

# Inspection report for Great Harwood Children's Centre

Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	365787
Inspection dates	7 – 8 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Suzi Clipson-Boyles

Centre governance	Great Harwood Primary School governing body
Centre leader	Zoe Turner
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Great Harwood Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	None

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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector. They held meetings with: children; parents; the headteacher; staff from the centre; a representative from the local authority; childminders; the manager of the centre's partner day-care nursery; health and social care professionals and other partners from other organisations.

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

## Information about the centre

The centre opened in 2007, as part of the phase two programme, to deliver the full core offer. At that time, it operated from rooms in Great Harwood Primary School. It moved into new purpose-built premises on a site opposite the school in September 2008. The headteacher of the school is also the head of centre, but the day-to-day running of the centre is managed by the assistant head of centre. The centre does not provide day-care, but is linked to Little Cheeky Monkeys private day-care nursery. The centre's childminding network has 13 childminders registered and has been awarded the National Childminding Association (NCMA) *Come First* quality status. The centre is governed by the school's governing body, via one of its sub-committees. The local authority supports and monitors the effectiveness of the centre's performance.

The centre serves an area surrounding and including a small semi-rural town between Blackburn and Accrington. There are pockets of deprivation that fall within the top 30% nationally. Overcrowding and low levels of literacy and numeracy are of particular concern, and unemployment is above national levels at 20%. Around one fifth of families rely on benefits, and of those who are in employment many are on low incomes. The population of the area is predominantly of White British heritage. Around 18% of the reach population is Pakistani, many of whom are first generation, and there are an increasing number of families from Eastern Europe, in particular Poland. Many children have skills below the levels expected for their age on entry to

the Early Years Foundation Stage, and language skills and levels of understanding are particularly low for the 30% priority group.

## 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
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### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2
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## Main findings

This is a good children’s centre that provides effective services for parents and their children. It is an inclusive and welcoming place to visit, and parents speak highly of the support they receive here. The centre has developed rapidly since it opened and the team of staff has grown as a result of the improved attendance and increasing numbers wishing to access its services. The effectiveness with which centre staff assess the needs of parents and families is leading to flexible and tailored provision. This in turn is resulting in good outcomes across a range of groups reflecting the diversity and requirements of its users. The centre is well led and managed by the highly professional and supportive team. Outreach workers have a considerable impact on helping families. The harder-to-reach families benefit particularly because of the persistence of these staff in making contact. Extended services are extremely well-coordinated and developed. Parents are very much involved in providing feedback on the services provided although they are as fully involved in significant decision-making or planning. Similarly, checks are made on systems periodically, but more rigorous quality assurance checks are not so well-established. The sub-committee of governors keeps regular checks on and is supportive of the centre but does not yet fully monitor and challenge the centre on its performance in relation to outcomes.

The centre’s capacity to improve and develop further is good. The leadership team have an extremely accurate understanding of their reach area and those who live within it. They also work effectively beyond the immediate community and collaborate well with other agencies and organisations. They work hard to identify gaps in provision so that they might continuously improve their services. As a result, registrations and uptake of activities are on the increase, relationships are positive and integrated work with different partners is going from strength to strength. Ambitious targets are set relating to provision, and performance across outcomes has

clearly improved. Self-evaluation is not yet rooted in a systematic annual cycle of robust and sophisticated analysis. This means that it is difficult to measure precisely the impact of the centre's work over time or make comparisons between outcomes for different groups of children and adults, for example, the impact of adult training on their future employment. Consequently, it is not possible to fully assess whether the majority of families are demonstrating sufficiently improved outcomes.

Good arrangements are in place to ensure the health, safeguarding and well-being of all who use, visit and work in the centre. Children and adults are responding particularly well to the high quality learning and development opportunities provided by the centre. Levels of engagement are high and there is an increasing demand for activities and other services, such as counselling, advice on tax issues, and parenting classes. Courses in basic skills, some of which are accredited, are particularly popular. The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is used effectively, although progress in the areas of learning is not tracked within the centre for its registered children.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Demonstrate that outcomes are improving for the majority of families by:
  - designing more precise measures for all the outcomes across time
  - tracking the impact of learning and development for adults on their longer-term economic well-being
  - monitoring more closely the progress of children in the centre against the five areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
  
- Establish more sophisticated and robust approaches to self-evaluation and improvement planning by:
  - quality assuring all aspects of the centre's work systematically
  - identifying key priorities for improvement by using measurable success criteria
  - involving users more strategically in the planning and decision-making process
  - ensuring that governors understand and carry out their responsibilities to monitor the impact of the centre's work.

## How good are outcomes for users?

<b>2</b>
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Outcomes for many young children and their parents are good as a result of the effectiveness of the services, activities and outreach approaches delivered by the centre. However, the lack of precision in the design, collection and analysis of data

means there is an insufficiently clear picture of the extent to which this affects the majority of families.

