

# Inspection report for Harpurhey Children's Centre

Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	365682
Inspection dates	9–10 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Joanne Smith

Centre governance	Manchester City Council
Centre leader	Wendy Lewis
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Harpurhey Neighbourhood Nursery EY302356 Carisbrook Children's Centre EY103954

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 head of centre, members of the senior leadership team, local authority senior officers, parents and representatives from a number of partner agencies.

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

## Information about the centre

This is a phase 1 children's centre, providing the core offer to a community in the north of Manchester which is in one of the 10% most deprived wards in the country. The centre operates from a building shared with a leisure centre and provides a range of services including health appointments and drop-ins, on- and off-site Early Years Foundation Stage provision, family support and adult education, and employment advice and support. It supports families from six local schools and responds to referrals from partner agencies as well as self-referrals from families. Outreach provision is delivered by one worker.

The head of centre manages the services provided by the centre and coordinates those provided by its partners. The local authority is responsible for performance management of staff in the centre and partners are responsible for the performance management of their staff who deliver services from the centre. The strategic management and development of the centre is the responsibility of the local authority, with local support and challenge from the shared advisory board.

Within the community served by the children's centre the majority of children aged four years and under are living in families dependent on workless benefits. Adult literacy and numeracy levels are below national averages. The large majority of

families are of White British heritage. Evidence indicates that the skills and knowledge that children have when they enter Early Years Foundation Stage settings are below those expected for their age. Long term and chronic illness in the community is slightly above the level for the city.

## 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

Harpurhey Children's Centre provides a satisfactory service for the families who use it and supports them adequately to improve the outcomes for their children. In recent months there has been a change in the way the centre uses and interprets the information it has, or is provided with, about the families in its reach area. This, along with a lack of historical data or information, means that the centre is operating as if it was a new centre rather than the well-established one that it is. Through the outreach worker the centre is now making contact with more local families, although this is still not at a level that is high enough to make a significant enough impact across the reach area.

There are clear lines of management and accountability within the centre that mean that the staff and partner staff who work with children and families know what their role and responsibilities are. At a more senior level, staff are beginning to develop their strategic management roles and the local authority has some recently introduced systems in place to monitor the quality and delivery of the services the centre provides. The area served by the centre is growing in diversity and the centre is developing this aspect of its work. Satisfactory procedures are in place to safeguard the welfare of all users of the centre and adequately promote equality and diversity. Self-evaluation indicates that the centre largely knows where its strengths and weaknesses are; however, because of a lack of tracking and monitoring it cannot be clear or specific about the impact of all of its work. This has also affected the centre's ability to set sufficiently ambitious targets. As a result, the centre has a satisfactory, rather than good, capacity for sustained improvement. Staff in the centre are welcoming and committed to their work. This provides for a comfortable atmosphere for service users, who are positive about the impact the centre has had

on their and their families' lives.

Positive partnerships have been established with a variety of agencies and these enhance the range of services and support the centre is able to offer. Although well attended, these activities are not always sufficiently linked to the needs of the children and families in the reach area. An example of this is the limited opportunities for families to develop their understanding of healthy lifestyles, despite the centre being ideally located in a leisure centre. Some activities have recently been discontinued; however, the centre uses volunteer workers well to maintain delivery where it can.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve local authority performance monitoring of the centre against identified local need and the core offer.
- Use centre-specific data and local intelligence to:
  - monitor and track the centre's impact
  - identify and meet the needs of families in the reach area
  - target services where they are most needed.

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

<b>3</b>
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Children who attend the day care at the centre and its linked facility make good progress in their development. One of the local schools reports a noticeable, positive difference between these children in their readiness for school and those who have not benefitted from this service. Tracking and monitoring of children's learning and development is well used; however, this is not the case for adult learning. Parenting courses run by the Child and Parent Service (CAPS) are well attended and adults who access them are very positive about the benefits to their emotional well-being and family life. This is well supported by the thorough evaluation of the impact that is conducted by CAPS. Parents who accessed the Forest Fun Learning scheme to develop their understanding of children's learning in the outdoor environment found the experience 'really cool'. They say that they use the local environment more now with their children.

Warm and friendly relationships between staff and families are apparent throughout the centre. Within the centre, users are safe and adults and children alike display behaviours that indicate their feelings of safety. Families have a developing understanding of healthy lifestyles and keeping children safe. There has been an increase in the number of children being immunised and a reduction in the number of under-fives receiving dental care in the reach area. This has been achieved through the solid relationships that have been established with the community health team. However, obesity levels in young children and admissions to accident and

emergency departments are higher than the city wide figures despite the high uptake of the Care and Repair scheme.

Some families' contact with the centre has been initiated through the Common Assessment Framework process or child protection concerns. These families praise the centre and their comments such as, 'I would be lost without them', are reflective of the impact the centre has had. For some parents the centre has been a catalyst that has led them to attend further parenting courses or college courses with a view to gaining employment in the future. The centre has too little information to indicate their levels of success in this area.

The centre has a positive approach to using and developing volunteer workers and a small number of parents work in roles such as running parent and child sessions, providing administrative help, and offering peer support for breastfeeding mothers. 'My confidence has grown so much', is a comment from a member of the parents' forum. This is a developing group whose views are fed into the joint advisory boards by their representatives. This forum has had a positive impact on those who are members. Within the centre the parents' forum has the opportunity to influence some service delivery. However, it is less clear how the views of the wider group of service users are heard.

