

# Inspection report for Ribblesdale Children's Centre

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Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	383598
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Centre leader	Viv Parsons
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY261379 Ribblesdale Cascades and Raindrops

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 nursery 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 additional inspector and one early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with centre leaders, staff, a wide range of partners, a representative from the local authority and users. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Ribblesdale Children's Centre is a Phase One centre, which opened in 2006. The centre is situated close to the town centre of Clitheroe, and serves an area of approximately 110 square miles, incorporating Clitheroe and many village and rural communities within the Ribble Valley. Services are delivered from the children's centre and nearby venues in Clitheroe, and also from venues in local communities within the reach area. The centre is located in the same building as Ribblesdale Nursery School and the site also incorporates Cascades and Raindrops Nursery, which provide full childcare facilities. Both the centre and childcare are managed by a management committee of the governing body of the nursery school. The centre manager is also headteacher of the nursery school.

The centre offers a full range of integrated universal and targeted universal services on site and at its satellite venues, together with outreach support. The centre works closely with the nearby Phase Three children's centre in Whalley, designated in 2010.

National neighbourhood statistics and local surveys show pockets of deprivation in the town of Clitheroe. In the surrounding areas, some children and families experience rural poverty and isolation. Families served by the centre are from very diverse backgrounds, with house prices well above average and with an acute shortage of affordable social housing. Five of the wards served are in the 10% most deprived in relation to housing and key local services.

The ward in which the centre is situated is in the lowest 30-40% in the domains of employment, health, child income deprivation and living environment. Numbers of lone parent households are above the average for England and Wales. Unemployment is normally quite low, although many jobs are minimum wage, part time or seasonal and recent effects of the recession have led to increased unemployment or reduced working hours. Most children entering the Early Years Foundation Stage have skills and levels of development broadly in line with those expected for their age, although there are wide variations.

Most families within the area are of White British heritage, although there is a small number of Asian and Polish families making their home within the community.

The centre was awarded the Lancashire County Council Early Years Quality Mark for Children's Centres in 2010.

## 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**

<b>2</b>
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### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

<b>2</b>
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## Main findings

Ribblesdale Children's Centre provides good-quality services. Several aspects of provision are outstanding. The centre's inclusive and welcoming environment, the enthusiasm and dedication of the staff in caring for and supporting families, and its outstanding partnership working, all combine to ensure that it has a positive impact on the lives of those children and families who use it. 'All staff go the extra mile' and 'There is always someone here for you' are typical of the comments made by parents and carers, who feel safe and comfortable when using the centre. The centre is becoming a hub for the local community and is committed to providing services for all families in its reach area, including those who are located some considerable distance from the centre itself.

The centre provides excellent care, guidance and support. Highly effective early notification procedures ensure that contact is established with families at an early stage of need. The centre and partner agencies, particularly health services, work closely together to ensure that individual needs are identified, that targeted outreach support is put in place and that families have access to the full range of services provided by the centre. Parents of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities feel particularly well supported through

activities and respite opportunities provided by 'Signpost'. Activities for both children and adults, such as 'Prambles' walks and breastfeeding support, and the consistent messages regarding healthy lifestyles which permeate the centre's activities, all contribute to outstanding health outcomes.

The promotion of young children's learning and development is outstanding. Crèche facilities, stay and play activities for children and parents, and childcare provided at the centre are well structured, tailored to need and provide many opportunities for parents to share in their children's learning both in the centre and at home. Children make outstanding progress in their early learning and development. Embedded in the centre's ethos is a culture of lifelong learning, which ensures that a range of high-quality courses are offered to adults. They make significant gains in their personal development, confidence and skills, and many move on to further education and employment.

Relationships between those using the centre are positive and they show respect for one another. Parents and carers are regularly involved in evaluating services and activities, and they know that their views will be taken into account. However, the user group is still establishing itself and users are not yet regularly involved in decision making.

The centre's work to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination is good, as are its safeguarding procedures. Well-established systems and lines of responsibility ensure that concerns are identified, and prompt action taken to support families and reduce numbers of children in the reach area who are subject to a child protection plan.

The centre is well led and managed. The centre manager and other senior leaders work well in partnership, have a good understanding of the reach area, and lead by example, ensuring that all staff have the appropriate knowledge and skills to carry out their work effectively. There are well-established procedures for monitoring and evaluating provision, and services are adapted and modified accordingly. The senior management team has an accurate view of the centre's strengths and areas for improvement. The children's centre committee are well informed about the work of the centre and the priorities for development, although they are not routinely involved in evaluation and strategic planning. Leaders and managers have recognised the need to develop the systematic collection use and analysis of data to assist with planning and to more effectively measure the longer-term impact of the centre's services. Therefore, the centre has good capacity to further improve.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve self-evaluation and development planning by obtaining and using data more effectively to set precise and measurable targets and demonstrate the longer-term impact of the centre's work on outcomes for children and families.
- Strengthen the role of the children's centre committee through more systematic involvement in planning and decision making and through increasing the contribution of parents and carers to the centre's governance.