The information gathered from partners indicates that an increasing number of families are improving their healthy lifestyles through raised awareness and a clearer understanding of what is required and why. Referrals to national health service (NHS) dentists are increasing and more families are adopting better dental hygiene practices. Parents say they are eating more healthily as a result of the cookery and nutrition classes. The number of physical activities provided, such as baby swimming, has been increased to combat obesity levels and participation rates are rising, although it is not clear whether this is having an impact on children's weight.

Parents and children are effectively safeguarded at the centre and say they feel safe there. Their awareness of safety issues in the home has improved. For example, 17 families have installed smoke alarms this year following guidance from the centre. The number of road traffic accidents in the reach area is considerably lower than in the wider district, and the number of admissions to hospital for children's injuries has fallen this year. Children who are subject to the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) are well-supported and make good progress. The number of children on child protection plans has been reduced to zero, but services continue to help families where there have been concerns previously in order to provide stability and support. This proactive approach is effective in preventing the recurrence of incidents and helps to embed the work of the centre in the longer term. There are no looked-after children within the reach area currently. Structured parenting courses are helping parents to improve the behaviour of their children, and the positive impact of this was very evident during observations by inspectors. Parents who are experiencing change or other difficulties feel extremely well-supported. One mother who had recently moved into the area said to inspectors that the centre had been a 'lifeline' to her and her family.

Parents and children alike all visibly enjoy learning at the centre. One parent commented about her son: 'He absolutely loves coming here and he used to be very shy.' Inspectors observed many children engaging enthusiastically in learning at the centre and at the local library. It was notable that they were very absorbed in the activities and behaviour was good as a result. This is helping them develop positive attitudes to learning in preparation for school and scores at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage in the five schools within the reach areas have risen during the last two years. The centre users and staff are clearly a cohesive community where relationships are constructive and new friendships have blossomed within and across cultures.

Learning outcomes for parents are particularly good and an increasing number are successfully achieving National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) through the centre. One parent was clearly appreciative when she told an inspector: 'I didn't do GCSEs at school and the centre has given me a second chance.' Parents also told inspectors that they are benefitting from the Jobcentre Plus link and support with job applications. Parents are increasingly engaging with and contributing to the centre,

for example, one group of mothers is currently being trained to be centre volunteers. They are keen to communicate their views do so willingly and are listened to. However, they do not currently have sufficient opportunities to contribute more strategically to influence the further development of the centre’s work.

*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>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>2</b>

## How good is the provision?

<b>2</b>
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The centre provides a wide variety of activities and services to match the needs of its many users. The staff consider carefully what is needed through different types of assessments and by evaluations of the provision. They listen well to parents and are responsive to their requests. As a result, relationships between staff and users are extremely positive and trusting, and participation rates are good and improving. However, analysis is not sufficiently refined to assess the extent to which needs are being met across specific groups. Outreach workers are proactive and highly effective in targeting the top 30% of families, and good inter-agency working with other partners leads to appropriate strategic referrals for services, such as the baby clinic, breastfeeding support and counselling. Some efforts have been made to engage harder-to-reach groups, with mixed results because approaches have not always been evaluated to establish if there might be alternative methods. Some fathers say they do feel part of the centre but would welcome more opportunities to meet as a group. A particular strength of the centre’s work is the way in which learning and development are driven by high aspirations for and expectations of their users. High quality training opportunities are available, some of which are accredited by other agencies. Parents have responded well to this and the numbers requesting training are growing. One parent said to an inspector: ‘Maths and English are fantastic! I am loving every minute of it!’ Another parent described what a difference the English as a Second Language classes had made to her ability to relate to others, reducing her sense of isolation. The Top Ten Tips for Parents course has been particularly successful and many parents were able to tell inspectors how this had impacted on their children’s well-being. For example, one parent explained how she

felt much more confident to take her child to the supermarket because she knows now how to divert tantrums by involving her in the shopping activities. The centre collects feedback from parents about courses but does not gather ongoing information to monitor the impact of learning on employment and skills. The centre provides good provision for children through well-planned learning opportunities within the centre and its grounds. The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is used effectively to guide planning and high levels of engagement and enjoyment were observed during the inspection. Parents also benefit from being encouraged to promote learning through play with their children at the centre. The centre does not track the progress of children across the five areas of learning, so planning of centre activities does not arise directly from assessments of children’s learning needs. However, individual children have been supported well in the past with one-to-one learning when specific needs have arisen. Other partners are deployed to extend the range of learning for children and the impact of this was clearly demonstrated by the babies singing joyfully at the Kindermusik class! Similarly, the provision is further expanded by the use of locations, such as the local library which engages other users in the wider community. Links are also made with other children’s centres in order to build further capacity for provision. Subsidised educational visits further afield for families enrich the experiences of children and parents alike. The quality of care, guidance and support is good and as a result, families feel very well-supported. The good coordination of multi-agency working and careful attention to meeting the needs of different groups ensures that all registered users feel that their needs are well-met in a safe and supportive environment.

