

Inspection report for St Cuthbert's and Palatine Children's Centre

Local authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	383604
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School URN 119597
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	St Cuthbert's and Palatine Children's Centre EY308201

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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.

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

The inspectors held meetings with parents, grandparents, staff including senior leaders, partners, governors and representatives from the local authority. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

St Cuthbert's and Palatine Children's Centre is a Phase 1 children's centre, designated in 2007. It is housed in a purpose built structure on the site of St Cuthbert's and Palatine Catholic Primary School, in the area of South Shore in Blackpool. The town is ranked as the sixth most deprived in the country. The centre is situated in an area ranked as among the highest 10% to 20% most deprived in the country. Within the area, 98.4% of families are of White British heritage. The remainder are from other minority ethnic groups with a rapidly increasing Polish heritage intake. There are a high number of transient families with the lowest average wage in the United Kingdom. There are high levels of teenage mothers, workless households, families claiming benefits, crime and violence including domestic violence, overcrowding and poor housing conditions. Rates for substance misuse, smoking and alcohol-related crime are among the highest in the country. The proportion of babies being breastfed at birth is smaller than average and over 20% of the working population have no formal qualifications.

The centre provides the full core offer including childcare and early learning, family support and health services. There is a 46-place sessional nursery, taking children aged two to five years. There is no full-time childcare provided due to the wide range of other local childcare services. The centre also provides a range of services from three satellite venues. Children's skills on entry to early years provision are generally below those expected for their age in

communication, language and literacy, numeracy, and in their personal and social development.

A children's centre manager oversees the work of the centre with the primary school's headteacher undertaking the role of head of centre. A governing committee that is aligned to the school provides governance to the centre.

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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

The outcomes for families, the quality of provision and the leadership and management of St Cuthbert's and Palatine Children's Centre are all outstanding. The centre is held in very high regard among its users, many of whom are from vulnerable groups. Users told the inspectors that the centre was extremely important to them with comments such as, 'It is like my second home'. They view the centre as a lifeline in their often chaotic lives.

The centre is highly effective in the inclusion of all users including those from vulnerable and under-represented groups. Improvements to the centre to support users with a disability include a recently fitted hoist in the treatment room to make it more accessible. 'PIPmix' and 'PIPstart' play activities support children who have a disability or difficulty. Smoking cessation, support for victims of domestic violence and activities such as fathers' and grandparents' sessions ensure that all users are included in the work of the centre. Outcomes for children and families are significantly improved from low starting points.

Children make excellent progress and this is narrowing the achievement gap in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Emotional and physical well-being of families has shown significant improvement as a result of activities such as an evidence-based programme for positive parenting. The centre is beginning to develop links across the range of groups, for example, the baby group and the grandparents' group to provide support for all users, but these are not fully established. The centre gathers the views of users in a wide range of ways. For example, formal and informal evaluation of activities, focus groups and satisfaction questionnaires. Parents feel that their views and wishes are taken into account and the centre acts on these by making changes to the provision. The parents' forum is actively

engaged with the centre including with fund-raising activities and the delivery of events such as Africa Day.

Excellent partnerships have been established with a range of professionals who provide services to meet the needs of users. The quality of support that the users receive is excellent. The breastfeeding network is well advertised and meets on a weekly basis. A 'Homestart' practitioner is available to families and offers a bespoke service dependent on need. Parents access courses delivered by local further education and sixth form colleges. Dental health services, activities and resources to promote good dental hygiene are provided for, and well received by, children. However, the promotion of dental hygiene for adults is not as strong. Volunteers are actively recruited to the centre and 70% of nursery staff were originally parent volunteers. Safeguarding is robust and is embedded very well. Children and users of the centre report that they feel safe.

