

# Inspection report for Barton Moss and South Eccles Children's Centre

Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	362437
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Reporting inspector	Gillian Bishop HMI

Centre governance	Salford City Council
Centre leader	Rachel Shearn
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Barton Moss Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Barton Moss Community 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 of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the senior leadership team, two representatives from the local authority, representatives from the advisory board and health services, frontline workers, representatives from local voluntary groups, representatives from local schools and day-care providers, and parents and other users of the centre's facilities.

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

## Information about the centre

Barton Moss and South Eccles Children's Centre serves families across the whole of south Eccles. The centre serves a community that is ranked within the top 30% of the most deprived areas in the country and in some areas it is within the top 20%. The proportion of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) within Salford is higher than those found nationally. Most children enter childcare and early education with a narrower range of skills and abilities than that expected for their age.

The children's centre gained full designation in 2006. Service development has been relatively slow due to unsettled management arrangements and then a transfer to local authority management in 2009. South Eccles Children's Centre became Barton's satellite centre in July 2009. Governance for both sites is through an advisory board with representatives from the children's centre, school, local authority, partner agencies and the voluntary sector. A multi-agency team, which includes health visitors, outreach and family support workers, communication development workers, midwifery assistants and the Citizen Advice Bureau, provides services from the

children's centre but most are not co-located on the centre's sites. The majority of the population within the Barton area are White British, whereas the population within the South Eccles area is much more ethnically diverse, with families of Eastern European, Asian, Yemeni and Afro-Caribbean heritage.

The children's centre provides the full core offer including childcare and early learning, family support, health services and childminder network support. Activities provided within the Barton Moss site include a young parents group, 'Stay n Play', 'BookStart', a baby and minor ailments clinic, and a Saturday morning dads group. The South Eccles site provides family learning sessions, 'Stay n Play', a childminders' group and 'Story and Rhyme Time'. In addition, swimming sessions, 'Funday Monday' and 'Gym Babies' run from other local venues.

Barton Moss Community Nursery provides 40 childcare places for children from birth to five years. This is a local authority run setting. The childcare was last inspected in December 2009 and the most recent inspection report can be found at [www.Ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.Ofsted.gov.uk). The Barton Moss children's centre and nursery are co-located within the grounds of Barton Moss Primary School. As a result, close links have been formed with this school. Their inspection report can also be found on the Ofsted website.

## 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**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**3**

## Main findings

Barton Moss and South Eccles Children's Centre provides satisfactory and improving support to children and families. Outcomes for them are at least satisfactory. The centre provides a friendly and welcoming place for families to make new friends and enjoy a selection of activities. Centre users are protected by safeguarding procedures, which meet statutory requirements. Centre staff work in collaboration with partners to identify and support families in crisis or at risk through effective use of the common assessment framework.

Evidence shows that the childcare provided by the centre is improving strongly and children make good progress given their low starting points. Positive outcomes

derive from examples of good quality care and learning within the centre nursery and the systematic support and guidance from educational leaders. Outcomes for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities who are supported by the centre or through outreach support are also improving. Collaboration with the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and adult learning providers is more secure than that established with Jobcentre Plus. Although there is some evidence to show parents and carers receive financial information and training, there is a general lack of quantifiable data across outcomes in general.

Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination are key priorities for the centre. As a result, staff have taken some initial steps to improve outcomes for young parents and more lone parents are now engaging with the centre. However, staff are acutely aware that a large number of families have yet to benefit from services or outreach support. This is particularly so for black and minority ethnic groups, substance-misusing families and those suffering from domestic violence.

The centre is currently working well to address the rising levels of obesity. However, it is difficult for the centre to set targets against national indicators in order to address health inequalities because data is not refined to a local level. Furthermore, maternal services do not operate from the children's centre sites, limiting early intervention strategies and the range of health services made available, particularly in the Barton area.

The centre has made slow progress since its designation due to a turbulent past and legacy of limited service development. However, leadership is now much more stable with a centre leader who communicates clear and consistent expectations, an established advisory board and improving support and challenge from the local authority. The leadership and management teams are under no illusions that they can be complacent, hence the significant number of actions within their business plan. However, the advisory board and the local authority are not sufficiently proactive in fulfilling their responsibilities to evaluate the impact of the centre's multi-agency work and their intent to demonstrate positive outcomes. Furthermore, the role of parents and carers in governance and decision-making arrangements is not yet secure.

