

# Inspection report for St Paul's Heathside Children's Centre

Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	365731
Inspection dates	13-14 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Janet Glover

Centre governance	Local authority
Centre leader	Alison Watt
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Heathside Grove Walkden Manchester M28 3NZ
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Linked school if applicable	355864 St Pauls C of E Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	307473 Holly House Day Nursery

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

## Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

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

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

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with senior management from the centre, parents and carers, professionals, health workers and members of the advisory board. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

St. Paul's Heathside Children's Centre is a phase two centre, located in one building on the site of St Paul's CE Primary School. The centre was managed by the primary school until July 2010, when it moved under local authority governance. Childcare is not available on site as full-time childcare is provided by Holly House, situated 0.8 miles away, with whom links have been developed.

St Paul's consists of two former wards, Walkden North and Walkden South. Historically, the area is made up of mainly White British families. However, the cohort of Black Minority Ethnic groups is growing and currently stands at 10%, including a growing number of Polish, Black African and European families. St Paul's reach area is broken down into nine sub-areas. One of these is in the top 10% most deprived and has 70% of children living in households claiming out-of-work benefits. The other sub-areas are in the top 10-30% most deprived areas with above average numbers of households claiming out-of-work benefits.

The centre links with a wide range of services and community groups, for example: Health Visiting Team Health Improvement Team; Speech and Language Team; Jobcentre Plus; mental health services; local faith groups and other services. Children's skills levels on entry into the five linked schools within the children's centre reach are low but rising, with particularly poor levels for speech and language.

## 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

St Paul's Heathside provides good quality services and meets the needs of users well. Parents and users of the centre value the inclusive, welcoming environment that it offers. They appreciate the friendly, approachable staff who build high levels of trust among families. The view, shared by all who are connected with St Paul's, is that the needs of each individual child and their families are of the highest importance, and that this underpins the outstanding care, guidance and support it provides. The centre manager goes out of her way to ensure that all users are welcomed and respected and she ensures the staff are responsive to users' needs. One parent, reflecting the views of many, said, 'My whole life has changed, I don't feel alone anymore. I now know I am not a bad parent just because sometimes it all gets on top of me'. Relationships between staff and children, parents and carers, are excellent, promoting positive cohesion in the community. The child and their family are at the heart of the centre and this is evidenced in the wide variety of activities that families, including the most vulnerable, can access. The centre is well led and managed and provides high-quality activities for children and families.

The centre's approach to safeguarding is robust and ensures that families are protected and engaged in an appropriate range of services that improve their safety and well-being. Centre staff and partners have developed a highly cohesive approach to reducing the risk of harm and preventing difficulties from escalating. This, and the successful implementation of the Common Assessment Framework, ensures the children and families most at risk receive individualised packages of care from a range of agencies in a very timely manner. Morale is high and relationships between staff and users are strong.

Outcomes for users are good. Multi-agency partnerships are well established and responsive to meeting the needs of families. The centre provides a wide range of services that are effectively raising the knowledge of parents and carers about healthy lifestyles and keeping children safe. There is no current provision within the centre for ante-natal and post-natal services, which has been identified by the centre

and its users as a barrier for identifying and engaging those most vulnerable early on in pregnancy.

The centre is an inclusive setting and promotes equality well. Twenty of its users have become volunteers, accessing a wide range of training and support resulting in full-time employment for nine of these. The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scores have increased over the past three years, reflecting how the centre contributes well to improving children's skills for learning in school. Out of the current cohort of children, nearly all have achieved expected outcomes. The centre runs a highly effective 'Chit Chat' group for targeted children and their families who need intensive support in communication and language development.

Senior leaders have a good understanding of the strengths in provision and how the centre could improve. For example, they are well aware that further work could be done to reach all families in the area served by the centre. Whilst the centre leaders evaluate the quality of provision regularly and use the information to determine priorities, they do not consistently record and formalise outcomes in a quantitative way. As a result of this, planning is less accurate and self-evaluation does not always systematically and precisely demonstrate the full impact the centre is having on making a difference to users' lives.

The centre has successfully raised outcomes for users since opening, has strong and dynamic leadership and highly trained and experienced staff. The local authority is beginning to implement stronger quality assurance measures and an 'annual conversation', whereby centre leaders are held to account for the centre's development, and to provide clear direction. This provides the centre with good capacity to build on successes in the future and further improve outcomes for families and children.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Communicate and signpost the centre's work more effectively to the wider community and to those groups in the reach area not yet accessing services.
- Improve the quality of self-evaluation so leaders know precisely the impact of the centre's work and to more accurately identify the services and activities users need.
- Further improve user engagement, outcomes and provision by developing a more localised range of maternity services within the children's centre reach for the Walkden community.

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

<b>2</b>
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Outcomes are improving well across all five areas and are good in most. This is because the centre provides a good range of activities that are developed particularly

well in partnership with other agencies and parents. The strong integration of this work, with the child being central to all activities, is at the heart of the centre's success. Relationships are strong and effective and one parent stated, 'We trust the staff because they listen and don't judge us...they understand where we live and the hurdles we need to overcome'.