## How good are outcomes for families?

2

Outcomes for parents and carers and their children are good overall and outstanding in relation to being healthy and enjoying and achieving. Users develop a very good understanding of how to keep themselves and their children physically healthy, and use it effectively, for example, in tackling childhood obesity. Prospective and new mothers gain effective knowledge through high-quality and very popular ante- and post-natal support programmes. Users' improved emotional, health and well-being are evident as a result of well attended sessions. Smoking cessation and immunisation rates are high and increasing numbers are attending breastfeeding groups and developing their skills as breastfeeding peer support volunteers. Oral health programmes and referrals have successfully helped families gain access to dental care. Users such as teenage mothers and those with mental health problems, effectively access individual outreach support.

All users say that the centre and the satellite venues provide a warm, welcoming and safe environment. Children behave well and all users feel respected and valued. 'We never feel judged', was a recurring theme in discussions. Parents and carers report that parenting programmes have had a positive impact on helping them manage children's behaviour and improve their confidence.. In addition, families report that their understanding of home safety, first aid and how to assess risk, has deepened as a result of the centre's workshops and courses. They also report managing stress better because of support at home from centre volunteers.

Children's happy smiling faces show how much they enjoy using the centre's facilities and taking part in activities. Children and their parents and carers play and have fun at all the venues served by the centre through a wealth of opportunities such as 'Snuggle and Sing' and 'Ribblesdale Rhythm'. Children are well engaged in a wide range of purposeful activities and staff are always keen to explain to parents and carers what the children are learning and how they can support them at home. Early Years Foundation Stage data shows that children make outstanding progress from different starting points, including those with special educational needs. Gaps between the lowest achieving 20% children and the rest, and between boys and girls, are reducing and are lower than for other areas in the local authority. The centre has achieved 'I CAN' accreditation, which has had a positive impact on children's speech and language skills. Children are well prepared for their transition to school. Adult learning programmes are well attended, with most participants completing the courses and gaining accreditation that furthers their educational and employment prospects.

Parents and carers make a positive contribution to the centre through involvement in the user group, which is largely concerned with promoting the centre's activities more widely. Opportunities for users to evaluate activities are well embedded, their views are listened to and the centre readily modifies the services on offer to reflect user feedback. This is particularly evident where times or venues of sessions have been altered to facilitate attendance. Flexible childcare arrangements and the provision of crèche facilities enable parents and carers to attend training or gain employment, and the centre works closely with

Jobcentre Plus. Families have access to a variety of pertinent information concerning employment, debt management, tax and benefits, and targeted family support gives individual parents and carers the necessary skills and confidence in their ability to take control of their own lives. Schools, childminders, health professionals, parents and carers all look to the centre for support, especially in times of need.

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>1</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 children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>1</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>2</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>2</b>

## How good is the provision?

**1**

The centre provides a wide range of well planned and delivered services and activities. A particular strength is the early identification of individual families' needs which paves the way for family support. Outreach workers assess and review the needs of families on a regular basis, are flexible in their approach and adapt provision effectively. Services and activities are provided at appropriate venues across the reach area and excellent partnership working enables these to run smoothly. The centre leases a minibus which is used effectively to facilitate access to services and activities for those who live in more isolated districts. The majority of activities are well attended, especially those which support the development of babies and the youngest children.

Enjoyment for families is a key part of the centre's work and the positive and all-encompassing ethos of learning and success is fundamental to the centre's outstanding provision for learning and development. The many diverse activities are planned with clearly identified aims and have a positive impact on outcomes. Staff delivering sessions are enthusiastic and they motivate and involve those taking part. The centre staff have high expectations of centre users, raise aspirations extremely successfully and express confidence in the ability of target families to succeed. Achievements are celebrated well and users feel proud of their successes.

Parents and carers know that they can turn to the centre at any time and someone will be there to help them. 'You can just come and there's always someone to talk to,' commented one young mother. They are unanimous in their appreciation of the individual interventions

and support they receive and know that 'all the staff really care' about them. The centre provides excellent emotional and physical support in times of crisis, together with more practical day-to-day assistance, such as helping to organise finances and to attend appointments. Those using the centre and its satellite venues can obtain a wide and varied range of information and advice on many aspects of their lives, either through the information point, leaflets they can read themselves or by speaking to someone at the centre. Some information, such as how to get help relating to domestic violence or sexual health, is sensitively placed to allow privacy. The centre provides a welcoming and secure space for parents to have supervised contact with their children, who are looked after or subject to child protection plans. Parents and carers of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities all say how the centre has helped them to cope; through providing weekend and holiday activities which give them respite and time to spend with partners and other children in the family, as well as reassurance and advice from fellow users and well qualified and experienced staff. As one parent commented, 'The play scheme has given me some personal 'me' time, which makes me feel relaxed and more in control of my life.'