Taking into account the satisfactory outcomes overall, the centre's overall effectiveness is also satisfactory. This, together with the leadership's determined focus on improvement and on identifying and meeting needs, indicates that the centre has satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve outcomes and provision by:
  - working with the local authority, the Primary Care Trust and Salford Royal Foundation Trust to refine health data to a more accurate and localised level
  - using the data to set clear targets for addressing health priorities
  - working with the Salford Royal Foundation Trust to develop a more localised range of maternal services within the children's centre reach for the Barton community
  - increasing access to services by a much wider range of the population within the reach area.
  
- Improve governance within the children's centre by:
  - developing a more systematic approach to collating and analysing data to demonstrate the full impact of the centre's work
  - ensuring findings are used effectively to inform services for the future
  - strengthening the way in which the local authority and the advisory board act as critical friends in challenging and holding the centre to account for its work
  - ensuring the views of parents and carers consistently contribute to the governance of the centre and to shaping services
  - improving the implementation of general safeguarding procedures.

## How good are outcomes for users?

<b>3</b>
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Outcomes for centre users are satisfactory and improving steadily. Developing inter-agency partnerships and a clearer understanding of the needs and wants of users are beginning to impact positively on health, life chances and aspirations. Parents describe staff as 'fantastic' and state that they 'go above and beyond' what they expect. The weekly baby clinic and the support from the link health visitor ensure that parents are able to monitor their babies' weight and get advice about infant feeding and minor health ailments. Furthermore, the prevalence of breastfeeding at six to eight weeks has exceeded local targets, although it still remains lower than national averages. Health data is mostly limited, for example in relation to the impact of a smoking cessation session. This prevents the centre from gaining a clear understanding of targets and improvements.

The priority placed on reducing high obesity levels is evident due to the number of activities within the centre programme designed to increase children's and adults' willingness to live healthier lives. One parent attending a cooking class stated, 'I didn't know you could make pizzas so healthily' and another said her children have started to eat fruit because they eat it at the centre. Strong partnerships with Salford

City Leisure is successfully engaging parents and children in swimming and gym programmes such as 'Baby moves', 'Gym Tots' and 'Water babies'. As a result, some parents are enrolling themselves and their children in formal swimming lessons and two adult volunteers have set up their own adult dance group.

Parents describe how they feel safe in the centre and they verify how home safety visits have helped them to keep their children safe. For example, one parent stated, 'I don't have hot drinks near my baby anymore because I know how dangerous it is.' There is also a keen focus on keeping safe in water during swimming lessons. 'Positive Parenting' courses have helped parents to deal with unwanted behaviour. For example, one parent described how she takes five breaths to calm down so she does not shout. Family support and outreach work ensures families in particular need or with child protection issues are referred to the centre. This and the purposeful use of the common assessment framework ensure timely intervention for those in need.

The extent to which children enjoy and achieve is good although the picture for young people and adults is less secure due to the lack of clear evaluative evidence relating to their accredited courses. Centre data confirm that the priority placed on improving children's communication, language and literacy skills through 'Talking Tots' and 'Every Child a Talker' has begun to reap benefits; the Foundation Stage Profile points show a narrowing in the achievement gap in this area. A local headteacher confirms improvement in children's educational achievements and preparedness for the transition to school. Children with disabilities and complex learning needs who are engaged with the centre, or with Salford's Early Support Team, make good gains in their learning due to targeted support from the special educational needs coordinator.

Parents and carers appreciate the centre's work and recognise the positive impact it has on their lives. Some parent volunteers play an active role in the centre and three parents have recently accessed employment through the 'Salford Parent Pathways' initiative. Parents and carers contribute to the evaluation processes and some are involved in a parents' forum. However, they are less clear about the role of the advisory board and representation from parents on the board is yet to be formally secured.

Parents have satisfactory opportunities to develop skills and improve their economic stability, an example of which is the 'Summer on a budget' course. The CAB is visible within the community, encouraging a growing number of residents to seek information on finances and employment. One young parent described how CAB helped her to get benefits reinstated and sort out debt. Outcomes for parents accessing Jobcentre Plus are not known as this work is not monitored and evaluated sufficiently. Furthermore, users' attendance often fluctuates at courses such as mathematics and literacy at levels 1 and 2 and 'English for Speakers of Other Languages'.

*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>3</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**

There is an adequate range of services and activities, which meet the requirements of the core offer and the needs of those who use them. Health services are adequate in the main but women can only access antenatal and other maternal services through doctors' surgeries. Parents state they thoroughly enjoy 'Stay n Play' sessions and baby massage, and they describe 'Funday Monday' as one of the most popular.

