

Inspection report for Stoneygate Children's Centre

Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	365735
Inspection dates	29-30 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Janet Glover

Centre governance	Local authority
Centre leader	Julie Morrow
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	119083 Stoneygate Children's Centre Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY345399 Pebbles at Stoneygate

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 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

An inspection of the maintained nursery was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, members of staff and partner professionals from other agencies. Discussions were held with members of the children's centre committee, parents and carers and service users and representatives from the local authority. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Stoneygate Children's Centre operates from an extended local authority nursery school with extended services. The centre evolved from an Early Excellence Centre and Single Regeneration funded project. Since May 2011 the centre has operated adult education, parenting classes and family learning services from Oakham Court, supported by crèche facilities. Other services are provided from Millbank Court and the Preston Quakers Friends Meeting House in Deepdale. Pebbles at Stoneygate (Pebbles) provides additional day nursery provision on-site and is a commissioned service from Lancashire County Council. The centre, Pebbles and Stoneygate Nursery School work to provide a full service to the community in which it sits.

There are 1327 families registered at the centre, with 1908 carers and 1776 children. Of these 3684 individuals, 1513 live in areas within the top 10% of deprivation, 1095 in areas between the top 10-20% of deprivation and 490 in areas between 20-30% of deprivation.

The population in the area is culturally diverse with significant communities of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean families. A high number (71%) of these families and children speak little or no English on registration. A high proportion of adults have few or no qualifications.

Unemployment levels are high with 35% of adults registered with the centre dependent on workless benefits. There are 117 lone parents registered and accessing services.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is delivered through various groups and a centre teacher is in post. Children enter early years provision with knowledge, skills and abilities below those expected for their age, particularly in communication and personal, social and emotional development.

The centre is governed by the local authority and has a Children's Centre Committee that challenges and directs the centre. Representation on this committee includes parents, professionals and community organisations.

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

This is a highly effective children's centre that serves its community exceptionally well. Stoneygate buzzes with life, excitement and purposeful activity. Throughout the inspection all those spoken to were unequivocally positive regarding its impact. Parents and carers say, 'Without this centre and groups I don't know what we would do, we have learnt so much that benefits all our children'.

The outstanding progress of children and families is the result of superb leadership

and management of the high-quality provision across the full range of services. The extremely well-organised centre, nursery and programmes all run smoothly and calmly, which is reassuring for families who use the services. Families benefit from the centre being attached to the well-established and greatly respected nursery school. The nursery school and day care work closely together and share outdoor provision. The centre actively promotes equality and celebrates diversity due to its highly inclusive ethos. A number of staff have been previous users of the centre who, through the excellent volunteer process, have accessed training and consequently full-time employment. A high number of males have been recruited to the team and are significant role models for families and children. There are a variety of languages used within the centre with staff members who provide support to these families using their first language. The centre opens on Saturdays to accommodate both families and fathers who might otherwise not be able to access activities and provision.

Staff morale is very high at all levels. Excellent partnership working across all partner agencies ensure the extensive range of excellent services provided are constantly changing to meet the needs of the community. Multi-agency professionals share expertise and their excellent 'Team around the Child/Family' approach results in outstanding outcomes. Parents and carers say, 'This place has turned our lives around'. They are very confident that this is a place where they will be made welcome and they can always seek and receive excellent advice and support.

Health partners foster early intervention and engagement with the centre, which have great benefits for the users. Families facing the most challenging of circumstances have shown very impressive improvements in their well-being because of the excellent outreach work and support and guidance provided through sessions and programmes.

Safeguarding has an extremely high priority. 'I feel safe here and know that my children are safe too', was a typical view expressed. Parents' and carers' very good knowledge of how to promote healthy lifestyles and stay safe is often as a result of attending courses and activities within the centre. A thriving 'Fathers First' group encourages much greater involvement of male carers ensuring that improvements in parenting skills and knowledge are not confined to mothers.

