

Inspection report for Wade Hall Children's Centre

Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	365753
Inspection dates	9 – 10 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Linda McLarty

Centre governance	The local authority
Centre leader	Maria Neale
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Busy Bodies Leylands Ltd EY368947

The inspection of this Sure Start Children's Centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

An inspection of the registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 3 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two early years inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the senior leadership team, a representative of the local authority and the chair of the advisory board, parents, representatives from health partners and of the commissioned services.

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

Information about the centre

Wade Hall Children's Centre is a Phase 1 children's centre which was designated in 2006 and has been delivering the full core offer since April 2009, under the governance of Lancashire County Council. The head of centre has managerial oversight of two Phase 2 centres (based at two high schools in the South Ribble area) and two Phase 3 centres in the area.

Service delivery is through a range of providers on and off-site, including local primary schools and the adjacent community centre. There is on-site delivery of services by speech and language therapists, educational psychologists, counselling services and smoking cessation advisors from the Primary Care Trust. There are service level agreements in place with the voluntary organisation Homestart to provide outreach services, parenting courses, a family group and a father's group. A service level agreement is also in place commissioning the Leyland Project, based on the Wade Hall estate, to provide outreach workers. Children's Integrated Services use the centre for contact sessions and family meetings.

There are 1033 children under five years old in the catchment area, of whom 241 live in some of the 30% most disadvantaged areas in the country. Of these 241 children, 182 (approximately 76%) are registered with the children's centre.

The centre has 492 children registered in total, representing 41.8% of the total number in the reach area. Service provision is specifically targeted at the most disadvantaged families. Of the 492 children registered at the centre, 65% accessed services during the last year.

The most recent data (from 2008) indicate that 215 children lived in workless households, and the 2007 data showed that 24.4% of families in the reach area were in receipt of Working Families Tax Credit.

The reach area is geographically large and of its ten super output areas two are in the top 30% of deprivation. Approximately 98% of families are of White British heritage with the remaining residents representing a range of minority ethnic backgrounds.

Busy Bodies Leyland Ltd, the nursery attached to the children's centre, offers care and education for up to 34 children from birth to five years, including no more than six children aged from birth to two years. An inspection of this provision was carried out and the report is available on the Ofsted website at [http: www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

The centre also supports children in a variety of private and voluntary sector settings in its reach area. Across the footprint, children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with broadly average levels of development compared to their peers nationally.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for users and the wider community

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Wade Hall Children's Centre is improving the five Every Child Matters outcomes for the families in its reach area well. Outreach workers are the main thrust of the centre's work, and management have prioritised and invested well in their

professional development. This enables the team to be highly effective. Emerging leadership is identified and supported very well, ensuring secure succession planning and effective leadership at every level. The manager has developed a strong leadership team, where capacity to improve is vested in the team rather than in individuals. This, and the centre's track record of improvement demonstrates a good capacity to improve outcomes even further.

The leadership and management are challenged and supported well by the local authority and by the advisory board, which represents many community and professional partners. The management is able to call on durable and productive partnerships in childcare, education, health, social care and housing to swiftly mobilise support for families experiencing need and crisis.

It is not yet possible to assess the centre's progress towards the national indicators, or fully evidence the impact of the centre's work in its reach area because the local authority has not set the centre any outcome targets. The centre evaluates its provision well, but is at an early stage of looking at provision in terms of measurable impact on outcomes. This limits the management's ability to self-evaluate the effectiveness of its work and restricts the advisory board and local authority's ability to hold the centre to account for outcomes.

Leaders and managers know the needs of the area well. The improvement plan predominantly prioritises provision targets, but the determination of the centre and its partners to continually improve their provision in all areas is resulting in good outcomes. The impact upon helping families to stay safe is outstanding. Service delivery is fully integrated because of good partnership working. The centre targets its resources at supporting the most vulnerable and swiftly reshapes services to respond to emerging needs and to maximise take-up. For example, the management quickly galvanised partnerships to support the emerging concern about communication, language and literacy in the area, and to improve the rising problem with obesity in local Reception classes. Assessment of need and provision of an impressive range of services, organised in response to analysis of assessment information, are both outstanding.

The centre responds swiftly to local intelligence, for example, that Early Years Foundation Stage profile scores for children in the reach area had dipped 0.3% between 2007-2009. The centre immediately provided more activities to improve children's speech and language. These interventions are already improving scores in three out of the five lowest performing schools. Some initiatives, such as tracking centre children's attainment on entry to local schools, are at too early a stage to highlight the specific difference the centre makes to the individual children using its services. However, anecdotally, local headteachers have said that they can see improved readiness for school in children using centre provision.

