain in confidence. Volunteers have enjoyed very positive experiences at the centre and it has supported them to go onto further training or seek employment. In fact, in past years, three volunteers have been employed by the centre. Care, guidance and support are good. Sensitive, individualised support is provided to all families and children who access the centre.

<b>The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users</b>	<b>2</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>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>

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

<b>2</b>
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Governance and accountability arrangements are good. The collaborative leadership committee meets termly and working groups that involve representatives from partner schools and the local community meet half-termly. Although only recently established, it has agreed clear and timely actions to further develop services and the centre is developing rapidly as a result. Performance management procedures are robust and show accountability. Professional development review procedures are in place for all staff with the aim of promoting strengths and areas for development

with clear structured objectives for improvement.

A clear line management structure is in place enabling the managers of the centre to work well together. They share a common vision that is apparent in the smooth running of the centre. The local authority is responsible for contractual arrangements with centrally commissioned projects and provides data to the centre regarding performance. Locally commissioned projects are quality assured by the senior leadership team and monitoring outcomes indicate that these services and the services provided directly by the centre are of a good quality and are good value for money.

The centre has regular meetings between the head of centre, children’s centre coordinator and the qualified teacher to review progress and plan provision. Service level agreements are in place and have been agreed with the partner agencies that use the centre. Equality and diversity are promoted through effective arrangements for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities in the Early Years Foundation Stage and by encouraging the participation of members of minority groups. The centre also promotes multiculturalism through ethnically orientated activities such as Indian Dance classes for families.

The centre works well with key agencies to ensure that children are safeguarded and that children at risk or in crises are safe. It has robust safeguarding procedures which assess and review children’s safety. These include enhanced checks for all staff, partner agencies and volunteers and safeguarding training for new staff during induction. Appropriate child protection procedures are in place and all staff attend regular training. All accidents and incidents are recorded and procedures for the arrival and departure of children ensure that they are safe within the building. Fire evacuation procedures are in place, and all staff, volunteers and visitors are made aware of them. Safeguarding policies are regularly reviewed and health and safety risk assessments are completed rigorously; this impacts positively on the health and welfare of centre users.

<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>2</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</b>	<b>2</b>



<b>agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	2
<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>	2
<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>	2

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

Information from the most recent Ofsted inspection of Douglas Valley Early Years Centre and Nursery School have been taken into account to a limited extent 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](http://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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Douglas Valley Children's Centre on 1 to 2 December 2010. We judged the centre as good overall. We visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's plans and documents and had discussions with some of you and professionals. Following this work, we have judged that the centre provides good support to you and your families and is outstanding in the ways that it promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users, as many of you told us. The centre is giving your children a strong start in their education by boosting their personal development and communication so well.

Many mothers and some fathers gave of their time to share their opinions about the centre with us. We appreciate that your time at the centre is valuable to you and thank you for your cooperation. Those of you who spoke to us were unanimous in your praise of the centre and its staff. You were particularly enthusiastic about the informal ways that staff guide you about healthy lifestyles and child rearing.

The centre is very effective in the ways that it works in partnership with other agencies to promote good physical and emotional health and provides especially good support to new mothers. It pays good attention to your views and tailors its activities to suit your needs. The centre is inclusive in the ways that it includes fathers in workshops such as 'Dads and Kids Science' and through scheduling activities for weekends in order to promote the attendance of working parents. It also encourages an awareness of the wider community through activities such as Indian Dance classes.

We have also identified some areas for your centre to improve. We have asked it to develop its data collection procedures to ensure that the services provided are appropriate and to encourage more people to attend. The information point is poorly situated and this limits your access to important information. In addition to this, we feel that you would benefit from more information on jobs and benefits. The centre has recently set up a collaborative leadership committee to govern the centre. This committee needs to be more established in order to further build on the centre's successes.

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