

Inspection report for Westfield Sure Start Children's Centre

Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	366727
Inspection dates	30–31 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Gillian Bishop

Centre governance	Collaborative Leadership Committee
Centre leader	Tim Sherriff
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Westfield Community School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Young Person's Centre EY336931

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 one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with volunteers, staff and senior managers from the centre, parents and carers, members of the Parents' Forum and the Collaborative Leadership Committee, partners and practitioners including health and Early Years Foundation Stage professionals.

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

Information about the centre

Westfield Children's Centre is a phase one centre, which received designation in 2006. The centre resides within a modern, newly-built fully-extended provision. On-site services include Westfield Community School, the Young Person's Centre and a 0-19 Social Care facility. The Early Years Foundation Stage Provision based on site includes an integrated service through a maintained nursery and a voluntary provider. This service offers a seamless and flexible provision for nought to four year olds as well as offering breakfast care and after-school care for children up to the age of 11 years.

The centre has the biggest children's centre reach in Wigan reaching out to five Primary Schools, and three Private and Voluntary Nursery Settings. The centre serves an area, which is in the 30% most socially deprived and disadvantaged in the country although two areas within the reach are within the top 10%. Local authority data indicate that a significant proportion of children in the reach area live in

poverty, as defined by the Children in Poverty Indicator. The proportion of lone-parent families and families receiving out of work benefits is double the national average.

The majority of local families is of White British heritage although there is a small percentage of minority groups such as East Europeans, Afro-Caribbean, Asian families and Asylum-seeking families. The proportion of children attending schools in the area that are known to be eligible for free school meals and those with special educational need and/or disabilities, is much higher than those found nationally. Most children enter schools with skills and knowledge that are significantly below those expected for their age.

The children's centre provides a full range of activities and services and staff work alongside various multi-agency teams including health, social care and Jobcentre Plus through Families First services. The centre has achieved a variety of awards, which include the Customer in Excellence Award in partnership with three other cluster schools; the Healthy Settings Award for the Early Years Provision; and the Smile Health Award. The centre is recognised as a breastfeeding-friendly centre.

Governance arrangements are delegated from the local authority to a Collaborative Leadership Committee, which is represented by partners from four local schools, a governor with parenting experience, centre user and a range of partner agencies. The day-to-day management of the centre lies with the head teacher of Westfield School, as he is the Head of Centre. He is supported by the assistant head teacher/qualified teacher for the children's centre and a children's centre coordinator.

Separate inspection arrangements have been applied to the inspection of Westfield Community Primary School and the childcare provided by the Young Person's Centre. Their most recent inspection reports can be found at www.Ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

Westfield Children’s Centre provides excellent services and achieves outstanding results. Leaders and staff are highly-motivated and intent on improving the life chances and the economic stability of its users. The centre provides a platform for independence and success, which ensures all those who engage make great strides in their personal and educational journey. At the start of this journey, centre users state they are frightened and often suspicious of the centre but by the end, they are reaping the rewards. ‘This place has turned my life around’ and ‘I never thought I could do the things I do now’ are typical comments by elated and proud parents and carers. The growing band of volunteers and the members of the parents’ forum, Families and Communities Enhancing Services (FACES), play a key role in the shaping and delivery of services; and they love every minute of it!

The strong sense of ambition and drive is built upon outstanding leadership and governance. Centre leaders, the local authority and the Collaborative Leadership Committee (CLC) have a firm understanding of the centre’s strengths and areas for improvement, hence the accuracy of their self-evaluation, their drive for continuous improvement and the centre’s excellent capacity for sustained improvement. The centre is extremely well managed by the Head of Centre and a highly committed and motivated team ably supports him. Strategic planning is appropriately informed by local and national priorities but current improvement plans are not yet fully concluded to demonstrate how targets will be used to measure and drive service development. Service evaluations inform future planning and confirm the effectiveness on outcomes for users, however, the high quality and usefulness of these evaluations sometimes varies.

