

# Inspection report for Meanwood Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Rochdale
<b>Inspection number</b>	383524
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15-16 September 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jeremy Spencer HMI

<b>Centre leader</b>	Elizabeth Nield
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Meanwood Community Primary School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	N/A

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.



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## 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 co-located/partner primary school 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](http://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 the integrated children's centre manager, members of staff, representatives from the local authority, a range of agencies working in partnership with the centre, advisory board members and families using the centre.

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

## Information about the centre

Meanwood Children's Centre is situated on the site of Meanwood Community Primary School, in a residential area to the north-west of Rochdale town centre. The centre is situated in an area designated as among the highest 30% most deprived in the country. The very large majority of families surrounding the centre are of White British heritage. The remainder are from other ethnic minorities, including Pakistani and Black African heritages. The area is characterised by high levels of unemployment and social deprivation, although there are some areas of socio-economic advantage within the centre's reach area. Most children enter early education with skills that are below those expected for their age. The centre provides the full core offer although there is no full-time day-care offered due to the close proximity of other local childcare services. A part-time crèche operates at the centre and this runs under the supervision of centre staff.

An integrated children's centre manager oversees the work of the centre, and also that of another local children's centre. Governance is provided by the local authority. An advisory board is in place at the centre and is made up of representatives from

the centre, the adjoining school, local parents, the police, the midwifery team and the health visitor team. The large majority of staff, including the integrated children's centre manager, was appointed to work in the centre in April 2011.

## 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 families**

3
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### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3
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## Main findings

The centre provides a warm, welcoming and safe environment for those accessing services. Families appreciate the work it does and recognise the positive impact it has on their lives. Parents and carers told inspectors that the centre has become very important to them in building their confidence and sharing life experiences with others. One parent described the centre as 'being a lifeline' to her. Another parent said that they 'couldn't have done it without the help of the centre and the crèche.'

Steadily improving outcomes, including improving outcomes for those in some target groups, together with satisfactory overall leadership and management of the centre, indicate that the centre has satisfactory capacity to continue to improve. A good partnership with the midwifery service has ensured that an increasing and good number of families are registering at the centre at an early stage. However, the percentage of families who then go on to access services at the centre remains to be no better than satisfactory. The centre do not currently target and engage those coming from the most vulnerable groups in the local area with sufficient rigour.

Equality is promoted satisfactorily. With effective support from the local authority's data monitoring manager, the centre is beginning to gain an increased understanding of the impact of their work upon target groups. Analysis shows that overall numbers attending activities from some of its target groups are increasing, particularly fathers and those from ethnic minority backgrounds. However, leaders and managers understand that their analysis and tracking of the achievement of individual families and target groups is not always sufficiently rigorous. This means that the centre's self-evaluation of its work sometimes lacks the necessary focus required to determine how well outcomes are improving for all families, particularly the most vulnerable. Consequently, the centre's development plans for the future are not as well informed as they could be, and do not drive the actions required to fully meet the needs of those in target groups.

Productive links with health services have had a positive impact on improving the health and well-being of parents and carers and their children. Parents report that ante- and post-natal provision is of good quality. Attendance at these sessions has increased over time, including the attendance of those in target groups.

From low starting points, children make steady progress in developing their skills. Sessions for children such as 'Library Time' and 'Stay and play' encompass interesting activities, which are clearly enjoyed by children. The centre is beginning to develop more robust planning and assessment procedures, in order to provide tailor-made learning opportunities for individual children and better meet their needs. The improvements are being well coordinated by the local authority early years and childcare advisory teacher, who is based in the centre and also provides effective support to other non-maintained childcare settings in the local area.