Self-evaluation is rigorous, detailed, and evaluative. The children's centre is managed by the adjoining primary school and the well-established governing committee is aligned to the school. It meets regularly and provides effective support for the centre. A representative of the governing committee commented, 'The centre provides a first-class service given the difficulties in this community. It is a good product that provides value-added.' Sub-committees, which include parental representation, meet to evaluate specific areas such as data handling and operational management. Staff have a clear vision for additional improvement, and together, all these characteristics support the centre's outstanding capacity to improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop further strategies for the promotion of dental health in order to reach all users including adults.
- Develop further links across the range of activity groups such as baby group and grandparents' group and so encourage user-to-user support.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

Outcomes for families using the centre are outstanding. The centre is able to identify and address the needs of the community and services are developed to provide a positive impact for users. Very high outcomes for children show that the achievement gap between the lowest achieving children is reducing. The centre has been involved in a Department for Education (DfE) research study for early learning in families. At the start of the programme, children at two years of age were assessed as having starting points as low as eleven months below their chronological age. By the end of the three-year programme, there had been significant catch-up, showing scores within the average age range. Children enjoy their time at the nursery. They have exemplary behaviour and develop well their knowledge and

skills for future learning. Parents are able to achieve a range of accredited and non-accredited qualifications such as literacy, numeracy and qualifications to degree level.

The centre promotes healthy lifestyles to its families. Obesity rates in Blackpool are in line with the national average. The 'Healthy Café' provides families with healthy and economical snacks and meals. It also encourages them to consider their own diets. Of the participants, 97% successfully completed the 'Change4Life' cookery course. Feedback from parents indicates that healthy eating awareness has supported them in budgeting for meals at home. The centre participates in the 'Golden smile' campaign to encourage users to register with dentists but this does not include the promotion of good dental hygiene for adults. A priority area within the centre is breastfeeding initiation and sustained breastfeeding at six to eight weeks. This has become a particular strength of the centre. Health professionals and voluntary groups very effectively support breastfeeding mothers and 655 mothers used the breastfeeding support service in 2010. Sustained breastfeeding at six to eight weeks has improved by 13% over a three-year-period. The centre has supported the Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI) in achieving their Level 1 and Level 2 accreditation for breastfeeding support and is currently undertaking Level 3 accreditation. The centre established the first satellite mothers' milk bank in the country with the hospital's neo-natal unit benefiting greatly from milk donation.

Safety procedures within the centre are rigorous and users feel safe. As a result of feedback, recent adaptations within the centre such as a hoist for disabled users have made it even more accessible. Early intervention strategies are a particularly high priority and those at risk are provided with timely support. Users in need of mental health support, those involved in domestic violence and drug and alcohol misuse access services extremely quickly. Highly effective use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and the involvement of a range of agencies have led to a decrease in the number of child protection plans. Users report that the support that they receive through CAF processes has helped them to make their lives less hectic and they are now more independent. Support from the centre has included highly successful courses to improve economic well-being and parenting skills.

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	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 children and parents, including those from target groups, 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 parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision making and governance of the centre	1

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
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How good is the provision?

1

All aspects of the provision are outstanding. Highly effective multi-agency working ensures that the centre compiles in-depth and accurate information about the centre users. There are very significant participation rates with effective analysis of reach and attendance data to prioritise the delivery of services. Assessment of user needs is meticulously detailed and is regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that support has a positive impact on successful outcomes for all groups of users. All partner agencies are effectively and efficiently involved in the assessment of children and families in order to provide a high-level tailored service that meets their individual needs. Regular evaluation and analysis of data ensure that the centre understands the needs of users including targeted groups. Data provided by the local authority clearly highlight the positive impact of the centre in meeting the needs of user groups.

Activities provided at the centre are wide-ranging and diverse. Sessions are well attended and evaluations from users show a 98% satisfaction rate. Attendances reached 6462 at the centre in 2010 across the top 10% to 20% of deprived areas. These bear testimony to the very significant reach of the centre. Some users also use cross-partner services and attend other children's centres to access their services. Skills such as breastfeeding, budgeting, literacy and numeracy development are promoted through delivery of specialist sessions. Events such as fun days and the forthcoming African event day which are organised by the parent forum further develop relationships and encourage groups such as fathers and grandparents to attend.

Care, guidance and support provided to users are exemplary. A comprehensive range of information is displayed at the centre. Users can speak to Jobcentre Plus staff and a range of vacancies are displayed on the prominent notice board. Effective and tailored support on how to write a curriculum vitae and a job application is provided to help users into employment. The family engagement workers, outreach workers and partner outreach workers complement each other's provision and support families through highly effective partnership working. Parents typically say, 'They have helped me through low times', and, 'The centre encourages us to achieve.'

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	1
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
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How effective are the leadership and management?

