

# Inspection report for Ashbury Meadow Children's Centre

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Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	383576
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Ashbury Meadow Primary School URN133770
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Ashbury Meadow EY293274
	Heybury Close Early Years Site EY103922

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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 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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). Also, an inspection of the co-located 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 additional inspector and one early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, front-line staff and representatives from the local authority. Discussions were also held with members of the advisory board, a wide range of partners, parents and carers and service users. The inspectors observed the centre's work, visited the linked maintained nursery and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Ashbury Meadow Children's Centre was established in February 2006 as a phase one centre providing the full core offer of services. The centre is on the Ashbury Meadow Primary School site, and has childcare provision which is currently temporarily located at Pioneer Street in Clayton. A playgroup operates at Ashbury Meadow alongside the crèche provision. The centre has recently had reductions in staffing as a result of budget changes and the service is subject to further changes following a current period of consultation.

The centre is in the Bradford ward of East Manchester, and its reach covers five super output areas which are all in the 2% most deprived communities in the country. The levels of social and economic disadvantage are above regional and national averages, with around 9% of families receiving long term worklessness benefits and 13% of families dependant on incapacity or disability-related benefits. A fifth of children are in single parent families, and

overall almost a half of families are classified as being in poverty. Fifty per cent of the families in the area are of White British heritage, with the majority of the others being of Chinese origin. There are also considerable population changes, because the area's housing stock is being replaced in regeneration projects and because the area has a high number of asylum seekers and refugees. The local authority has responsibility for governance of the children's centre and an advisory board oversees the centre's day-to-day operation. Most children's development levels particularly in language and communication on entry to early years provision are below those normally expected for their age.

## 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**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**3**

## Main findings

Ashbury Meadow Children's Centre provides a satisfactory service overall. It has several good features and leaders are sharply focused on building on these. However, the centre has faced significant challenges over the last year, including changes in the level of their budget and staffing, with the loss of well-established members of staff which has reduced its overall effectiveness. The centre faces further changes as a result of impending reorganisation. Currently, the centre's procedures for self-evaluation and capacity for improvement is satisfactory. Parents and carers, and partners play an important part in the advisory group for the centre, and give support and challenge to the leaders. One user of the centre commented on the value of the support which he had in very difficult times, 'As a single dad with no family nearby, I am so grateful that the centre gave me the confidence and skills to cope and the understanding of how to play a part in my son's developing and learning.' This reflects the positive views of many users.

Staff provide good care, guidance and support, and work smoothly with other agencies and appropriate referrals to provide help for families, especially in times of crisis. Outreach support is good, but staff resources are currently insufficient to extend the work to engage more of the hard-to-reach families in the area. Physical security and safety of the site and activities are managed well, and safeguarding is thorough and has the full cooperation and support of families and partner organisations.

There are many issues still to be resolved by the consultation and subsequent consideration by the local authority, which delays the fuller consideration of development plans, but the centre has maintained its core offer, with optimism and confidence. In addition, there has been a lack of up-to-date data, both to help the centre understand the extent of issues facing children and families in the area, in targeting support most effectively and to enable staff to measure their success. Some of the health outcomes are more difficult to track, both because of concerns over sharing confidential data and because of capacity issues affecting health visitors in the area, which has affected some collection and collation of data.

The daycare and guidance for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is beginning to have an impact on narrowing the gap between the lowest attainers and the rest. However, this is limited because there is currently no local authority Early Years Foundation Stage specialist at the centre to develop the best practice and there is not enough first-hand data to fully assess the centre's impact.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- The local authority and health service partners should improve both the collection and sharing of data about families in the reach area of the centre.
- The local authority and centre managers should:
  - ensure that the centre has adequate professional expertise to support the Early Years Foundation Stage in order to improve children's achievement, particularly in communication, language and literacy in the centre's reach area
  - improve the monitoring of the impact of its services on outcomes for families and to use fuller information about outcomes to give more precise self-evaluation, target setting and planning for development
  - extend and further target the outreach work to better serve those potentially vulnerable families not currently accessing centre services.