Outcomes for families are extremely positive and outstanding in most respects. However, the centre’s ability to confirm a greater impact on health outcomes is impeded by the lack of localised health and birth data. Centre users develop a strong sense of identity and a willingness to become actively engaged in a full range of activities and decision-making processes. The extent to which parents, carers and children are consulted about centre business is exceptional and leads to their full

contribution in monitoring, evaluation and the future development of the provision. The priority given to improving adult literacy skills and raising levels of self-confidence ensure everybody who chooses to do so, is able to have their say. Educational achievements are outstanding for both adults and children resulting in the long-standing cycle of worklessness, now being challenged.

The centre's approach to safeguarding is robust and exceeds statutory requirements. Centre users consistently describe a strong sense of belonging and security and they benefit from excellent care, guidance and support, which enhance their health, welfare and social independence. Assessment of need is swift and referral pathways to and from various multi-agency teams are secure and successfully implemented. As a result, interventions are based on a firm analysis of need, are highly effective and include the implementation of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). This is particularly so for children in need, those who are looked after or those returning home or at risk.

A key strength of the centre is the way in which all partner agencies co-operate to deliver cohesive support and a full range of services. Another is the success of community outreach services and the tireless work of all the centre staff in engaging a significant number of memberships by vulnerable families from the most deprived areas of the reach. Inclusion and anti-discriminatory practice is at the heart of the centre's work. The centre provides a place and a service for everybody because they never lose sight of the needs of the whole community and all those residing in it.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Continue to work with the local authority and the Primary Care Trust to improve the availability of local health and live birth data, to enable earlier family intervention to take place and to facilitate the centre in demonstrating the full impact of their work in reducing health inequalities
- Ensure all agencies routinely evaluate the outcomes of their service or provision and contribute to the overall evaluation of the effectiveness of the centre; use these evaluations more systematically to set ambitious targets for the future within the forthcoming children's centre improvement plan.

How good are outcomes for users?

1

Outcomes for families are extremely positive due to tailored provision that is built around the needs of the family as a whole. Comments such as; 'they have turned my life around, we wouldn't be a family without them' and 'I'm much stronger now' reflect the sense of value that users feel. The hustle and bustle of families arriving for activities creates a buzz of excitement but there is also a strong sense of calm and serenity which some users appear to absorb as they choose to sit quietly in the

reception area.

Clearly-targeted health campaigns delivered through the BOAT (Better Outcomes Achieved Together) Project and the Sunflower Project increase parents' awareness of how to lead healthier lives. Parents describe how they now cook well-balanced meals on a tight budget, how they have introduced the 5-a-day principle and how they enjoy being physically active with their children. Local obesity levels are low but Cooking for Fun classes have prompted parents to look at food labels and consider the nutritional value of particular foods, 'I've got rid of my chip pan and I'm looking at labels now' confirms one parent. Many parents have been very well supported through periods of depression and firm evaluations of the visiting counselling service confirm exceptional strong outcomes for children experiencing emotional difficulties.

Parents describe how they thoroughly enjoy the energetic Physi-bodies and the pre-school children have significant opportunities to be physically active during pre-school gymnastics and during play in their 'outdoor village'. Input from a variety of community health teams and training provided by Action for Children ensure mothers and fathers receive preventative health advice relating to sexual health, immunisations and minor illnesses. As a result, centre data confirms consistently good immunisation rates and a reduction in the number of families needing to attend the hospital or GP for advice. Men Matters has produced equally good results as fathers report an increased understanding of how to monitor their own physical and emotional well-being. Teen conceptions remain high across the borough although there is a steady decline and current data indicate that breastfeeding rates are low but improving slightly. The centre's strong commitment to improving health outcomes is evident but a clear picture about the impact of their interventions is hindered by the lack of local and reliable reach data, including live birth data.

The excellent behaviour and sense of tranquillity in the centre confirms why parents and children say they feel safe. Parents state that they are better informed about recommended alcohol limits and how to manage their safety and drinking habits on a night out. The adventure-based learning initiative provides an excellent foundation for very young children to consider and manage risks. This is particularly well-evidenced when observing pre-school children negotiating a safe passage up the school's climbing wall. Early intervention is a particular strength of the centre and this ethos is immersed in a sense that prevention is better than cure. Consequently, they have striking case studies which demonstrate how intensive outreach work has prevented difficulties escalating. Strong working partnerships with an extensive range of agencies ensure clear referral pathways for outreach support combined with the effective implementation of the CAF. As a result, the centre provides excellent levels of support for significant numbers of children who are looked after or who are on protection plans, with extremely positive results.