Case study evidence and discussions with users show that the centre is making a significant difference to the lives of users, some of whom state that 'No matter what your needs, nothing is a problem' and they '...could not have coped without the

support.’ Universal early intervention and preventative work is valued by users and partners, and complements the highly successful targeted work and individually tailored crisis intervention and support.

Safeguarding of children and users is outstanding and the early intervention work is successfully pre-empting higher-level involvement. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used extremely well to ensure effective identification of services required. Progress through the continuum of need is very effectively monitored to ensure support remains focused where most needed. Social care partners praise the centre’s support for children in need and those on child protection plans.

The centre consults with parents and carers regularly, and their views are respected and frequently used to reshape services. However, insufficient numbers of users contribute fully to decision-making.

The centre’s focus on the most vulnerable promotes equality of opportunity well.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work with the local authority, education, health and social care partners to improve the quality of data received by the centre and so to:
 - enable the leadership and management to set specific, measurable improvement targets based on improving outcomes for centre users;
 - enable the advisory board and local authority to hold the centre to account for progress against these targets;
 - enable the leadership and management to ensure that self-evaluation is supported by more evidence of impact upon improving outcomes in the reach area.

- Increase the participation of parents, carers and centre users in decision making.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Outcomes for users attending the centre’s activities or receiving outreach support are good overall. Impact data, although only available at locality level, indicates that uptake of immunisations in the locality exceeds the national average. Since the midwifery service began using the centre for initial book-in sessions, take up of this service has dramatically increased. Post-natal support, particularly for families from the harder-to-reach and more vulnerable groups, is well organised. In response to data at locality level, which indicates rising obesity in Reception Year, the centre swiftly reshaped its services to further promote healthy lifestyles. More cookery lessons and physical activities were organised across the reach area. Incentives,

such as rewarding attendance and completion of courses, with cooking utensils and slow-cookers have significantly increased participation while providing practical support for families to practice healthy cooking at home. Skilled outreach workers are improving users' emotional and mental health in the reach area, and the inspection received powerful personal testimony of the impact of their support, described as '...beneficial before anything bad happens.'

Users are kept very safe when using the premises and during activities through careful risk assessment. Resources are safe and of high quality. The centre encourages parents to access safety equipment in their homes, which reduces the incidence of accidents. The outreach team are very highly-trained across the whole staying safe and safeguarding agenda. They form a strong team able to offer informed and skilful support to users experiencing a range of crises, such as domestic violence, stress-related mental health challenges and post-natal depression. The support released through the Common Assessment Framework process is helping to reduce the number of families with child protection plans.

Children are well prepared for school in the on and off-site day care provision, and the centre early years teacher also supports other provision in the area. The centre organised ongoing intensive support to providers working cross-sector, to improve children's communication skills, in line with local school targets. Targeted groups such as 'Penguins' and 'Chattering Chimps' also promote these priorities, ensuring parity of support and outcomes for children with additional needs. Very strong partnership working with the childminding network coordinator based in the centre has enabled many children to receive specialist support from the community childminders, and the network itself receives intensive support from the on-site early years teacher, who is also the centre deputy. This joint working is credited as one reason why 28% of childminders across the locality are judged to be outstanding.

Adult learners have access to a varied menu of courses and programmes to enhance their ability to become economically independent, with clear pathways to progress identified. The volunteer programme further develops adults' confidence and aids their progression into higher or further education and, in some cases, to paid employment. Participation rates are monitored carefully to check that courses continue to meet need. Numeracy, literacy and employment training further enhance economic stability in the reach area.

The behaviour of children in the area is improving. The centre's parenting courses and behaviour management initiatives are attributed with being partially responsible for police reducing the priority risk rating of the Wade Hall Estate. The centre has won regional recognition for its collaborative work with the local prison to redevelop the children's play area in the visitors' hall and the provision of play bags, which improve the opportunities for prisoners to engage in their children's play during prison visits.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	2

How good is the provision?

2

The centre uses assessment systematically to accurately determine the needs of the residents. Information is analysed effectively and used to marshal multi-agency support for individuals, families and groups. This ensures that resources are delegated swiftly to those most in need. The Common Assessment Framework process is used exceptionally well to identify and coordinate prompt support for families in need, with children's progress monitored meticulously, and this frequently prevents the need for crisis intervention. The Leuven scale for assessing involvement, well-being and interaction has been recently introduced in the centre's family learning activities by the centre's early years teacher, although it is too early to see the impact of this.