Outstanding attention is paid to training and development. Many parents and carers are motivated well to engage in education and seek flexible employment to work around their children's needs. Courses are well attended and all those attending courses in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) complete with many moving on to higher level programmes. A large number of parents have successfully achieved their paediatric first aid. The outreach support workers provide exceptional personalised support, particularly on parenting programmes which are tailored to meet the needs of individuals; consequently, results are impressive. Children make at least good progress in their learning. This is due to the child-centred approach to their individual needs and the high quality of care and education. Some children are making rapid progress and are at, or exceeding levels for their age and stage of

development. The partnership between the centre and the local primary schools is developing in purpose and focus. Exchange of information has an emphasis on the small minority who do not achieve knowledge and skills at expected levels for their age by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The centre leader and her senior leadership team know their community and reach area extremely well; users and members of the community stated that they have the greatest respect for the work of the centre. The centre monitors and evaluates carefully the impact of the vast majority of cohesive services they use and have rightly identified that this depth of evaluation brings about positive change and challenge. The leadership and management are very effective in evaluating the success of what is achieved so far and reflective about where further improvements can be made. The Children's Centre Committee is highly representative of the community and challenges, supports and holds the centre to account extremely well. The centre demonstrates excellent capacity for sustained improvement. It is in a strong position to sustain exceptionally high outcomes and continually improve its effectiveness.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Securely embed the exchange of information with schools to further inform support for families and close the gap of the lowest achieving children by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

How good are outcomes for users?

1

Excellent provision is ensuring that outcomes in all areas are outstanding and continuing to improve. A wide range of services, advice and support actively promote healthy lifestyles. Children's centre and health workers can clearly articulate the sustained impact of sessions to reduce obesity in early childhood. The numbers of obese children has reduced year on year and is now significantly lower than the national average. Parents and children interviewed spoke of significant changes in their weekly diet due to attending sessions at the centre. Parents talked about understanding food groups and how to prepare them cheaply and easily. One lone father talked of being left alone with no cooking skills when his wife left. He now has the children asking for their favourites each week and adds more recipes as they go along to the centre. With the implementation and integration of the 'Healthy Heroes' programme across the provision children are finding out in a fun and exciting way about food, exercise and their bodies. The weekly challenge, such as 'drinking water' is extremely successful in helping children and families understand how to keep themselves healthy. One child talked about only having fizzy drinks at home and how he had told his mum that he now wants water for him and his three brothers. The centre provides a six-week healthy eating course for parents and carers run in partnership with the Foxton Centre. This is very popular and evaluations show that it is highly regarded by those who attend. Family plans show that parents and carers

are making positive changes to their children's diets. The regular exercise programmes and outdoor activities provide ample opportunities for parents who use the facilities well to explore physical fitness for all the family.

Children attending the school and day-care have excellent opportunities for outdoor play with well-planned and resourced outdoor area, with separate areas for different ages and stages of development. A sensory area in the shade under a tree provides a good environment for planned small activities. Many children arrive with significant separation issues and staff sensitively support individual children's emotional well-being. The excellent impact of this support is recorded and well documented within individual children's files. Children thoroughly enjoy the weekly 'Physi Kids' sessions which are lively, noisy and highly enjoyable. All teenage pregnancies are recorded by the centre and a specialist teenage pregnancy worker runs frequent support meetings in conjunction with the midwife and health visitor. Currently all those identified are registered with the centre and access information, advice and guidance which is tailored to meet their needs. One young parent stated that 'without the support of the centre in my early pregnancy I would probably have had my beautiful baby taken away from me, I had nowhere to live, nobody to turn to.'

The centre provides powerful messages around safeguarding and staying safe. All staff attend the required local authority training and have undergone the appropriate checks on recruitment. The single central register is up-to-date and all staff are required to attend additional training for safeguarding vulnerable adults. The centre supports a wide range of adults and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities well. Parents of children with disabilities stated that the centre had provided exceptional support and guidance at the centre and through outreach work. Disabled children and those with additional needs, their parents and carers enjoy and appreciate the special 'Time 4 Me' programme that is run each holiday. This provision was set up at the parents' request to provide well-earned respite.