The centre has some distinct barriers to serving the whole community effectively of which the geographical location of both sites is one of the most obstinate. Parents from the Barton Moss area are reluctant to travel to Eccles town centre and vice-versa. One parent stated she did not use the Barton Moss site because 'It's too small and it limits what we can do'. The centre has taken some steps to improve community cohesion by providing services in larger venues and on boundaries between the two areas and this is beginning to prove successful.

Secure links with the teenage pregnancy team and the young dads' worker has enabled staff to make links with young parents and establish a designated group for them. In addition, 'Dads Socoatots' is proving to be successful, with one dad stating the centre has become his 'lifeline to his children' as it provides a safe, happy and stimulating place for him to spend time with them. The activity programme is often subject to change due to sessions not being viable because attendance and retention is too variable. This has resulted in a 'Positive Parenting' programme being cancelled and a loss of members from the young parents groups.

Increased access to live birth data is enabling the centre to identify families earlier and make an assessment of their needs. Assessment of individual cases is becoming more secure due to the manner in which the common assessment framework is used for both prevention and intervention strategies. The 'Incredible Years' programme

provides a range of support for parents and children, appropriately designed to improve the behaviour, mental health and well-being of those involved. The centre is developing support mechanisms for families suffering domestic violence through the Cornerstone Project; however, this tailoring of services is not always based on a firm analysis of need or relevant information.

Care, guidance and support for families are satisfactory with some aspects of practice that are good. For example, sensitive outreach work results in more parents and carers being willing to engage in activities out of the home after a period of home visiting and some gentle encouragement. As a result, a growing number are now engaged in activities and training programmes within the centre's provision. The centre provides a good range of literature about health, safety and services. Young parents state they are already beginning to think about how to talk to their children about relationships and sexual health matters because they have attended the 'Speak Easy' course.

Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage is good due to the intensity of the support by educational leaders. Educational outcomes for children are monitored closely and provision adapted when gaps in learning are evident. Parents are valued as their child's first educators. They are encouraged to assess their own child's learning within all activities by taking photographs and considering how to move their children forward. The transition to school is carefully planned and involves parents and carers, key workers and the school as equal partners. A volunteer training programme has provided some good opportunities for parents to play a more active role in service delivery. However, once trained, too many volunteers do not proceed to use their new skills within other roles. The centre has secured access to various projects which are designed to improve life chances through engagement and employment, such as the 'Raising Employment Aspirations Challenging Hopes' (REACH) and the 'Together for Women' project. In addition, the Family Learning model encourages parents to improve their basic skills and, in turn, to help and support their own children's learning. However, data only confirm attendance and do not demonstrate the long-term benefits of these adult learning programmes.

*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>3</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

The leadership and management of the children's centre are developing satisfactorily and there is a clear focus on improvement held by managers, the local authority and the advisory board. Priorities within the centre business plan link securely to strategic planning outlined in Salford's Interim Children and Young People's Plan. Aspects of the self-evaluation are reasonably accurate but centre staff are intensely aware that they are at the 'start of a journey'. Key priorities derive from a clear understanding of the gaps within the provision, such as the effectiveness of the Salford Foundation Trust in providing accurate, localised health data and provision for maternal services.

Centre leaders acknowledge the slow start in reaching the wider community and particularly those most vulnerable but they demonstrate a strong commitment and a growing ability to strengthen key partnerships and improve outcomes for their residents. This is reflected in the links now established with some health professionals and the much stronger ones with family support services within the South Locality Team, Teen Pregnancy Team and, most noticeably, the Working Neighbourhood Team.

Safeguarding procedures meet with statutory requirements but they could be better. This is particularly pertinent to the collation and maintenance of information relating to Criminal Records Bureau checks and the procedures for sharing safeguarding policies with partners and others. A strength of the centre is the comprehensive manner in which risk assessments are conducted across all services. The coordination of family support and outreach work and improved systems for sharing information about families most at risk, are beginning to impact on their willingness to engage in a wider range of services and therefore prevent risks escalating.

The focus placed on equality and tackling discrimination has enabled the centre to target services to some minority groups such as those in the Polish community and fathers. A flexible crèche provision successfully allows more users to attend courses and this is reflected strongly within one parent's testimony that 'I couldn't go to any of the training if I didn't have the crèche'. However, a considerable number of families from black and minority ethnic groups have yet to engage and the work with families living in domestic violence situations and those associated with substance misuse is very much in its infancy.

The centre provides satisfactory value for money. Resources and services across the sites are adequately utilised although building limitations are preventing maternal services operating out of the centre. Outreach work is now clearly focused on being part of and visible within the community, which is beginning to have an impact on improved engagement with schools and voluntary groups. Equally, the community is beginning to respond well to staff's persistence to engage them and this is resulting in an increasing number of the population registering and accessing services.