Partners state that due to the proactive promotion by the outreach workers, the attendance rate at health development sessions in the Wade Hall area has increased. An outstanding range of services and activities meet the needs of users as shown by the participation rates and positive feedback from parents and carers. The nurture group supports nursery children at risk of poor attachments. Those who need additional support with communication skills have differentiated programmes and groups such as the Language in Partnership Project (LIPPS); in addition, the centre has identified a Communication Champion to coordinate the speech and language focused services and staff training. Parents and carers report improvement to their children's communication following the 'Chattering Chimps' or 'Penguins' courses. The centre has produced a 'Communication through Music' DVD to augment the communications sessions in the home environment.

The quality of early years provision supported by the centre is good, and the centre also provides sessions across the reach area to encourage parents and carers in how to use play to support their children's academic and personal progress. These include a very successful twice-monthly Saturday session for fathers.

Adult users benefit from a range of courses carefully designed to improve their economic well-being. Their confidence is fostered productively through achieving authentic achievements, leading to accredited courses, volunteer work and in some cases, degree level training and full-time paid employment. Some parents and carers have been supported towards Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications in childcare. The centre leadership is conspicuously committed to developing economic independence within the residents of the reach area and case studies attest to good levels of success. Parent volunteers are trained in first aid and safeguarding, and one parent is currently organising a child protection course for other centre users.

Strong relationships enable staff to offer well-informed as well as intuitive care, guidance and support, particularly during times of challenge. Case studies provide strong evidence of sensitive support to Eastern European families, based on a very good awareness of racial attitudes in the area. Users experiencing domestic abuse are confidentially signposted to sources of support. All staff, including administrative staff, are trained to identify when centre users may need help. 'I don't know what this family would do without the centre's help' was a typical parental comment.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The head of centre has forged a strong staff team with a shared drive to improve provision, enhanced and underpinned by durable partnership arrangements. Governance is strong, with good support and challenge from both the local authority and the advisory board, which keep the centre firmly focussed on meeting the needs of the hard-to-reach and most vulnerable. However, lack of measurable outcome targets from the local authority mean that the centre is not being held to account sufficiently for progress towards improving outcomes in the reach area.

The 'hub and spoke' model of shared management, and advisory board oversight of Wade Hall and the linked centres, results in good value for money because of shared resources and reduced duplication of services. The outreach team also work across the linked settings and residents know they can access the same staff and support through any of the centres. This increases participation and improves outcomes for a greater proportion of the population, many of whom are not mobile.

The performance management of staff is aligned well to the centre's improvement targets. This increases accountability for service delivery and strengthens Wade Hall's capacity to improve. Dynamic and supportive leadership has driven the professional development programme to ensure that staff are very well trained to support their roles. All outreach staff have received leadership training and this further aids succession planning and sustainability.

The centre has successfully ensured equality of opportunity for all its users and can demonstrate that once they are engaged in its work it leads to qualitative improvements to their well-being. This is particularly the case for parents of children with disabilities who speak very highly of the services they receive. Staff are well trained in inclusion and discrimination is challenged sensitively but firmly. Targeted and tailored services are continually reshaped in response to evaluation of need, to ensure that provision remains prioritised where it will do most good. This means that the more vulnerable and excluded members of the community have strong advocates within the centre's workforce, who use their partnership influence to ensure their needs are accurately assessed and support is organised swiftly and monitored closely.

Staff's commitment to working in partnership with professional colleagues, parents and carers and families to safeguard children means that preventative and intervention strategies are outstanding. Staff have high levels of training to help them offer bespoke support across the wider safeguarding agenda. For example, case studies attest that the centre has significant positive benefits for individuals and families experiencing child protection issues, domestic abuse and substance misuse. 'No one is pre-judged' said one parent. There are systematically applied procedures to ensure staff are recruited safely. These procedures, together with thorough risk assessments, ensure the centre is safe and those at risk are well supported.

The centre's self-evaluation is challenged by the local authority in the annual conversation, and the outcomes of these consultations inform future planning of services. Continuous monitoring at every level of service delivery is evident, but evaluation is it is not yet at the stage where it is using measurable data to determine accurately the impact of its work on families in the reach area or to drive further improvements.

Partnership is a strength of the setting. Health partners told inspectors that 'The centre's early intervention is vital to underpin our work as we do not have any capacity to offer the levels of support and pre-emptive work offered by the children's centre.' All professional partners expressed high levels of confidence in the work of the children's centre and in the leadership and management. All could cite powerful examples to demonstrate that the children's centre was making a difference to the lives of residents, and helping the partner agencies to meet their remits performance targets. Some courses evidence the distance travelled in terms of impact on lives, but some partnership representatives acknowledged that producing impact evidence of the benefits of the joint working with the centre was at an early stage.