Senior leaders have some suitable plans in place to support the centre in moving forward. Appropriate targets, sometimes referring to specific target groups, have been identified, and actions required to achieve the targets are effectively planned and assigned to individuals. However, the centre's reviewing and monitoring of the progress they are making towards achieving the targets is underdeveloped. This is because it is not always clearly understood who will be responsible for carrying out this role. A lack of clear milestones also makes it difficult for those monitoring actions to know if improvements are running to plan. Furthermore, the projected costs of actions are not usually made clear in action plans, making it difficult to judge the feasibility of projects and consider whether value for money has been achieved. The centre also acknowledges that annual targets need to be sharpened further to better address the needs of those in specific target groups.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve systems to identify those who live locally who belong to one or more of the target groups and increase their levels of engagement in the centre's activities.
- Improve self-evaluation by focusing more rigorously on the quantitative impact of the centre's work in improving outcomes for all target groups.
- Increase the effectiveness of development planning by:
  - outlining clearly who will be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the impact of actions and the progress made towards achieving the centre's agreed targets and objectives
  - including the projected cost implications of all actions within the plan
  - introducing more detailed 'milestones' so it is possible for those monitoring actions to know if improvements are running to plan, or whether increased resources or a change of approach are required.
  - focusing more closely on planning to meet the needs of target groups.

## How good are outcomes for families?

3

Families respond well to the centre's promotion of healthy lifestyles. Recent outcomes regarding breastfeeding prevalence at six to eight weeks and smoking cessation rates have been positive. Attendance at a planned programme of postnatal parenting courses run by the midwifery team in the centre, has increased significantly, particularly so for families from ethnic minority backgrounds. However, it is unclear as to whether other target groups have benefited from these activities. Parents and carers report that sessions to improve their awareness of healthy diets and nutrition have been effective and also said that their mental and emotional health has been supported through positive social interaction with other families in the centre. During the inspection, a well-attended 'Little Swimmers' session ensured that the parents, carers and children attending together benefited from a period of healthy and enjoyable exercise.

Inspection evidence confirms that families feel safe in the centre and the centre staff know the families they work with well. Children behave well during activities and appear to feel secure in their environment. Satisfactory systems and procedures are in place to protect families, including the most vulnerable, and the centre works effectively with other partners to share information and concerns in an appropriate and coordinated manner. During the inspection, a police community support officer ran a monthly surgery session in the centre. Parents and carers told inspectors that the officer helps them to feel safe, by listening to and acting upon their concerns, promoting the 'home-watch' scheme and providing them with 'police telephone number cards.'

Children attending the centre make satisfactory progress in their learning and development. Data show that children are achieving higher standards in their communication, language and literacy skills and personal, social and emotional development as they move into the Early Years Foundation Stage in schools in the local area. However, the gap between the lowest achieving children in the area and other children has widened slightly over a three year period.

Satisfactory support is provided by staff to help to promote economic stability, for example, by parents and carers accessing local training courses and gaining qualifications. 'Employment links' meetings, providing individual advice and help for those seeking employment, have operated in the past but no longer run at the centre. A referral system is however in operation for this service

Satisfactory procedures are in place to help parents and carers make a positive contribution towards the work of the centre. A group of parents and carers are currently learning to write applications for funding bids, in order to try to attract

additional funding for new activities. Some have expressed an interest in providing additional voluntary support to the centre but the centre has been unable to coordinate this in recent months. A parent forum group is in operation at the centre and parents and carers are also represented on the centre's advisory board. However, those from target groups are underrepresented in these groups.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</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>3</b>
<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, 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, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment</b>	<b>3</b>

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

<b>3</b>
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Assessment is used satisfactorily to ensure that services meet families' needs. The centre's focus upon the improved engagement of those in target groups continues to develop and improve, however, it remains to be a priority for centre staff. Outreach services, sometimes provided by other agencies linked to the centre, including the Barnardos' Rochdale Project, complement the work of the centre. For example, several children with disabilities have successfully been introduced to the centre and, with support have made good progress in improving their levels of confidence and independence. Parents of these children have been grateful to receive additional support, guidance and encouragement. The local authority's 'Family Support Team' provide additional effective support to the centre.

Activities planned to engage and motivate children's learning are satisfactory and resources are relevant to their interests. Learning environments, both indoors and outdoors are well organised and stimulating for children. Assessment procedures enable staff to track and plan the progress of groups of children but lack detail at an individual level.