Many parents and carers have had home safety visits and have been provided with safety equipment. As a result, parents and carers possess an excellent understanding of safety prevention issues. Many have made significant changes within their homes to minimise risks as seen in the successful promotion of Lancashire's safer baby sleeping campaign, 'Give me Room to Breathe'. The promotion of safety has had a very positive effect on numbers of children accessing accident and emergency services, those experiencing road traffic accidents and on the incidence of early infant deaths. Children are encouraged to behave in ways, which are safe for themselves and others and even very young children learn how to assess risks. Children spoken to were very confident and asked the inspectors for identification, including two children who asked to see appropriate badges. Children subject to a child protection plan have comprehensive and detailed files that demonstrate the success of the multi-agency approaches used. There is significant and sustained evidence of improved outcomes for children as recognised through their individual and family files.

Parents and carers understand the importance of child protection because it is

carefully explained to them. Significant and sustained improvement is evident for those children on child protection plans. The Common Assessment Framework is used extremely well to support families. Parents and carers describe the children's centre staff as people they can trust when sharing extremely sensitive issues. For many it is the last resort for help and support especially those with significant language barriers. For others it might be accessing valued contact time with their children, and for a number we interviewed support to prevent them from being deported. Behaviour of children across the settings is exceptional. The centre staff promotes a sense of belonging and respect that users appreciate. As a result, users and staff enjoy their time spent in the centre. Play sessions successfully engage parents and carers by involving them in the running of groups. For example, parents and carers play an active role in the activities with their children and they are encouraged to suggest ideas for future activities.

Excellent ideas and activities are shared well with parents and carers, supporting them to help their children achieve highly. One set of parents and carers stated that the '6 Steps to Parenting' course had brought them together, ensured that they presented a consistent approach to behaviour management and now understood a lot more about play and learning. Those attending the 'Nurture Group' in preparation for nursery school are making very good progress. Data confirms that the numbers of children attending the nursery school achieving 78 points or more on the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile is significantly increasing. An increased emphasis on communication and language acquisition is ensuring that the number of children achieving six or more points in communication, language and literacy, and personal, social and emotional development is increasing. The centre is successfully narrowing the achievement gap between children with different starting points. The developing partnership with the local primary schools and shared focus on the most disadvantaged children is securing improved outcomes by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Users make a significant contribution to the centre and the local community. A particularly strong and inclusive ethos promotes community cohesion extremely well amongst users and the wider community. Fathers play a key role in the many family days and events. There is a good representation of males who work at the centre or volunteer regularly. Parental involvement in the governance and development of the centre is strong through their representation in the governing body and Children's Centre Committee. There are a high number of Polish children recently registered at the centre. The centre employs a bi-lingual Polish support worker who works closely with the Polish support staff employed in the nursery. The Polish staff have been able to support Polish families in accessing a range of services to improve their children's health and well-being.

Staff are resolute in their commitment to ensuring that as many parents or carers as possible access a wide range of courses. The numbers of parents and carers engaged in education and training is steadily increasing and there is clear evidence that family learning is greatly improving outcomes. As a result, a significant number of parents and carers are keenly encouraged to increase their chances of

employment and improve their economic well-being. Very effective consultation with parents, carers and children result in their frequent engagement in critical reflection and evaluation to shape services.

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	1
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

How good is the provision?

1

The centre provides an excellent range of services that are well matched to the needs of families. Excellent use of local data ensures that hard-to-reach families are identified and supported. The centre's early notification of pregnancy enables the centre to let future mums and dads know about all the centre has to offer. The centre is an extremely welcoming, safe and secure environment where children's well-being and safety are given utmost priority.

Close links with the centre's health visitors and midwives enable prompt responses to crises in individual's lives. A number of fathers stated that, 'Without the centre we would not have access to our children, not have learnt how to care and cook for them, or have learnt to speak another language that helps us communicate better.' Families in extreme poverty are supported to access monthly food boxes provided by the Salvation Army and City Church.

