

Inspection report for Vauxhall Children's Centre

Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	383564
Inspection dates	29 - 30 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Gillian Bishop HMI

Centre leader	Mrs Kim Garthwaite
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Titchfield Street Liverpool Merseyside L5 8UT
Telephone number	0151 298 2918
Fax number	0151 298 2924
Email address	kim.garthwaite@liverpool.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	The Trinity Catholic Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Vauxhall Children's Centre Nursery Vauxhall Out Of School Club

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.

Template published: September 2011

Report Published: October 2011

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.

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

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

The inspectors held meetings with the senior leadership team, representatives from the local authority, representatives from the advisory board, health services, frontline workers, representatives from local childcare providers and school, parents and carers and other users of the centre's facilities.

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

Information about the centre

Vauxhall Children's Centre is a phase two centre located in the ward of Kirkdale, north of Liverpool city centre, a deprived residential area with few businesses and industries. This is in contrast to the extended reach area within the Liverpool Central ward, a busy and increasingly cosmopolitan city centre with thriving shops, restaurants and businesses. Both areas are situated in the City and North Neighbourhood Management Area. Kirkdale ward has one of the largest concentrations of super output areas, which are ranked in the top 1% most socially deprived and disadvantaged areas in the country with the remainder located in the top 10%. In Kirkdale 36.8% of the population are unemployed, 57.5% are in receipt of incapacity benefit and 24.1% receive Job Seekers Allowance. In Central ward 12.7% are unemployed, with 6.9% on incapacity benefit. 3.9% are on Job Seekers Allowance. Over

50% of children living within the Kirkdale and Central wards live in poverty, which is more than double the national average.

Families in the area experience significant issues relating to long-term unemployment, substance misuse and low levels of literacy and numeracy. Most children enter early years provision with skills and knowledge lower than that usually expected, particularly in their personal and social development and speech and language skills. Central ward is transient by nature with three Liverpool universities within the vicinity. The majority of families are White British and there are a small but increasing number of Black minority-ethnic families. In addition, there is a long established Traveller community in Kirkdale, mainly located on an official council site close to the children’s centre. Children from this community historically attend The Trinity Catholic Primary School and Vauxhall Children’s Centre.

The children’s centre derived from a Sure Start Local Programme and received designation in 2006. The centre provides the full offer, including a full day-care facility managed by the school governing body and a ‘school holiday’ and ‘before and after’ school care facility managed by a community organisation. A maximum of 62 children may attend the nursery at any one time and, of these, 62 may be in the early year’s age group and, of these, not more than 18 may be under two years-of-age. A maximum of 32 children may attend the out of school provision at any one time. Separate arrangements are in place to inspect these provisions and their reports can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk. The children’s centre and day care facilities have been co- located with Trinity Catholic Primary School since 2007.

The delivery of extended services has been delegated by the local authority to the headteacher at Trinity Catholic Primary School. The work of the centre is monitored by an established advisory board and the local authority. The day-to-day management of the centre is undertaken by a children’s centre coordinator. The centre provides a range of services and activities alongside partner agencies such as health professionals, schools, Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS) and the speech and language service.

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

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Vauxhall Children's Centre provides an excellent range of provision and achieves outstanding results in many respects. Leaders and staff are highly motivated and intent on improving the life chances and the economic stability of its users. All those who engage make great strides in their personal and educational journey.

The head of centre, well-established advisory board and the local authority provide a secure strategic steer. This, coupled with an innovative and motivated children's centre coordinator, ensures that Vauxhall Children's Centre often leads the way in developing some pioneering services which are successful in engaging, and positively changing the lives of, the most vulnerable groups within the community.

Outcomes for families are good overall and outstanding in some respects. However, health outcomes are variable and, therefore, satisfactory despite some outstanding health provision. Families engage in a wealth of good quality services, such as 'Chill Out,' which lead to improved emotional well-being and which enable parents and carers to address significant problems relating to substance misuse and mental health issues. However, health-related information and data are not meticulously tracked and the centre are unable to demonstrate a securely improving trend with regard to the children's centre key performance indicators relating to obesity and breastfeeding, nor are these featured within current improvement plans.

Families keep themselves exceptionally safe and parents and carers willingly make self-referrals to services, such as family support, when home life is difficult to manage. Excellent referral pathways and multi-agency support ensures intervention and prevention strategies work hand-in-hand and prevent difficulties escalating. This, coupled with outstanding safeguarding protocols ensures families are extremely well nurtured and protected. Opportunities for families to make a positive contribution to centre life, their community and further afield through charity events are frequent and regular. Furthermore, parents and carers play a generally active role with regard to service delivery within the Parent's Forum and through some representation on the advisory board. However, their role in driving improvement forward is less well developed.