*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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>2</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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The centre is well led and managed and provides good value for money. Self-evaluation is accurate and informs the ongoing planning and development of the centre, although the views of users are used to inform operational rather than more strategic improvements. Resources are well organised and of high quality. The environment is clean, orderly and enhanced with thoughtful and carefully presented displays, including displays of children’s work. Good information is also available for users in a variety of formats. One parent commented to an inspector: ‘I feel so relaxed and welcome when I come here.’ Staff work as a cohesive and enthusiastic team and ambitions are high to provide good outcomes for their users. Safeguarding

arrangements are good, including secure systems between different agencies and effective training for parents as well as staff. Recruitment and vetting procedures are rigorous and visitors to the centre are checked appropriately. Required policies and procedures are in place, although quality assurance systems are not sufficiently advanced or regular to identify where further improvements might be made. Early intervention strategies and effective referral systems ensure that children are securely protected and much successful work has been carried out with families involved in domestic violence.

Senior leaders have a determined ambition for providing the best services for its users. They are responsive to needs on an individual level, although the more strategic use of information is in the early stages of development. Plans for improvement are thorough and consider all outcomes, but the lack of measurable success criteria means that priorities and progress are not as clear as they might otherwise be. The centre is highly inclusive and a positive multicultural ethos emanates throughout. Similarly, meeting the needs of those with disabilities or additional needs is a high priority. One father commented to an inspector: 'My child has a medical problem and the staff have really helped and supported us through a difficult time.' Staff work tirelessly to ensure that all registered users have equal opportunities to access relevant services. They are responsive to needs, often adapting activities when needed. For example, the appointment of a bilingual outreach worker has greatly enhanced the impact of the centre's work on children and parents speaking English as an additional language. However, the lack of accurate comparative data is currently impeding the centre's ability to identify whether gaps between groups are narrowing sufficiently well because precise measures are not collated and compared from year to year

Partnerships are strong across private, public and voluntary sectors. The childminding network is exemplary, a considerable number of individual childminders have improved their ratings in Ofsted inspections from satisfactory to good since joining the network and two are now enrolled on foundation degree courses. Similarly, the partnership with Little Cheeky Monkeys day-care nursery has led to improved practice and outcomes. The centre is extremely well-supported by the local authority who also provide suitably challenging conversations to help the centre further improve its services. Training and guidance provided by the local authority are extremely good, and much work has been carried out recently to improve the efficiency and value of data transfer. The sub-committee of governors keep regular checks on the centre, particularly finance, staffing and buildings, via termly reports received from the headteacher. They then report to the full governing body. Meetings are efficiently recorded. Members take a keen interest in the services provided by the centre but there is limited evidence that they monitor or challenge the impact on outcomes.

*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</b>	<b>2</b>
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<b>understood</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>	2
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	2
<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>	2
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	2
<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

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected Great Harwood Children's Centre on 7 and 8 February. We have judged the centre to be good. You were very helpful in answering our questions and we enjoyed listening to your views and ideas. Thank you very much for coming in to see us.

The centre provides a good range of services and activities. The staff listen to you carefully so that they can adapt and change things if needed. You told us that many of the courses have helped you a lot. The Top Ten Tips for Parents course has really made a big difference. We think it is brilliant that so many of you are improving your basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Some of you told us how you are eating more healthily at home. Others are taking more exercise to become healthier.

We were also impressed with the way your children were enjoying the learning activities at the centre. Those babies really can sing and dance! In the crèche, the

behaviour was extremely good because the children were so interested in what they were doing. This is preparing them very well for when they start school.

Those of you we spoke to said you feel welcome and safe at the centre. Everyone feels included, and staff always make sure that everyone's needs are met. Many of you and your children have made new friends at the centre. Sometimes staff provide special activities when needed by certain children or families. The arrangements and training for safeguarding you and your children are good. This includes the way the centre works with other partners such as health and social care.

We have asked the centre to work on two areas to improve its services even more and help it to improve even further by the next time it is inspected. Firstly, we would like staff to measure more accurately the differences the services are making. This will help them understand how families are affected by the centre and see where there may be gaps. For example, how well are the activities in the crèche increasing your children's learning levels? Secondly, we would like them to evaluate their work more systematically in order to plan further improvements. This should involve governors more. We have also suggested that some of you might like to be more involved in this process.

I send you and your children my very best wishes for the future.

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