*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**

The centre responds appropriately to the needs of those it has contact with and it is particularly strong in assessing the needs of children who attend the day-care provision. There is an adequately structured system to review the needs of referred families. This ensures an appropriate support package is provided, whether it is signposting by the outreach worker for debt management advice or referring on to the early intervention team for more intensive work. The centre is rich in displayed information to inform users where they can seek guidance or support. Thoughtful

consideration is given to the presentation of this information as the centre is aware that there is a growing need within the community to provide for those who do not speak English as their first language. Information on seeking help if suffering from domestic violence, for example, is presented in several languages and is displayed where contact details can be noted in privacy.

There is a sufficiently broad range of services on offer at the centre including: birth registration; child health clinics; breastfeeding support; parent and child sessions and adult learning classes. These appropriately meet the needs of the families who have contact with the centre. Health visitor and midwife clinics are particularly well attended. The centre is just beginning to assess the needs of the reach area as a whole using local data and intelligence. This is leading to some services such as the Wonderful World of Play being developed as a response to the needs of particular, identified families before being offered as an open access scheme. The centre is also more aware of the whereabouts of some of the families whose circumstances make them more hard to reach and it is beginning to take some services out into community venues. Nevertheless, the centre is not yet clear enough about what is required across the reach area to be certain that it is meeting the most important needs. This limited knowledge of the reach area is particularly apparent in the provision for adult learning. While this is provided by partners, including Manchester College, courses are not delivered in response to local need at the instigation of the centre. The centre acts as a host building while the courses are determined by the partners, thus meeting the partners' need. Alongside this the centre does not do enough to monitor and review the quality of the adult learning delivered from the centre or to track its impact on those accessing it.

*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**

Safeguarding requirements are met by the centre. Centre staff and partners are clear about the procedures for reporting and recording concerns. Centre staff's suitability to work with children and vulnerable adults is assessed using a thorough recruitment and vetting process prior to their employment. The centre also has sound systems for ensuring the suitability of partner agency workers. There is good enough working across the agencies to ensure that those whose circumstances have made them

more vulnerable are worked with effectively. Clear assessment systems and joint working with the day-care provision and partner agencies mean that children and families are appropriately supported either through the Common Assessment Framework process or lower-level support.

In the last year the centre has experienced change in how it is managed and supported at a strategic level by the local authority. This has led to some positive changes in that the centre is now working with more specific information about its reach area alongside its own service users' evaluations. The manager's use and analysis of this information is in the early stages and as a result is beginning to target some of the services to where they are most needed. Even so there are still gaps that are known about, such as work to involve more male carers and to improve awareness of healthy diets, that are not being addressed swiftly enough. The processes for monitoring and planning the centre's performance at local and strategic levels are not yet embedded. The resulting effect is that plans and targets for the centre are more in line with a newly-established centre seeking to meet the core offer rather than one of longer standing.

The centre is well cared for and the accommodation is well used to support the centre's work and that of its partners. However, the centre is not yet reaching a large enough proportion of families who are in the most vulnerable or hard to reach groups in the community. The centre has adopted an inclusive approach to its work; for example, providing crèche facilities to support parents into learning or volunteering opportunities. It has reviewed the ethnic and cultural make-up of the local area. This has led to a positive change to the displays around the centre, which are reflective of the community. Work with speech and language therapists and psychological services are an integral part of the centre. This and links with the pre-school special needs service serve to provide support for families of children who have special educational needs and/or difficulties. This means that the centre is providing satisfactory value for money against its core offer.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>3</b>

<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>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**

None.

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 Harpurhey Children's Centre on 9 and 10 February 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you to those of you who came into the centre to speak to the inspectors. We also read some of the things you have written about the centre when you have been on courses or attended activities with your children. Some of you found the Forest Fun Learning sessions helpful and very enjoyable. Your comments were all positive and showed us how the centre helps you by providing what some of you called a 'home from home' that helps you to build your confidence. We also found that the centre is good at helping some people to use their skills as volunteers in the centre. We are pleased that these things have helped some of you to think about your future and take up college courses.

We know that the centre is a safe place for you and your families and that parenting courses are helping you to improve your children's behaviour. This means that you and your children have less stressful lives. We know that some of you are members of the parents' forum and the advisory board for the centre. This is something that is



new to you, but it does mean that you can help the centre to decide what type of activities it should provide and if things aren't improving you can ask why. We know the staff work hard with other agencies to make sure that when those of you who use the centre need help, support or guidance, it is given by the right people. The staff have also started to improve the ways that people who do not speak English as their first language can access information and support at the centre.

We found that not enough local families are using the centre. The centre is just starting to find out more about the area it serves and the families who live in it. This means that the activities and college courses that are on offer are not always the ones that will help you in the best way. For example, the centre knows that too many young children are obese and that too many children have to be taken to the accident and emergency department, but they are not working quickly enough with you to improve these things. We have asked the centre to improve how it uses the information it has. We have also asked the city council to improve the way that it monitors how well the centre is doing to improve opportunities for local families. This is the main reason why we have made the centre satisfactory rather than good. We think that this will help the centre to tailor its services more closely to your needs with the help of the city council. We wish you well for the future.

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