The annual planning and delivery cycle is informed by the ongoing evaluation of how well services deliver local and national priorities. Improvement plans provide a secure basis for further improvements but they lack the robustness of ambitious targets to demonstrate how progress across all key areas, particularly health, will be measured over time. Strong achievements are a direct result of imaginative, outcome-focussed programmes of work which raise the aspirations of families engaged. As a result, the centre's capacity for further improvement is good.

Parents and carers, including a large majority from target groups, make significant gains in their personal and career development due to the excellent range of training and

volunteering opportunities available to them. This alongside outstanding care, guidance and support empowers families to tackle significant difficulties in their lives, overcome barriers to learning and progress to employment. As a result, the centre has reduced the worklessness figure by 1%. Parents and carers comments such as, 'It's important for my children to see me get up in a morning and go to work,' and 'My children will make something of themselves because they are getting the education I never had', demonstrates how the cycles of poor education and unemployment have begun to change.

A key strength of the centre is the way in which all partner agencies fully cooperate to deliver cohesive support and a full range of services. The centre is adept at seeking out unique partnerships within the community and rolling out skilfully planned programmes and activities to particularly vulnerable groups, such as Traveller families and homeless young parents. Health professionals are actively supporting the successful delivery of a wide range of health services at a practice level. However, leaders and the local authority have been unable to secure their strategic role on the advisory board with the Primary Care Trust, impeding a more pro-active role in improving health outcomes within the reach area.

Inclusion and anti-discriminatory practice is at the heart of the centre's work, hence the strong sense of welcome and community, which families vividly report. As a result, the centre has successfully engaged all target groups including those notoriously hard to reach. The strong links with families in the reach area, good or better outcomes and a firm foothold within the community, confirms the centre's overall effectiveness is good.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Prioritise well-targeted services and activities within the current improvement plan in order to secure improved outcomes for obesity and breastfeeding:
 - improve the collation and analysis of data and information, particularly about health trends, to inform outcomes more meticulously and accurately and in conjunction with the local authority, advisory board and centre partners, use data and information to set ambitious targets within the centre improvement plan.
- Alongside the local authority, work with the Primary Care Trust to secure the strategic role of health professionals on the advisory board and their active contribution to decision-making processes at a governance level:
 - develop the strategic role of the Parent's Forum.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Outcomes for families are generally very positive due to tailored provision and a 'Think Family' approach to meeting the needs of the whole family. Comments such as; 'I'm a different person now, we all are,' and 'I never thought I'd have the confidence to do the things I do,' 'reflect the sense of pride that parents and carers feel about their achievements.

Clearly-targeted health campaigns and events led by the health promotion worker increase parents' and carers' awareness of how to promote healthier lives for their families. For example, 'Yum Yum Yummy,' and the 'Lunch Club' have encouraged families to try new and healthier foods. Parents and carers describe how their attendance at 'Funky Movers' and 'Tiny Tums' has encouraged them to become more physically active, as a result some mothers have joined the Aqua exercise classes to establish a personal health regime. However, the centre is unable to show how the strong health provision has had a positive impact on obesity levels in the area. Furthermore, attendance at the 'Milky Way' breastfeeding group is low and despite a rise in initiation rates, breastfeeding prevalence at six to eight weeks has fallen for the last three years.

The implementation of the Liverpool Infant Mortality Strategy has led to an increased awareness of good weaning habits and safe sleeping arrangements for young babies. Signposting to 'Fag Ends' and the 'Smoke Free Homes' initiative has led to parents and carers smoking in designated zones in and away from the home. Furthermore, centre data confirms a reduction in mothers smoking after delivery of their babies. However, the number of centre parents and carers stopping smoking is unknown because data is not routinely tracked to show long-term outcomes following interventions. The 'Heads, Hearts and Hands' programme for teenage parents resulted in increased confidence, raised aspirations and increased awareness of sexual health.

The centre is a haven for support and safety. 'I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for the help of the centre', testimony replicated by a number of parents and carers who with intensive support, have escaped a life of domestic violence. Outcomes for children in need, those on child protection plans or who are looked after, are excellent. Close monitoring and intensive support ensures families access a range of services, including childcare, parenting courses and health and safety training. Consequently, families stabilise, improve their home environment and subsequently reduce the threshold of intervention.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make increasingly good progress in their learning and development and centre data confirms a narrowing of the achievement gap. A newly established 'Target Tracker' helps staff to routinely monitor learning outcomes from children's starting points. Services for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are cohesive and well coordinated ensuring they too, make good strides in their development. The transition to school is smooth due the implementing of the 'Ready 4 School' programme and good partnerships with local schools.