Careful and detailed initial assessment ensures that all staff have a clear understanding of the needs of users, particularly the most potentially vulnerable. Central to assessment is a detailed 'welcome' conversation with the parent or carer to identify their starting point and what it is they most need. Outreach workers play a key role in these assessments; they use their excellent relationships with the statutory, private and voluntary sectors to ensure that the support given is carefully matched to the parents/carers needs. As a result of this careful assessment, many parents and carers are supported to move on in their lives. One of the parents spoken to during the inspection said that, 'Without the help and support of my

dedicated key worker I would have lost my baby, lost my home and have been deported to a country I have little memory of; they gave me hope when I thought all I could do was die’.

All staff are using the Common Assessment Framework very effectively to ensure assessment of the difficulties faced by families are detailed and well informed. The family files are rigorously up-dated and used well to track and monitor progress. As a result, support is personalised to meet each family’s specific needs. Well-established partnerships with multi-agency teams are ensuring that children and vulnerable adults are particularly well safeguarded. Feedback to the centre from both families and partners is unanimous in providing strong evidence on the positive difference that the provision the centre offers is making to the lives of the centre’s users.

Learning, development and enjoyment are strongly promoted. All centre staff very effectively integrate the Early Years Foundation Stage into all aspects of their work to ensure that children are well prepared when they start school. There is a ‘Nurture’, and ‘New Beginnings’ programme in-place to support this across the centre. The team is highly skilled and qualified in providing appropriate personalised support for all its users, regardless of need or language barriers. Parents and carers, including young parents, speak highly of the impact that the opportunities provided by the centre have had on them and their children. Detailed evaluations from parents and carers about interventions demonstrate the difference their experiences have made to their own and their children’s development and well-being. Comments such as, ‘They made me realise what being a real parent meant’ and ‘I can’t believe that my child with such complex needs can be so happy and so well looked after’ were some of the views expressed to inspectors.

The local authority Management Information Services collects all local data and provides a document that identifies well the impact of the centre upon its reach. The robust and consistent evaluation of the impact of services ensures that all community needs are being met and changed according to this need.

The quality of care provided by the centre is excellent. Inspectors observed the wonderful community spirit fostered during a ‘Healthy Heroes’ outdoor session, which promotes community cohesion very well. Well-established partnerships with Jobcentre Plus, Citizens Advice Bureau and the local further education college are providing excellent levels of support to adult users looking for employment and greater economic stability for their families. A number of staff, including males, started off as service users and have been successfully recruited and developed through the highly successful volunteer and apprenticeship programmes run by the centre.

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,	1

development and enjoyment for all users	
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 centre exemplifies high-quality practice. The centre leader, senior management team and partners are enthusiastic, highly skilled and trained. They demonstrate excellent commitment to the success of the centre. Governance and accountability arrangements are extremely well established. There are very strong links between the strategic planning, development plans and individual work plans. All workers have areas of responsibility that they address with total dedication, determination and drive. Performance management and quality assurance systems are extremely rigorous. Every activity, session and programme is scrutinised, evaluated and constantly changed to ensure that it meets the needs of those accessing it. A recent influx of Polish children has resulted in the employment of a bi-lingual support worker who works closely with the Polish speaking nursery staff to provide early and effective one-to-one support for children.

The local authority invest highly in their staff, many have accessed a wide range of high level courses, degree and postgraduate study to enhance their practice. Staff morale is high and everyone works together to improve outcomes for users. The centre resources are managed with great insight to provide the best service possible for the community. The centre runs very efficiently with a high regard for financial security. It focuses on activities that are sustainable, building on existing provision and sharing costs and resources where possible, thereby ensuring excellent value for money.

Excellent relationships within the senior leadership team enhance everything they do. The centre leader uses all available information to successfully interpret data quarterly so that she has a very clear picture of what is happening in the reach area. She knows what information is useful, and if data is inaccurate she will challenge it. She has high expectations and is constantly striving to improve provision to ensure it is responsive to local need. The centre leader works diligently to plan and evaluate the impact of services and to improve, or at least maintain, previous goals. Targets are ambitious but realistic and they continually drive improvement and inspire others to narrow the gap for the most disadvantaged by intervening early to breakdown any barriers to positive outcomes. None of this would be possible without the continued high level of financial support and guidance provided by the local authority.