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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are the leadership and management?

**2**

Senior managers have established a clear vision and shared sense of purpose and are constantly seeking ways to improve the effectiveness of the centre, which has contributed to the centre's very successful development and impact on outcomes for families. The senior management team works well together to communicate high expectations and is well supported by an extremely dedicated team of staff and partners.

Well-organised arrangements for governance include clear management structures and lines of responsibility and well embedded systems for professional supervision and performance management. Although well informed, the governing body is not yet systematically involved in evaluation, review and action planning.

Evaluation of services is good, through a range of feedback opportunities and consultations with children, parents and carers, professional partners and others in the community. The formulation of a rural policy has identified the challenges inherent in meeting the needs of such a diverse community, and strategies to overcome these. However, the collection, analysis and use of data that would enable the centre to identify more specific targets to demonstrate clearly the full impact that it is having on improving outcomes is at an early stage and not yet providing sufficient information.



Resources are managed well and evaluations show that there are high levels of user satisfaction with the services and activities provided by the centre. Staff have a broad range of skills and knowledge, are well deployed to ensure the needs of the community are met, and share their expertise through in-house training to enhance sustainability. Specific resources are well targeted to the high-quality outreach support which effectively engages those most in need in outlying venues. Feedback from users and partners is used in planning services to ensure cost effectiveness and good value for money. Information about the centre's services is promoted well throughout the community.

All staff receive training in equality and diversity and the inclusion of all children and families, regardless of background, is central to the centre's vision. There is no discrimination and users comment on how they never feel judged. 'We're all treated as equals' was a sentiment expressed by many. The centre staff work hard to remove barriers to access, through providing quality activities for fathers and male carers, provision for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, flexible crèche and childcare facilities and targeted support where needed for those from ethnic minority groups.

Safeguarding is a priority for the centre, with good policies and procedures in place to ensure the health, safety, security and well-being of all who attend the centre and its activities. All required recruitment and vetting checks are carried out, and staff and volunteers have regular up-to-date training. Multi-agency working and the use of the Common Assessment Framework ensure that a wide range of professionals work together extremely well to safeguard and protect children and families. Staff are alert to any signs of safeguarding concerns. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and timely intervention frequently prevents escalation of concerns.

A range of excellent partnerships with health, social care, Jobcentre Plus, adult education, schools and other centres and community groups is well established and integrated provision is fundamental to the centre's work with children and families. Partnerships within the local community are a vital aspect of the centre's work in providing high quality services across the reach area. Relationships between professionals are extremely well managed and information is shared effectively to enable the centre to meet the diverse needs of the community and to improve outcomes for all users.

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 effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>2</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>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 partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose</b>	<b>1</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>2</b>

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

When making their judgements, the inspectors took into account the findings from the coordinated inspection of Ribblesdale Nursery School and the previous report for Cascades and Raindrops Childcare, inspected in 2009.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Ribblesdale Children's Centre on 15 and 16 November 2011. We judged the centre as good overall. Some features, such as the care, guidance and support offered to families are outstanding

Thank you for making us feel so welcome and for contributing to the inspection by sharing your experiences and views of your children's centre. It was good to hear how much you appreciate all that the centre staff do to help you and how the centre has made a difference to your lives.

Many of you told us how welcome you feel, how friendly and helpful the staff are, and how no one is ever turned away. We could see that you enjoy the many opportunities to have fun and to play and learn with your children, such as when you attend baby massage or Snuggle and Sing. You enjoy seeing your children making friends with other children and becoming more independent. The staff clearly help you in understanding how your children learn and develop and provide you with ideas to help them at home.

The centre works exceptionally well with many partners to provide health advice, parenting courses and a very good range of other learning opportunities. We know how impressed many of you are with the lengths that the centre is prepared to go to in order to provide activities in outlying areas, and how important this is to you. Many of you said how much you value the opportunities you get to have time for yourselves, such as when your children are at Signpost activities, or when you go to Time out for Mums, knowing that your children

are being looked after well. You also enjoy opportunities to meet other people who are going through the same sorts of experiences that you are, and we know some of you have made really good friends through coming to the centre.

The centre staff take good care to ensure that you and your children are kept safe. They work well with other agencies when trying to help you and your families and always treat you as individuals. They listen to your views and you know that your opinions matter and make a difference. It is clear that the staff work very hard and want the very best for you and your families.

We know that the centre staff are very committed to making the centre even better. We have suggested that they use data more effectively to set targets and measure improvements in the services provided and the impact of this work upon families. We have also suggested that the children's centre committee takes a greater part in decision making and that more parents and carers are involved in this.

It was a pleasure to have the opportunity to talk with so many of you – thank you once again. We wish you and your children every success in the future.

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