The views of parents and users are routinely gathered through evaluations of individual activities and interventions in order to check the quality and usefulness. and to inform the future planning of provision. However, parents and carers are not sufficiently involved in decision making and the centre is aware of this area for improvement. Some parents and carers also felt that the centre could do more to publicise their services and some said they wished they had known about and had access to centre support earlier.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	2
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	2

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

An inspection of the on-site nursery provision Busy Bodies Leyland Ltd EY368947 was carried out at the same time as the children's inspection under and the full report of that inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk

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. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected Wade Hall Children's Centre on 09-10 March. 2011. We judged the centre to be good overall.

It was a privilege to talk to you about how the centre is helping you, and your willingness to share your views really helped the inspectors understand the impact of the centre in the area. Thank you. We found that the centre is good at helping families learn about healthy lifestyles, and that adults and children are being supported well to enjoy and achieve in their learning and development. The on-site day care provision was inspected at the same time as the centre, and judged to be effectively supporting children in their learning and development.

Some of you told us that your confidence was greatly improved by the way staff work with you, and by attendance at courses provided by the centre. You said that staff support you to gain qualifications or learn new skills. This has boosted your self-esteem, to the extent that some of you became volunteers and in some cases, secured paid work. The way in which the centre helps families keep themselves safe, and its safeguarding practice, is outstanding. The management has made sure that the outreach team are extremely well trained in a wide range of safeguarding issues. Consequently, they are highly skilled at identifying your needs and working with their colleagues to offer you support, especially in times of great crisis and difficulty. This has helped some of you cope with challenging and sensitive situations. 'I am where I am today because of the centre, looking after my children with hope for the future' is typical of comments made during the inspection.

The centre's focus on improving behaviour management and parenting skills in the area has contributed to the police reducing the priority level in the Wade Hall estate from red for high priority, to amber. Centre staff make sure that their work is focused upon the most vulnerable families and are having a very positive impact in the local community. For example, management and outreach staff personally cleaned and decorated an area of the visitors' room in the local prison, transforming it into an attractive play area, providing toys and resources. Centre staff trained prison staff in how best to encourage children's good behaviour in these potentially tense situations. This greatly enhances the enjoyment of these visits for families.

The centre is outstanding at assessing the needs of the users, particularly children. They work with you and other professionals using the Common Assessment Framework to find out and respond to your needs, and they carefully monitor the progress of families as they receive support from the centre and its partners. They have introduced assessment of young children's involvement, well-being and interaction with staff in family learning activities, although it is still too early to see the impact of this venture.

The centre provides an outstanding range of activities right across the area and they support existing good practice very well, for example, the Springfields project. The centre is small, but uses the adjacent community centre and sites across the area very well to make sure there are plenty of accessible activities to promote positive outcomes. The outreach work is described as the hub of the centre's work.

Inspectors agree that this strong, well-trained and well-supported team is working well to reach out to families facing particular difficulties in the area. They use the centre's good partnerships with health, education, voluntary organisations and social care to make sure you get the best service. The management carefully look at records of attendance and your responses to the activities to make sure they continue to meet your needs.

The centre receives valuable support and challenge from the local authority and from the advisory board. However, the centre does not have clear outcome targets from the local authority. This makes it very difficult for the leaders and managers to evaluate how well they are doing, as they have nothing to measure themselves against. This also makes it difficult for the local authority and the advisory board to hold the centre to account for their progress towards improving outcomes in the area. We have asked the centre to work with the local authority, health and social care to improve the quality of information received by the centre to help the centre set measurable targets based on improving outcomes. This will improve the way the authority and the advisory board hold the centre for account and also help the leaders and managers to know the difference the centre is making.

We think that the centre offers good value for money, and that by focussing its main resource, the staff, on outreach work, it is effectively reaching those who need the centre's support the most.

The managers know the needs of the area very well and check their provision to ensure that all groups, particularly those most in need of additional support are included fully. Consequently, equality is promoted well at the centre.

Partnership working is a strength of the centre. Although most partnerships are, like the centre, at a fairly early stage of being able to clearly show the impact of their work, partners state that 'Without the centre our work would be much harder, we would not be able to help the residents in the same way. The centre's work means that we are able to help far more people.'

Although the centre actively seeks, values and acts on parents' views, there are not enough parents involved in the decision-making in the centre. We have asked the centre to improve this.

Thank you once more for your willingness to talk to us; we can see why you value the centre staff so highly.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.