Parents and children are effectively supported to make healthy choices through a series of well-planned activities. Programmes like 'Talking Tots', baby massage, 'Inbetweenies', 'Bubble Babes' and healthy eating groups, developed to tackle 'fussy eaters', are just a small range of regular activities on offer to support and encourage healthy lifestyles. However, maternity services are not provided from the centre, which has been identified as limiting a number of families accessing other services. The priority given to getting children and parents physically active has had a good impact on obesity levels which, at 3.45% for Walkden South, is far below that of the highest ward in Salford, and below national levels. Effective signposting to the breastfeeding buddies scheme and the peer support group enables new parents to maintain breastfeeding when they are at risk of giving up. The post of Children's Centre Worker (for parental well-being) has had a significant impact on the mental and emotional health of parents through her work in developing an innovative and successful weekly parent support group called the 'Daisy Group'. One parent said, 'I was suffering from postnatal depression; there was a black hole everywhere I went. This group has built up my confidence and made me challenge issues. I thought I was the only one until then'.

Parents and carers feel safe and they state the centre has a 'warm and good feeling about it'. Parents and children understand the safeguarding procedures and they know they are in place to help and protect them. This has resulted in many parents engaging well with the Common Assessment Framework and has helped to reduce the numbers of families identified as being in greatest need. These early intervention pathways are highly effective in preventing difficulties escalating and in providing intensive support for children on child protection plans, for looked after children and those having contact visits within the centre. Case study evidence and discussions with parents provide strong evidence that access to good quality behaviour management advice, with strong support from sensitive centre staff, improves relationship, behaviour and home safety for users and their children. The centre prides itself on the successful recruitment and training of volunteers who make up 50% of the staff team. All staff model safe practices well.

The extent to which children enjoy and achieve is good and this is confirmed by the centre's improving Early Years Foundation Stage profile data. The gap between the lowest performing 20% of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the rest of the children has narrowed considerably since 2009. The necessity for high-quality communication and language development is well promoted through the 'Chit Chat' session provided in partnership with the local Communication and Language Development Workers and the centre's own 'Talking Tots' group. Parents have stated that these programmes have made them more aware of the need to read, talk and play with their children in a more meaningful way. Activities are frequently

supported by an enthusiastic and dedicated centre teacher who shares her experience and knowledge with all staff at every opportunity. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress. They have access to specialist staff that can support them effectively and their needs are assessed and planned for during progress review meetings with their parents. Transitional arrangements for children leaving the centre to the schools nearby are well organised and successful due to a focused programme of visits and preparation sessions developed in close liaison with the schools.

Several parents spoke of the positive support they had received in increasing their economic stability and independence. Many parents have gained confidence from helping as volunteers in the centre and have gone on to further training and gained employment. For example, a number of lone parents stated that they had been encouraged to attend the centre with their children early on and had all accessed a wide range of learning opportunities, a number resulting in access to work. Parents who have accessed the 'Incredible Years' programme describe how they have introduced boundaries and routines for their children and that they feel more confident when managing their behaviour. This, coupled with the centre's innovative approach to 'person/child-centred practice', empowers users to make positive and long-term changes to their lives. The local authority and leaders of the centre recognise that users' contributions to the governance of the centre have been limited in the past and now have robust plans to ensure that they can take a more active part in decision making.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for users*

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How good is the provision?**

**2**

The centre provides good quality provision. The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. The centre has firmly established procedures for assessing the needs of children, parents and families. These are identified early and interventions ensure that good progress is made towards targets and goals set.

Assessment of individual cases is robust and the Common Assessment Framework is successfully used and very well documented. Teams are gathered quickly to support children and families identified as being in need. There is good evidence of effective inter-agency working through good-quality case studies. Early interventions from the teenage pregnancy team, provided at the centre in conjunction with a teenage parents group, ensure that young parents are integrated into the centre to access services from the beginning of their pregnancies.

Particularly strong and effective actions are taken to support vulnerable families and children as well as those who require support in times of acute need or crisis. The centre provides immediate and effective support that promotes strong mutual respect and trust to those in the greatest need. Careful strategies are in place to ensure parents can build their confidence, parenting skills, and be supported to independence, at a pace that is appropriate to them. The use of volunteers within the centre is a strong example of the commitment to developing users' confidence and to support them to move into further training, education or employment.

