

# Inspection report for Sure Start Preston West Children's Centre

Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	362591
Inspection dates	24 –25 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Henry Moreton

Centre governance	Federated Advisory Board
Centre leader	Sally Nightingale
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Ashton Stepping Stones Nursery

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 additional inspector and one early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with users, the centre manager, members of the senior leadership team, members of the federated advisory board and local authority officers linked to the centre. They also observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Preston West Children's Centre started as a Sure Start Local Programme and became a phase one children's centre in 2004. The centre is situated on Ashton primary school site which also houses Ashton Stepping Stones nursery and Lancashire Education Medical Service. During the inspection building work was taking place.

Preston West Children's Centre is working towards providing the full core offer for children's centres. Governance of the centre is through a federated advisory board. The advisory board and Preston West's staff work across three children's centres. The centre manager is the manager of four other children's centres in the Preston area. Much of the centre's provision takes place in various venues throughout the community.

Preston West Children's Centre serves a community where some wards experience high levels of social and economic disadvantage. One ward is in the top 10% most deprived wards in the country. Other wards are more affluent. Overall, unemployment and the number of families on benefits are higher than the national average. The community served by the centre is predominantly White British, with less than 5% belonging to a minority ethnic group. The housing stock throughout the centre's reach area is mixed. Levels of attainment on entry to the early years' provision are below average.

The early years' provision provided by Ashton Stepping Stones was last inspected in October 2010. The full report is available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

## 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**

<b>2</b>
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### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

<b>2</b>
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## Main findings

Preston West Children's Centre provides good quality services. Partnership working is outstanding and all users of the centre benefit from an excellent range of services that promote their well-being. The centre effectively targets its resources, including its outreach service, to provide good support to its vulnerable users. This includes adults and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Centre users value highly the support they receive.

Centre users are very positive about how they trust the staff to ensure they are able to access a comprehensive range of services to support them, and their families. The care, guidance and support offered to the centres' users are of a high quality. Some individuals develop a long-standing relationship with the centre and some of these adults develop the confidence and skills to contribute to the centre's provision as volunteers. Others use the centre as a springboard to move on to further or higher education.

The centre makes a good contribution to improving the health of families. It makes a satisfactory contribution to improving the educational achievement of children. A very high priority is given to the promotion of safety and welfare, and safeguarding arrangements are good. The centre makes a good contribution to the economic stability of its users, including signposting them to specialist services.

Leadership of the centre is good. Because of the effective commissioning arrangements with the many voluntary and statutory partners, resources are well targeted. Managers are flexible in responding to assessed needs. Centre staff have very good training, ensuring their skills are maintained and enhanced. The centre's managers provide good care for their staff, placing high importance on looking after the welfare of staff and volunteers. As a result, the staff team work well together.

Members of the federated board have a good understanding of the needs of the diverse community served by the centre. The board members have a good understanding of the centre's strengths. The centre meets its statutory responsibilities for the promotion of equality and diversity. However, the centre's procedures for ensuring robust self-evaluation, including the ongoing involvement of its key partners, are not fully effective. While the centre's many developments to date have been well considered, planning for next year and beyond is not as clear.

Preston West Children's Centre provision has developed well, and continues to improve. Outcomes for its current users are good. Consequently, the capacity of the centre to improve is good.

The centre's childcare is provided by Ashton Stepping Stones, a private day nursery, located in the same building as the children centre. The quality and standards of care in this provision are satisfactory.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve the quality of the childcare commissioned by the centre to improve outcomes for children across the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Improve self-evaluation by better monitoring of actions and increase the involvement of key partners on a regular basis.
- Improve strategic planning for the next few years.

## **How good are outcomes for users?**

<b>2</b>
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Outcomes for parents and carers are good. Typical comments from users are 'The centre is always there for me', and 'Without the centre my family would have broken up'. The adults who use the centre feel less isolated because they are encouraged to engage with others, and with a range of statutory and voluntary services. Users make and sustain new relationships, improving their confidence and self-esteem.

Families show an improving understanding of dental care, healthy eating and food hygiene, though the levels of obesity in the reach area are relatively high. Users and their children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, enjoy the physical activity through 'leapfrogs' and 'tadpoles'. Indicators show that sexual health is improving, including among young adults. A growing number of new mothers have initiated breastfeeding. Children behave well and safely around the centre. Good modelling by staff, including the large number of outreach workers, is contributing to keeping children safe. Excellent relationships between the centre and its partners are also improving the safety of families. Parents value the access to a range of safety equipment, as well as training in road safety. This includes those who

are vulnerable, some of whom have child protection plans. Users value the counselling made available to them in difficult times and this has a good level of take-up.

Users value the range of activities and respect the professionalism of staff. They appreciate being able to use services, such as for toddlers, in a number of different venues convenient to them. Parents and carers report improving confidence and skills as a result of the guidance they receive from centre staff. This helps them to support their children at home. It also encourages them to pursue their own interests, including in counselling and childminding, contributing to the community's cohesion. Users' views are sought, including at the end of sessions and a more formal mechanism for capturing their views has only recently been resurrected after being dormant for too long.

Users are supported well in gaining skills to secure employment through appropriate advice and guidance. This often involves them being 'signposted' by the centre's staff on to courses in literacy, numeracy and computing. Outcomes are good for a small number of teenagers who are pregnant. These young women are well supported in sustaining their education or training, and currently, a number of them are following a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) course in 'Children and Learning'. The extent and range of accreditation available to all adults is satisfactory overall.

There is some improvement in the Early Years Foundation Stage profile scores of those children who use the centre, though this is inconsistent. In particular, children's communication, language and literacy skills are slow to show improvement, as are their personal, social and emotional development.