Performance management procedures are secure and the centre manager extends

strong messages that working practices must be sharply focused on demonstrating improving outcomes for users. Governance arrangements are stable with regular attendance from partners at advisory board meetings. However, board members frequently change, inhibiting its ability to monitor, evaluate and challenge progress within the business plan objectives. The local authority has provided good levels of support during turbulent times and has devised new strategies designed to guide and challenge children's centres more securely. However, its personnel have not used the 'annual conversation' processes rigorously to ensure self-evaluation is robust in its intention to demonstrate outcomes for families.

*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>3</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**

Childcare provided by Barton Moss Community Nursery is co-located with the children's centre and Barton Moss Primary School. As this setting was not inspected at the time of the children's centre inspection, the previous inspection report was taken into account. There are a number of local primary schools including Barton Moss Primary School, Beech Street Community School and Godfrey Erman Memorial School. Information from their most recent regulatory and section 5 inspections and information relating to the quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage have been taken into account when writing in the report about early years provision and

outcomes for children.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Barton Moss and South Eccles Children's Centre on 17 and 18 November 2010 and we judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Those of you we spoke to say the centre provides a friendly and happy place where you and your children can make new friends and enjoy some special time together. All parents agreed that staff work hard to make you feel welcome and they listen to your ideas about how some activities could be better. You also told us that you always feel safe in the centre because the building is secure and you trust the staff that work with you. We agree with this, but we also found that they could improve some procedures by making sure they keep information about vetting checks more accurately. We did find that the staff work well with other agencies because they work closely together when trying to help families at risk of danger or in crisis.

We spoke with many of you when we visited Stay n Play, swimming lessons and Story and Rhyme Time and some of you came to speak with us personally to share your views about how well the centre works and supports you. We thank you for that. During these activities, we could see how well your children are helped to make good progress in their learning. It was good to see that you as parents and carers are also being helped to improve your children's development by joining Talking Tots, Bookstart and by taking photographs of them in their play so you can think about how to help them next. We were also pleased to see that where the centre is working with children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, they too are well supported in their development.

You told us that you have been helped to manage your finances better through courses such as 'Summer on a budget' and we know that some of you have visited the weekly Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB) sessions to get more specialist help with these matters. However, we found that many of you are not making use of the Jobcentre Plus because you either do not know about it or because it is not available in the centre. Many parents and carers have attended a variety of training courses and some of these have helped with maths and literacy. However, we are not sure what difference these made to you or if they helped you to get jobs and enrol for more training because the centre does not yet collect statistics about this.

The centre has taken some steps, such as asking you for your comments, to make sure everybody gets the services and activities they want. For example, when you finish one course they ask you what you thought about it and what you might like to do next. Some of you have become volunteers and you now help with work in your community and others have joined a parents' forum so they can discuss ideas on your behalf. All these things are good because they help you to influence the range of services for the future. However, more needs to be done to make sure some of you join the advisory board and play an active role in making decisions about the centre's work because you know what the community needs most.

Centre staff now have a better understanding of the people in the community, their religious and ethnic backgrounds and their needs because they are working better with other agencies to get the information they need. As a result, they are helping more young parents and they have done a particularly good job getting a Saturday morning dads group started. However, they must do much more to help people from other ethnic groups and those who are at risk because of their lifestyles and circumstances. You told us that cooking classes, swimming lessons and information about home safety has made sure that you live healthier and safer lives. However, the centre does not always get the information it needs from health organisations to help staff decide which health issues to help you with first.

We found that too many people with young children are choosing not to come to the centre. Many of you said that you know friends who just don't come. Some of this is to do with parents not wanting to travel out of one area into another and others think it is because the centre is too small and limits what they can do. We also know that there is too little space for midwives, which prevents them running things like antenatal appointments. We know that more needs to be done to increase the number of people coming to the centre and we have asked the centre to think about ways in which it can do this.

The centre has had a difficult past and this has prevented staff improving its services much sooner. However, they have some useful plans, which will help them to do a better job. Leaders know that they must ask everybody they work with to help gather the right information so they can show that they make a difference to your lives but there is much work to be done. Therefore we have asked the centre managers and staff, the local authority, health teams, advisory board and all the other agencies who work with them to improve the way they record information so the centre can see what is working and what is not. This will ensure they continue to improve their services and your lives.

We thoroughly enjoyed our time with you at the children's centre and we thank you for helping us with our work.

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