Educational and personal achievements for adults and children including those with disabilities and/or learning difficulties are outstanding. Parents and children thoroughly enjoy activities and courses such as Messy Mayhem and Learn and Play Together INSPIRE sessions. As a result, parents report a better understanding of

children’s early development. The Early Years Foundations Stage is highly systematic and of a very high standard ensuring children get off to a flying start in their learning despite their very low starting points. Monitoring and assessment procedures are rigorous and targeted interventions such as Every Child A Talker and the Two Year Olds Funding Entitlement Project produce extremely positive outcomes for children in need of extra support, ensuring their readiness for school. Consequently, centre data confirms a secure narrowing of the achievement gap.

Adults make equally outstanding progress in their personal development, ‘my skills and abilities are growing all the time’ and ‘my children are so proud that I work in a school, it’s making them want to work in the future’ are testimonies of the pride and sense of achievement these parents now have. The centre’s commitment to ‘raising aspirations and striving for excellence’ ripples through the parent volunteers who beam with delight as they describe their personal journeys. Parents describe how they want their children to get a ‘good education and make something of themselves’ as they recognise the importance of becoming socially and economically independent. Valuable input from Credit Union, Families First and access to community outreach drop in, have supported a large majority of parents to improve their life and work chances through access to basic literacy and numeracy courses and by adopting a philosophy of ‘save first and buy later’ rather than ‘buy what you can’t afford’. The transition for some of these families is astounding as those potentially a target for ‘money-lenders’ are now confident and socially resilient.

The strong nurturing ethos and the frequency with which users are consulted about the quality and range of services ensures they are actively engaged in the life and development of the centre. The parents’ forum FACES is highly effective in both the support and challenge it offers. Members have undertaken accredited training for their roles and they have written their own constitution and the chair of FACES has now been appointed to the CLC. They have an exceptionally clear view of the role they play in enhancing services across the breath of their community and through strategic planning. They are enterprising in their approach and they are an absolute inspiration to others. Comments such as ‘I’m passionate about what we do and the difference we make’ is testimony to their will and motivation.

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	1
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	1

The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	1
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How good is the provision?

1

The care, guidance and support for families are outstanding. 'I don't know where I'd be without their support, everybody is lovely, not judgemental, and they'll even meet me outside so I don't have to come in on my own' are typical comments made by parents. Parents, volunteers and learning mentors are all advocates and role models for the centre and they do an admirable job in raising the aspirations of others. Reception staff provide a positive first impression of the centre due to the empathy and intuitive support for service users. Access to particular services is discrete due to the effective management of the reception area, which ensures all users feel welcome and happy to attend. An information kiosk and warm phone area provide easy access to a range of advice concerning childcare, jobs and training.

The centre knows its community remarkably well, ensuring services are carefully tailored, located and achieve good levels of attendance. For example, Messy Mayhem, Physi-bodies and a young parents' group run from a variety of community venues in a clear attempt to break territorial boundaries and increase engagement by the wider community. Service provision is flexible and includes weekends and evening services such as the popular 'Dads' Days' on a Saturday morning. As a result, the centre has been highly successful in reaching families who live in the most deprived areas and services to support them have been concerted and effective. However, they are not complacent, and they know that they must continue to increase engagement rates in general and this features heavily in both previous and current improvement plans and remains a key focus in the work associated with FACES.

Highly-effective Community Link Workers have been pivotal to the increasing levels of engagement by vulnerable groups and families. Firm relationships based on trust and sensitive persistence ensures the majority of families engaged with the centre are those that need it most. Engagement in some cases, has taken two years but when the success of this perseverance comes to fruition then it is a cause for great celebration as tiny steps are enormous for some. Parents describe their link workers, as 'little godsend' and they know they can come to the centre to seek comfort or safety. Excellent inter-agency work with children's social care, health services, schools and the extended school services, combined with intensive outreach work provide a secure bridge between support and formal services. Referral pathways to and from the centre are embedded across all partners ensuring swift and timely interventions for those in need.