The range of services, activities and opportunities offered through the centre and outreach services meets the needs of users accessing the centre well. Well-organised and effectively resourced learning environments are provided within the centre, enabling purposeful learning to take place by children and adults. Many activities at the centre are supported by a crèche which enables an increasing number of parents and carers to take part. There is a full programme of activities at the centre each Saturday for families and this is well attended by fathers. Targeted provision to meet more specific needs of those attending the centre are firmly in place. The centre has worked hard to engage the reach population, but they are aware that more should be done to increase the engagement of families considered hard to reach.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

**2**

Leadership and management of the centre are good. The centre leader, deputy and

lead teacher have facilitated highly effective teamwork and partnership working. Staff are understanding of users' needs and creative in meeting them. Governance moved to the local authority in July 2010 and they are beginning to provide a clear framework for the centre. The annual conversation process is not yet fully established but with support from a strong lead from another centre this is being quickly addressed. Lines of accountability are understood and reporting arrangements are embedded. Performance management procedures and the priority placed on continuous professional development ensure all staff are well equipped for their roles and responsibilities. Members of staff have come with additional skills and experiences including those in counselling, psychology and meeting the needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Parental well-being is high priority at the centre and interventions are always focused on improving outcomes for the most vulnerable families. The centre has exceptional examples of success in this area and case studies demonstrate many significant and positive changes the work done has made to families so that they are empowered to change for the better. The development of the advisory board has been recognised by the centre and local authority as a priority and suitable plans are in place to further improve the contribution users make to decision making. With change management process and efficiency cuts in place, the local authority are reviewing the role of advisory boards and how they fit into the new structure for children's centres.

Senior management involve staff at all levels in the process of self-evaluation in order to identify strengths and areas to improve. A whole-team day was a successful way of reinforcing the centre's vision and priorities. Staff have a clear understanding of the impact their work has on children and their families and are now much more aware of what they need to do to engage more families in the wider reach of the area. Some target setting lacks rigour and challenge and outcomes are not always measurable. Informal evaluation of activities is good but written analysis lacks clarity and a sharp recognition of impact and changes made after reflection. A good start has been made in using data to improve planning but the current system does not facilitate clear analysis which is easily interpreted by all staff. Good management of resources, combined with good outcomes for centre users, ensures that the centre provides good value for money.

Safeguarding procedures are robust and exceed statutory requirements. For example, older children undertake risk assessments for each appropriate activity themselves. Local safeguarding procedures systematically apply to the centre's work and effective recruitment, vetting and induction procedures ensure the suitability of staff and associated partners. As many staff members are local volunteers, robust training around confidentiality has been put in place. Staff take appropriate steps to alert parents and carers about safeguarding duties, which ensures their work is open, transparent and supportive. Good partnership arrangements ensure that early intervention arrangements are strong, and this contributes significantly to keeping users safe.



The centre is successful in creating a fully inclusive provision and has a strong commitment to removing barriers to accessing services. Excellent outreach work ensures families benefit from equally good services within the home if required. User's contributions through volunteering provide a valuable resource which centre staff greatly appreciate and deploy to good effect. The cohesive and integrated approach to family support and early intervention is a tremendous strength of the centre and this is shown in the wide range of partners with which the centre engages and in improving outcomes. Particularly strong links with health professionals, social care, extended school's team and the teenage pregnancy team ensure vulnerable families consistently receive a package of tailored support that is adapted as individual needs dictate.

These are the grades for leadership and management

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision</b>	<b>3</b>

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

The May 2011 inspection of Holly House childcare was used to inform some of the judgements made on this inspection. The setting was judged good. Some features of the setting were judged outstanding. The report can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the St Paul's Heathside Children's Centre on 13 and 14 July 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

Those of you we spoke to said the centre provided a friendly and welcoming place where you and your children can make new friends and enjoy activities together. All parents agreed that staff work hard to help you and listen to your ideas about how some activities could be done better. You all were really pleased that staff and volunteers were local people who understood what it is like to live in Walkden. You also told us that you always feel safe in the centre because the building is secure and you trust the staff that work with you. We found that staff have to undergo vetting checks before they are able to work at the centre. We also found that staff work exceptionally well with other agencies when trying to help families in crisis or at risk. You like the way the Common Assessment Framework is used to help make some positive changes in your lives by helping you join parenting groups and making your homes safer places for you and your children. Many of you told us how helpful and life changing attending the 'Daisy Group' was and how much you value this service. You told us that the centre is brilliant at bringing multi-agency teams together to support you, and this has been particularly helpful for parents who have children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. We strongly agree with this view because we know some children receive good quality speech and language therapy to help them improve their speaking and listening skills. We have also seen how progress review meetings help you with specific issues such as preparing your children for the transfer to school. Those of you who have participated in the 'Chit Chat' and 'Talking Tots' sessions say that this has not only helped you to support your child's learning but it has also led you to other programmes including some adult learning so that you can continue to learn.

You explained to us how much you like and trust staff working at the centre. You and your children are guided, cared for and supported extremely well by the staff and we judged this aspect of the children's centre as outstanding. The centre welcomes people from all backgrounds and treats everybody equally and fairly. Your centre leader and her staff have good ideas about ways to improve the centre.

We asked the centre leader and her staff to look at how they can make things even better. The most important things are to:

- look at how they can contact and encourage all of those families not yet involved or using the centre
- make sure maternity services are delivered from the centre so that mums and dads can get support and guidance early on in their pregnancies
- improve how the centre finds out if services are useful to you so they can plan well for the future.

It was a real pleasure to meet you and your children. We hope you continue to enjoy and benefit from your time at St Paul's Heathside Children's Centre.

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