Parents and carers make outstanding progress in their personal, social and educational development, and comments such as 'I never had the confidence to talk in a group, now I'm delivering confidence building sessions alongside centre staff,' confirm this. The highly effective 'Volunteer into Placement' programme (VIP) has led to a large majority of vulnerable and targeted families accessing comprehensive work-based training packages, work experience and subsequent employment and economic stability. All participants achieve at least an NVQ level 2 in their chosen career path and many progress much further. Equally, the centre provides a range of activities for users to make a positive

contribution by providing regular opportunities for families to express their views, although this is yet to include a more meaningful strategic role.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	3
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 children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships, and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
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.	1

How good is the provision?

1

Excellent inter-agency work with health professionals and schools combined with family support and 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. The Common Assessment Framework is well utilised to assess and plan tailored support and services for all families with specific needs.

The centre has devised some excellent assessment tools, such as the 'Outcome Based Action Plan' used by family support staff with parents and carers, to identify difficulties, strategies to address them and goals to be achieved. Parents and carers benefit from this process immensely, as they play an active role in tracking progress through a series of manageable goals. 'It's like having a personal little mentor' beamed one elated parent.

The highly effective 'Wish You Were Here' team and the new role associated with 'Parent Champions' have been pivotal to the increasing levels of registrations and engagement, particularly by vulnerable groups and families. Firm relationships based on trust and sensitive persistence ensure the large majority of families engaged with the centre are those that need it most and 100% of all target groups, with the exception of most Black minority ethnic families, have accessed health services, promotions and events.

The centre is dynamic in its approach to engaging vulnerable groups and families. For example, the 'Anne Fowler Hostel' project and subsequent 'Look What My Mum Did For Me' programme provide excellent support for young homeless women who endeavour to improve their lifestyles in order to return to community life and reinstate themselves as main

carers for their children. Increased awareness about the dangers of substance abuse and a strong sense of purpose has helped these women to address their addictions and get their life back on track.

The centres' long standing relationship with the Traveller community is built on trust and persistence. As a result, 100% of the children aged under five years in this community have accessed centre services. They are uniquely tailored to provide targeted services, such as holistic and well-being therapies to universal activities, which Traveller families' consistently attend. For example, the 'Parents R Us' programmes, 'Aqua Natal' classes and first aid courses. Furthermore, increased educational stability is having an extremely positive impact on children's progress and attainment.

The provision to help children learn, develop and gains skills for the future are good and improving. Good quality provision is replicated across all services ensuring no learning opportunity is missed. One parent stated 'When we are cooking or cutting up fruit we count and name shapes, I never thought to do that before'. The excellent 'Language Enrichment Programme' and associated activities, such as 'Chitter Chatter' and the 'Every Child A Talker' initiative have been instrumental in improving children's speech and language skills and their subsequent transition to school.

The learning and development opportunities for parents and carers, including those from target groups, such as lone and young parents are outstanding. Participation rates within most services and activities are usually good with a growing waiting list for the VIP programme. Adult learning opportunities are carefully thought out and cater for a wide range of career paths, interests and abilities, ensuring all parents and carers benefit. For example, one parent leads the weekly 'Art Attack' group independently. The centre's 'Soft Outcomes for Universal Learning' programme captures individual progress from starting points through each stage of a training programme. Parent Champions actively promote services at local health clinics and others help to organise large scale charity walks and events. One parent commented 'The things the centre has helped us to do have been life changing, it breaks a pattern of bad habits and it gives you a purpose and a route to do better'.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The strategic management of the centre is secure, with centre performance being monitored by means of quarterly performance reports and the local authority annual conversation. Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and successes of the centre and relentlessly focus on meeting the needs of the target and vulnerable groups. However, they have yet to secure a more strategic role of their health partners despite their persistence. Service evaluations confirm that provision is well matched to needs and current plans, with the exception of health priorities, are well placed to secure further improvement. The collation and analysis of data and information is continually developing, although not rigorously used to set targets for improvements.

The day-to-day management of the centre is undertaken by an experienced centre coordinator who instils high expectations of staff, partners and the community. She and her team have a secure knowledge of the needs of the reach population and they are extremely effective and innovative in all aspects of their work. For example, the VIP programme has won the International Journal of Neighbourhood Renewal award in 2010. The centre team have established an extensive range of universal and unique partnerships that successfully contribute to a unified and imaginative approach to improving outcomes.