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	2
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	2
<b>The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	2
<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>	2
<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>	2

## How good is the provision?

2
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Provision for children and their families is good. The centre assesses needs within the community well, in close collaboration with partner agencies. It does so speedily, using all the information at its disposal. As a result, the care, guidance and support it provides are well targeted. Interventions are not only prompt but also consistent over time. Centre staff adjust provision accordingly. For instance, over the last year or so there have been good developments in the provision of childminding, counselling, community volunteering, midwifery and specific services catering for the particular needs of fathers. Some initiatives have been more successful than others. The leadership from the centre is pivotal in enabling a large number of its partners to work in tandem on behalf of the users, and excellent use is made of formal agreements with partners from the voluntary and statutory sectors.

The activities observed by inspectors throughout the community, including in users' homes, were sometimes of excellent quality. Centre managers ensure that the staff use appropriate policies and procedures, and this gives users' confidence in them. All the sessions observed were purposeful. As a result, users can see the relevance of attendance and participation in the activities, often resulting in individuals and their families benefiting from more than one aspect of the centre's services.

Signposting and referral to services and courses are prompt and effective. Links with Jobcentre Plus are developing with a new referral process starting recently. Users report that access to groups and professionals improved their attitudes in terms of their self-esteem and confidence, and their relationships. A typical comment is that, 'The centre is the foundation of where we started off'.

The quality of care for users and their children in the centre and out in the wider community is good. Support for users' well-being is good across all outcomes and families report their lives have improved because of the centre's work.

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

## How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Leadership and management are good at all levels. Development planning has been aligned to local and national indicators for children and families. The centre manager and senior leadership team provide good leadership with high expectations for the community at the heart of the centre's work. The advisory board and staff share their aspirations. Information used to plan and evaluate the centre's provision is not always sufficiently specific to Preston West's reach area.

Board members have a good understanding of the centre's strengths. Monitoring is improving, and the senior leadership team acknowledge that there has been more focused attention to outcomes over the last year. The local authority provides very helpful advice, guidance and challenge to the centre. Board members do not currently provide sufficient challenge to the centre. This is recognised by them particularly concerning their involvement in self-assessment. Users are also now more involved in determining the direction of the centre's work.

Clear policies support the centre's work in promoting diversity, and in ensuring safeguarding and child protection. The centre makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion, and this is currently one of its priorities. The centre is also looking at more ways to reach the 'hardest to reach' within its area. These and other current priorities reflect the centre's good knowledge and awareness of its community. Planning for the future is less clear, including into next year and beyond.

Relationships at the centre are positive. The parents and carers spoken to by inspectors place a high level of trust in the centre's staff. Users do not participate fully in the decision-making process, and nor do the views of all users and all key partners contribute to ongoing self-evaluation.

Overall, the centre runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Systems have developed well over the years and management routines are well established. Arrangements for safeguarding users and staff are good. All staff have clear lines of accountability and benefit from good training. Senior managers have good practical concern for the well-being and safety of the staff, as well as the centre's users.

Given the good and improving provision, especially through the excellent arrangements made to commission many of its services, and its good outcomes, Preston West Children's centre provides good value for money.

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	2
<b>The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider</b>	2

<b>community</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 agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>2</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>

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

There is one childcare setting within the building occupied by Preston West Children Centre. This is Ashton Stepping Stones Nursery, which was inspected in October 2010. It is managed by a private provider and the children centre's manager is a member of its management committee.

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 Preston West Children's centre on 24 and 25 November 2010. We judge the centre as good overall.

Preston West Children's Centre provides good quality services. As a result of its outstanding work with many agencies from the voluntary and statutory sectors, we think that you benefit from an excellent range of services which promote your well-being. We think the centre targets its resources effectively to provide support to those in the community who are vulnerable. You told us that you value highly the support you receive.

Those of you who spoke to us were very positive about how the centre staff ensure you are able to access the full range of services available to support you, and your families. The care, guidance and support offered to you are of a high quality. As a result, some of you develop a long-standing relationship with the centre, sometimes contributing to its provision as volunteers. Some of you use it as a springboard to move on to further and higher education.

The centre makes a good contribution to improving the health of your families. It makes a satisfactory contribution to improving the educational achievement of your children. A very high priority is given to the promotion of your safety and welfare. The centre makes a good contribution to your economic stability, including by signposting some of you to specialist services.

The centre is well led. Because of the effective commissioning arrangements with its many partners, resources are well targeted. Managers are also flexible in responding to your needs. The evidence shows that since the opening of the centre, provision has developed well. Staff are well trained. The centre's managers provide good care for their staff, and so the staff team are pulling together on your behalf.

Members of the federated board have a good understanding of your needs. They also have a good understanding of the centre's strengths. However, the centre's evaluation of its performance is not sharp enough. While it gets good support from the local authority, it does not use you or its other partners enough in robust analysis of how it is doing regularly enough. While the centre's many developments to date have been well considered, planning for next year and beyond is not as clear.

The childcare is provided by Ashton Stepping Stones, a private day nursery, located in the same building as the Children Centre. The quality and standards of care in this provision is satisfactory.

Overall, Preston West Children Centre is improving and has made good progress since it started in 2004. Consequently, the capacity of the centre to further improve is good.

The inspectors have made the following recommendations to help improve the centre:

- Improve the quality of the childcare commissioned by the centre to improve outcomes for children across the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Ensure the monitoring and evaluation that feeds into self-evaluation is rigorous, and involves more partners on a regular basis.
- Improve planning for the next few years.

Thank you for your help with the inspection, especially those of you that we were able to meet and talk to.

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