The highest priority is given to safeguarding. For example, robust risk assessments and a single central record are in place which underpins effective recruitment procedures. There are exemplary protocols and partnerships in place with relevant

key agencies, particularly in terms of child protection. The child protection team are due to move into the children's centre to further develop these relationships and ensure rapid and effective early responses to issues that arise.

The centre consistently supports all users to be included in the services on offer. For example, staff determined to engage families conduct relentless outreach work in homes to ensure they can break down any barriers of isolation some families may experience. The centre is highly inclusive and promotes diversity very well. The centre is fully accessible for people with disabilities and the centre offers a well-equipped and resourced nursery provision which is accessible for children with additional needs. Staffing profiles are as diverse as the reach area itself and well reflects the community well.

The Children's Centre Committee is a very strong and enthusiastic constituted group who have helped tailor several services delivered at the centre due to thorough consultation about the community needs. The group is chaired by a parent governor who ensures that parents and carers are suitably represented on the committee; there are currently two. There is a thriving parents' forum that meets regularly and feeds their views and ideas to the committee. The committee support the centre well and are confident to challenge it to continually improve the excellent provision.

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	1
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	1
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

The findings from the inspections of Stoneygate Children's Centre Nursery and Peebles at Stoneygate nursery contributed to the children's centre report and judgements.

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 Stoneygate Children's Centre on 29-30 June 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

We were very impressed with many aspects of your children's centre and your excellent attendance at the centre shows a very high percentage of families enjoy the opportunities on offer here. Those of you we spoke to told us how very welcome you feel at the centre and how much you appreciate the support the staff at the centre have given you. The children's centre provides an excellent range of services that are helping you and your children. Throughout the inspection children, their families and other users were keen to tell us how the centre had helped them. We were particularly impressed by the case studies that showed the difference that the centre is making.

The children in nursery and day care demonstrated a mature and independent attitude and are very clear about how much they all love Stoneygate. The centre has many strengths, including the actions taken to support you and your children's safety and well-being and the outstanding quality of care, guidance and support offered by all staff who work with you and your children. The centre is working very closely with many organisations such as schools, health and social care professionals to continually develop the range of services that are available to you. Using these partnerships is helping many families and children, particularly those who are most disadvantaged, to have a good start in life. You gave us many examples of how the centre has helped you to gain experience as volunteers and qualifications that are helping you to apply for jobs; for many of you, the centre has totally and positively changed lives.

The centre offers an excellent and increasing range of programmes and activities, including those aimed at improving the health of people in your local communities. We felt it was especially good at giving your children experiences of engaging in outdoor play which is so very much enjoyed by the children. Also the 'Time 4 You' sessions, run during the school holidays, are greatly valued by children and parents alike. We thought that the early notification of pregnancy was good, particularly as it helps the centre let future mums and dads know about all the centre has to offer.

Children make outstanding progress during their time at the centre which provides a wide range of activities. This prepares them particularly well for their move to nursery school. The centre staff are very keen to make sure they know whether you have enjoyed any courses or sessions in the centre and they respond by making changes as suggested in your comments. Those of you who take part in courses such as '6 Steps to Parenting' say how good it is in helping you to understand your children's development, in building your confidence and self-esteem and in helping you to develop good relationships with your children. This is having a positive impact on their development.

Parents and carers we spoke to describe the centre as providing a very safe and welcoming environment; you are confident that your children will be secure and well cared for. You all particularly praised the staff for their warmth and commitment. Some of you with children who are disabled or have additional needs were keen to tell us that support from the centre has helped you try new ways of working with your children so that you can help them to achieve highly. The children's centre leader, known as the head, has very strong procedures to make sure staff and volunteers are suitable to work with your children. Some parents and carers explained just how important the centre is in their and their family's lives. You told us that staff listen to you and help you to get the right support and guidance. The inspectors found that the centre was excellent in helping many families at times in their lives when they most need it. You told us that the centre is respected in the local community because of the good leadership of the head and her team. She is well supported by the Chair of the Governing Body and the Children's Centre Committee. The head and her team run an outstanding centre but they still want to ensure that they are continuing to meet all of your needs.

Thank you to everyone who took time to speak to us, we are very grateful and wish you every success for the future.

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