Safeguarding arrangements are robust. Criminal Record Bureau checks or service level agreements confirm the suitability of those working and delivering services within the centre and these protocols are implemented without exception. Building checks and risk assessments are rigorous and security arrangements are exemplary. All staff and volunteers receive safeguarding training in line with Liverpool's thresholds for intervention, which ensures they respond accordingly where risks or crisis escalate.

The promotion of equality and diversity is central to the work of the centre and this is securely evidenced by parents and carers who describe the centre as 'a good place for everybody,' and 'a place where the community matters'. This is why the centre is so successful in engaging with its target groups. Families display a strong sense of respect and concern for others and their willingness to promote a wide range of good causes, such as the 'Haiti Appeal', 'Dogs Trust' and 'Walk for Africa' is truly impressive. The excellent work of the Disability Link Worker ensures equally good outcomes and provision for children with disabilities and/or learning difficulties as services are consistently personalised.

The building is well maintained and financial management is robust. The centre is intent on providing sustainable services so the pursuit of distinct funding opportunities is ongoing to maintain and enhance provision. As a result, most outcomes are good or better ensuring the centre provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management:

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use of ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2

The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	1
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.	2

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

Inspection outcomes for Trinity Catholic Primary School and Vauxhall Children's Centre Nursery have been considered as part of this inspection. Both provisions were inspected at the same time as the Vauxhall Children's Centre.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaints procedure: raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted* 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 Vauxhall Children's Centre on 29 and 30 September 2011 and we judged the centre as good. However, there are several outstanding features.

As part of our investigations we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's plans and documents and talked with a number of you, staff, partners and volunteers who work with you. We found that the centre provides an exceptionally safe and welcoming place for you and your children and those of you we spoke with said that the centre had helped you to improve safety in your homes, improve your personal well-being through 'Chill Out' sessions and provided you with lots of information about how to lead healthy lives. We also found that children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in their learning and development due to activities such as, 'Chitter Chatter', 'Jingle Jangle' and good quality provision in the children's centre nursery.

You state you benefit from activities to improve your physical health, such as Aqua classes, 'Yum Yum Yummy', lunch club and many of you particular enjoy joining in charity walks and the 'Pramathon'. In fact, we found that the centre provides an excellent range of activities and services, including those which promote your good health. However, the centre is unable to show how these activities are beginning to reduce obesity levels in the area. Equally, the centre has yet to improve breastfeeding rates, as too many new mothers fail to

sustain breastfeeding for more than a few weeks. Therefore, we have asked the centre to prioritise these issues within their current improvement plans.

We found that one of the outstanding aspects of this centre is the 'Volunteer into Placement' programme, which has provided a significant number of parents and carers using the centre, with a wonderful opportunity to undertake a detailed training programme, gain work experience, access valuable qualifications and gain employment. This is a significant achievement for families involved and for the centre. In fact, the programme is so successful and popular it now has a waiting list. We also found that parents and carers provide their views about services after courses and activities and some of you play an active role on the Parents Forum and advisory board. The centre knows it is important to seek your views about how to make services even better. However, they need to make sure that your views influence improvement plans more specifically.

The centre provides exceptional support for people in very difficult situations or crisis and they make sure they are appropriately protected and supported. The centre's family support and outreach services work exceptionally well with their partners to make sure lives improve for the better. Parents and carers we spoke with described how staff have helped them to seek help with problems, such as substance abuse and to relocate to new homes when fleeing from domestic violence. We found that the centre has a very clever approach to helping families make positive changes in their lives and they provide outstanding care, guidance and support to all families, but particularly those who may be in potentially very vulnerable situations or who may experience prejudice because they choose to live their lives in a different way to others. As a result, the centre has been successful in encouraging all groups of people, including Traveller families, young parents and dads to engage with a wide range of centre services.

You told us that the centre is managed extremely well and we agree with this. We found that day-to-day management of the centre is undertaken by an experienced centre coordinator who has high expectations of staff, partners and of the families in the community. She and her team know the community very well and they provide lots of imaginative services and activities which meet your needs very well.

The headteacher of Trinity Catholic Primary School, the local authority and the advisory board regularly review the services and activities to make sure they continue to match your needs. However, they need to make sure they collect all the right information so they can continue to develop more services and activities in the future, particularly those linked to your good health. Furthermore, we have asked them to continue to invite health professionals onto their advisory board because this will help them with this crucial work.

We would like to thank everyone who came to speak to us, we are very grateful for your help and we wish you well for the future.

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