Careful and detailed assessment of need is central to the tailoring of support alongside discussions about what parents need as well as what they want. This ensures parents are realistic about the need to achieve change through small but

measurable steps. Collaborative interagency working across all centre partners and the appropriate use of the CAF ensures needs are firmly focused on the protection and safety of families. Positive links with Home Start, Action for Children and Wigan Family Welfare ensures supplementary and specialist services are also on hand. Attendance across vulnerable groups is tracked and carefully monitored ensuring services are purposefully directed to where they need to be. Leaders never lose sight of the needs of the most vulnerable hence the increasing membership of a significant number of lone parents and fathers, the re-engagement of young parents after they drifted from centre services and improved attendance from minority and ethnic families.

Opportunities for educational and personal development are exceptional. There is a vast range of successful adult training programmes many of which lead to accreditation and qualification. Some, such as Triple P, Surviving Christmas, first aid and food hygiene training equip families with practical everyday advice. In addition, the highly-successful volunteer programme provides adults with valuable work based experiences and a pathway to further education and paid employment. Provision organised through the extended schools service has provided holiday schemes and family fun days for older siblings incorporating archery, abseiling and canoeing. Fathers and their children have engaged in adventure pursuits during camping trips at Bispham Hall. Whatever the activity, expectations of participants are high and tasks are challenging and progressive, this, parents say, is beginning to tackle the cycle of three generations of worklessness previously accepted as the norm.

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	1
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	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

The leadership and management of the centre are excellent. The head teacher, centre coordinator and Early Years Foundation Stage leader maintain high aspirations for their community and they are intent on providing high-quality provision through continual improvements. As they say, 'outstanding is still not enough'. In their quest for excellence, leaders have equally high expectations of their staff, leadership board, partners and carers and volunteers. They ensure resources are equitably dispersed across the wider community and they make excellent use of additional resources and facilities within the primary school. The sustainability and effectiveness of services are stringently reviewed, and keenly focused on matching services to need. As a

consequence, the centre provides outstanding value for money.

The Collaborative Leadership Committee (CLC) provides exceptional support and a strong strategic steer. Effective monitoring of services and outcomes by the Under-Fives Working Group and the Children's Centre Commissioning and Extended School Services Teams ensures the CLC is systematically informed about the overall effectiveness of the centre's work. Despite its relative infancy, the committee is highly effective in its role and is proficient in holding the centre to account. Together with leaders and the local authority, the CLC fully contributes to self-evaluation processes and conducts timely reviews of the centre's progress towards its improvement plans. The CLC recognises that previous improvement plans although clearly successful, lacked robust targets to measure impact more meticulously. Although this is being tackled within forthcoming plans, the planning cycle is not yet complete.

Safeguarding arrangements are robust. Criminal Record Bureau checks or service level agreements confirm the suitability of those working and delivering services within the centre. Building checks and risk assessments are rigorous and security arrangements are exemplary. All staff receive appropriate safeguarding training and interventions for families most at risk, are carefully monitored through regular case supervision. Parents understand the centre's statutory duties because staff are open and transparent during the course of their work. Referral pathways are secure and links with police community support officers and WAVE ensure families in domestic violence situations receive targeted support. Outcomes for children in need and those on child protection plans are consistently good and include secure exit strategies for children returning home from statutory care.

The promotion of equality and diversity is central to the work of the centre and this is securely evidenced by parents who describe the centre as 'a place for everybody'. Users display a strong sense of respect and concern for others and their willingness to promote a good cause during the 'Making a Difference' day is extremely impressive. Community cohesion is important to the members of FACES, who are intent on developing a community, which is strong, respectful and inclusive.

Activities and events are evaluated through pre- and post-evaluations, which seek to confirm the effectiveness of provision. Centre users consistently reflect on their learning and enjoyment through formal consultation processes and their views are used exceptionally well to adapt, improve or decommission provision, which are no longer effective. FACES have recently undertaken a superb piece of work with the extended schools service seeking to evaluate the satisfaction of centre users. The results of which, are keenly awaited, and will ultimately feed into strategic planning. Evaluations undertaken by strategically-commissioned services are robust and informative providing a clear steer as to their success and sustainability. However, the quality of these evaluations varies across some locally-commissioned services preventing a more profound view of the impact on outcomes for users.