1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The centre is very highly regarded in the community and the maintained nursery was recently graded as outstanding during its Ofsted inspection. Clear governance of the centre includes the input of the organisational management group. Made up of partners within the centre and including strong parental representation, this group ensures that the provision is very closely monitored before reporting to the governing committee. Local authority strategic managers work very closely with the centre to ensure the successful delivery of targets. The centre has been identified on a number of occasions as exhibiting good practice, much of which has been disseminated across the children's centres in Blackpool.

The self-evaluation, delivery and development plans are robust and detailed. They accurately identify areas for improvement, are highly inclusive and take into account the feedback from centre users, staff and partners. Data sets are comprehensive. They are gathered, collated and analysed regularly and effectively and include data which is compared with that of other centres within the town. Support from the local authority's management information manager is highly effective in evaluating the impact of the centre. His view is that 'The centre is very effective in how the data are being used and data against outcomes are in a continuous upwards trend.'

Outstanding working relationships with partners have a significant impact on the delivery of services. Partners are members of advisory groups and operational management groups and sit on the governing committee. High-level information sharing is used particularly well and close liaison ensures that coordination of services for families is stringent. There are excellent cross-referral processes in place across partners. Resources are used extremely well and provide the centre with good value for money. Staff have clear roles and responsibilities and have high expectations of themselves and the centre. Continuing professional development for staff is targeted to meet staff and service needs.

Excellent procedures that are aligned to the co-located school's procedures are effective in assessing the suitability of staff to work with children. The comprehensive safeguarding policy is aligned to the school's and to the local authority safeguarding protocols. Staff have all undertaken safeguarding training and have a thorough understanding of safeguarding procedures and child protection processes including those of the CAF. Inclusivity is evident in the physical environment, the services provided and in the highly positive approaches that the centre has to the promotion of equality and diversity. The centre provides excellent 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	1
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	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 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.	1

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

An inspection of the on-site nursery provision took place in June 2011 and inspectors considered these findings during this inspection.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the St Cuthbert's and Palatine Children's Centre on 18 and 19 October 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

Thank you for meeting with us and sharing your experiences about how the centre and all of the people working there help you and your families. You really like the centre because it is friendly and welcoming and the staff are very helpful. We found that the staff, volunteers and all the other people that work with you offer excellent encouragement to you to be independent and their high levels of support help you to cope when life becomes too hectic.

For those of you experiencing difficulties in your life, the centre works with lots of other professionals to make sure that you get the help that you need. Many of you feel that the staff help you through the low times in your lives and that the staff are there to support you all of the way. The centre welcomes everyone and has tried very hard to be inclusive. For example, a hoist has been fitted into the treatment room so that everyone can access the facilities.

We looked at the work of the professionals and what they do to help you and we found this to be outstanding. Your children's progress at nursery is excellent and the support that they receive is exceptional. They know all of the children very well and keep a learning journal about how your child is doing at nursery. You have said that you really like to look at these journals. The children enjoy going to nursery and the things that they do when they are there are excellent in helping them to develop their skills and to make new friends. The staff make sure that your children are ready for school and provide them with the skills to help them when they are there. Courses such as budgeting and 'Change4Life' cookery are superb in helping you to manage your money better and prepare cheap but healthy meals for your family. A large number of new mums have been supported by the breastfeeding network which has meant that a lot of you are still breastfeeding your babies when they are six to eight weeks old which is an excellent achievement. Staff work very well together as a team and are constantly looking at ways to make the centre even better. These are all reasons why your centre has been graded as outstanding.

You told us that you love to be involved in the work of the centre and how the parents' forum has been involved in fund-raising and organising activities such as fun days and the African event day that will be happening soon. It is brilliant that you are able to do these things to support the centre. You are also asked regularly to give feedback about the centre so that it can improve. The team has listened to your suggestions and they change things to make them much better for you. We particularly liked that you were invited to be involved with the operational management group. You are now able to have your say in everything that the centre does. We were also impressed that some of the volunteers in the nursery now have paid jobs and have studied for childcare qualifications. That really is helping you back into employment. You particularly enjoy coming to the different sessions that the centre offers and many of you look forward to coming to the centre so that you can meet up with the other parents.

You think that the Healthy Café is fantastic. It is here that you can meet friends for a chat and are able to buy cheap and nutritious snacks and meals. You are also able to take away recipes to try for yourself at home.

We were pleased to see that the centre helps your children to look after their teeth but we would like them to help you look after yours too. We have also asked the centre to keep on making links between the groups so that you can all help to support each other.

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.