A broad range of purposeful learning opportunities, including courses to develop parenting skills have been made available to parents and carers, including specific learning opportunities for young parents. Attendance at adult learning sessions has been satisfactory and on some occasions has been limited by the space available in the centre. An 'Early Start' course is planned to run in the centre during the coming

weeks, designed to help parents and carers to improve their children's readiness for starting school.

Parents and carers value the care, guidance and support provided by centre staff, although the centre is not recognised by all as the first line of support. A number of parents and carers commented that they have complete trust in the centre's staff team and are always 'met with a smile' and made to feel comfortable in the centre. Parent satisfaction surveys indicate that almost all parents and carers who responded are satisfied with the work of the centre and the support they receive.

The crèche operated by the centre offers limited free placements to children. This provides parents and carers with respite time, often following referral from other agencies. Several parents and carers told inspectors how the crèche facility has supported their improved health and well-being in times of need.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</b>

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

**3**

The centre has been part of a recent restructuring programme by the local authority and the integrated children's centre manager is relatively new to her role in the centre. The manager is also responsible for the running of another local children's centre. This facilitates good working relationships between the two centres and helps to ensure that staff and other resources can be satisfactorily shared between the two centres. In extending the role of the centre manager across two centres, the local authority has ensured that expenditure on staffing and professional development has been streamlined. These arrangements promote satisfactory outcomes for families and, as a consequence, the centre is providing satisfactory value for money.

Senior leaders and managers know the centre's strengths and areas for development. Despite changes in staffing and leadership, the centre has focused on improving areas of weakness and gaps in provisions, and maintained satisfactory day-to-day management. Several parents and carers told inspectors that activities are usually very well organised. The advisory board have not met for eight months and currently lack a detailed understanding of the centre's current priorities. However, a meeting is arranged and is due to take place in October 2011.

Clear procedures are in place to check the suitability of staff to work with children prior to their appointment. The centre's safeguarding policy meets requirements and



includes an appropriate range of guidance for staff on recording procedures and sharing concerns. Staff have undertaken recent safeguarding training. The centre promotes inclusion satisfactorily; appropriate policies, procedures and materials are in place to successfully encourage positive approaches to the promotion of equality and diversity.

Partnerships with health professionals are strong and continue to develop but those with other agencies, including social services, are not as well developed. Partnerships with the co-located school are satisfactory and joint projects, including an initiative to develop boys' speaking and listening skills have been delivered. However, the impact of these projects upon children's outcomes has not been fully evaluated.

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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</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>3</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>3</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area 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**

None

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](http://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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Meanwood Children's Centre on 15-16 September 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your children's centre recently. We visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's plans and documents and had discussions with some of you and some professionals.

The centre provides a satisfactory range of services that are helping children and families in the local area. Throughout the inspection, parents and carers were keen to tell us how they had benefited from the centre's activities, how much they enjoy activities and how they were made to feel so welcome in the centre.

The centre is managed effectively on a day-to-day basis and staff have adapted to their new roles well since staffing was reorganised in April 2011. They have developed links with a number of other organisations which provide a wide range of help and support for you, particularly in the support of your health.

While continuing to maintain the things they do well, the inspectors have recommended that the centre focuses greater efforts upon finding and supporting the most vulnerable families in the local area, where children may be at an increased risk of harm or underachievement. They have also asked the centre's leaders to improve their plans for the year ahead, by deciding who will check how well things are going and by making sure that they know exactly what they are looking for and when. The plans also need to be focused more on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable families in the community and carefully costed to make sure that they are affordable and good value for money for everyone.

The centre works closely with a range of agencies to ensure the safety of children and all those who use the facilities. The centre has undertaken all the necessary checks when employing new staff and keeps detailed records to make sure that all children are kept safe. Children behave well and are comfortable in their surroundings at the centre.

Thank you once again for your help with the inspection, 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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).