The centre has established a firm collaboration amongst its partner agencies and

relationships between Westfield and its cluster schools and private and voluntary providers are excellent. Outcomes for users are significantly enhanced by the contributions from all partner agencies and through extended links with local community associations, FACES and the Westfield Action Group. The ethos of a seamless service successfully provides a team around the child and family and enhances the provision and outcomes for all those engaged in centre. Subsequently, the overall effectiveness of the centre is outstanding.

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	1
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	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
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	1
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	1

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

Ofsted reports for Westfield Community School and the Young Person's Centre have been considered as part of this inspection. The school was inspected in May 2010 and the childcare provided by the Young Person's Centre was inspected alongside this inspection. Both achieved outstanding outcomes.

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 the Westfield Children's Centre on 30 and 31 March 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

Thank you for the lovely welcome and for being so willing to speak with inspectors. Those of you we spoke to say that the centre provides you with a place of safety and enjoyment and fabulous opportunities to improve your health, education and independence. We strongly agree with this. Comments such as, 'I would be really lost without the centre and 'It's turned my life around' confirm how much you have benefited from the centre's work. We found that the centre is particularly good at knowing who is most in need and this is helping staff to provide support for families right across the community. For those not ready to come to the centre, there is excellent outreach support, which means families are visited at home until they are ready to join groups. Sometimes this takes years, but the workers never give up and when parents are ready they provide fantastic care and guidance and will happily hold your hand if you need them to do so.

Many centre users become volunteer helpers and some have set up a parents' forum called FACES (Families and Communities Enhancing Services). This group ensures that they find out about what parents need and want and they devise action plans for the management to consider on your behalf. This ensures that alongside your satisfaction surveys, you are also able to make decisions about what you want for the future. We know that many of these people have travelled a long way in their journey to become so confident and active in their community. We also know how proud they are of their achievements and so they should be!

The centre provide a wealth of activities and services which provide advice about smoking, breastfeeding, healthy eating, managing alcohol and emotional health and we know these are having a positive impact on your lives because you told us. This is because cooking classes have helped you to cook healthier meals and you have a better understanding how to drink alcohol in safe and healthy manner. However, the centre is not always provided with enough information for the Primary Care Trust to help them understand how best to meet your health needs. Therefore, we have asked the local authority to tackle this.

All the parents and centre users we spoke to were extremely impressed with the way in which the centre is managed and led. We agree with this too. We were particularly impressed by their safeguarding arrangements as we found these to be outstanding. We found that the senior leaders and the Collaborative Leadership Committee have exceptionally high expectations of themselves and of the children and adults they work with. This is why so many of you go on to achieve so well in everything you do. Leaders say that 'outstanding is not enough' and the plans that they have for the future confirm that they will continue to improve the activities and services to ensure

they continue to meet the needs of everybody in your community. However, they know that they must make sure that their development plans include suitable ways to measure the impact and success of this work, so they can show how it makes a difference to your lives. Therefore, we have asked them to make sure their new plans include ambitious targets to improve services even more quickly.

We found that their partnerships with lots of other agencies provide you with lots of extra help and support; these include the work with Home Start, Credit Union, health professionals and other local schools. We know this because these agencies provide information to the centre, which shows how successful their services are, but some agencies don't do this as well as others. Therefore, we have asked the centre to encourage everybody to provide this useful information.

Many of you told us about how courses and training opportunities have helped you to make significant changes in your lives. In fact, we know that both adults and the children attending the centre make outstanding progress in their learning and development. Many of you confirmed that you have attended literacy and numeracy classes and you have learnt lots of everyday skills through first aid and food hygiene training and parenting classes such as Triple P. The centre make sure you get lots of advice from Credit Union and Families First and this often leads to adults improving their qualifications and getting paid work. Lots of you have are learning to manage your money much better and you have also opened savings account for you and your children. All of this sets the right example to your children and as you say, encourages them to do well in their education and improve their chances of work in the future.

We had a lovely time at your centre and we were truly impressed by your achievements and willingness to make positive changes in your lives. Thank you, and we wish you all the very best for the future.

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