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

<b>3</b>
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The centre has a wide range of activities and services to promote healthy lifestyles, including easily accessible outdoor play spaces, promoting healthy snacks and through sessions, such as weaning projects which include support and advice for new parents in learning to cook. The centre makes use of health initiatives such as 'Zest' to stimulate exercise and healthy eating, and works closely with the Ramblers Association and Forest schools to promote walking and enjoyment of the outdoor spaces. Overall, however, the centre's impact on healthy lifestyles is satisfactory. The centre does not effectively monitor the impact of these initiatives and health visitors are not routinely tracking progress on an area basis. There is support for smoking cessation, tackling obesity, immunisation and breastfeeding in the centre and through the outreach work and open community meetings. However, the centre cannot clearly tell what impact it has in these areas. Staff provide appropriate support for children's emotional well-being, using the key person scheme and

'Intimacy Island,' which gives them confidence to discuss their concerns and feelings. Users of the centre talk of the benefits to their families of health promotions, but in the absence of baseline data and monitoring of the impact of this work, it is not clear at this stage how much progress is made.

Centre users recognise and appreciate the priority given to their safety and that of their children in activities in the centre and in outreach and outside activities and describe how they feel safe. Many users of the centre have benefited from home safety visits, and the provision of safety aids. The centre recognises the area has a high rate of use of hospital accident and emergency facilities and has tried many innovative ways to promote safety practices. Road safety is particularly well reinforced and in one activity, the police liaison officer gave parents and carers and children speed cameras and helped them monitor cars using the main road, to understand the risks better, and to slow down the local traffic. Many parents and carers have completed paediatric first aid courses at the centre.

Regular meetings and effective communication between centre staff and partner agencies ensure that there is effective support for potentially vulnerable families, including looked-after children and that those at risk that are known about. However, the centre does not have sufficient data to ensure that all are appropriately targeted and that their needs are, therefore, fully met. Case studies and the written evaluations by parents and carers show that how families' lives are improved by outreach workers and family support staff providing effective support. Many users of the centre praised the staff who had promoted positive respect and mutual trust.

Users of the centre enjoy the wide range of learning activities and many show how they apply their learning at home. 'Wonderful world of play,' for example, encourages interaction between parents and carers and children, using recycled and easily sourced materials. 'Parent Survival' or 'Webster Stratton' helps parents and carers understand children's development and family behaviours and which one parent described as 'It's helped me get from despair to where I am now.' There is good access to adult learning opportunities, including an accredited research-based project which supports volunteers looking at issues of community interest. Close working with the adult education service and Jobcentre Plus gives access to qualifications and training, supporting users to volunteer in the centre and community as a mentored preparation for employment.

Work with children to help with their social and personal development is used as a basis for improving their communication and language skills, but it is too early to see the impact of this on children's achievement. The centre works well with the co-located school, to share some staff and activities for a smoother transition from the early years provision. However, progress with some other schools in the centre's reach area is not as advanced. There is insufficient detailed target setting to improve children's communication, language and literacy. Systems for tracking children's progress are still new and the service does not yet have data to show the impact of their work.

The centre encourages users to contribute their views to the centre's running. The outreach worker regularly advises users of advisory group topics, and helps them put their ideas

forward. Some users of the centre are active members of the advisory group and have also set up an organisation to develop joint activities with the co-located school. They contribute to the consultations and campaigns about the future of children's centres in the authority, and to plans for the area's regeneration. As one parent said, 'We are proud that our centre can be a hub for the community during the period of change'.

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>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>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>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>3</b>

## How good is the provision?

**2**

The centre works well to meet the needs of the families in the reach area. Good partnerships, home visits, outreach and referrals have helped identify many of the vulnerable families in the community and sensitive support and encouragement has helped them access the wide range of services and activities. Registrations at the centre have steadily increased to 76% of the children in the area, but managers recognise that more outreach and better use of services is needed to involve the remaining hard-to-reach users from target groups. The centre is responsive to needs and requests, so opens at weekends and evenings especially for men's groups and for support groups of families with children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The centre works closely with a home-visiting team to give additional support at an early stage for these families, especially to facilitate inclusion into centre activities, for assessments, referrals and preparation for transition to primary school. 'Learning Journeys' are used to record children's achievements and good displays and photo albums celebrate the successes and the enjoyment.

Parents and carers make good progress in their learning and the centre staff and partners have good advice and guidance resources to help with progression. Users particularly appreciate the support they receive at times of crisis. Parents and carers told inspectors how welcoming and encouraging the entire centre staff are, how the centre provides good care and support and how involvement with the centre has further developed their confidence. 'I was delighted that as soon as I moved to the area with a new baby, I was contacted by the centre and welcomed in', stated one enthusiastic parent. Well-documented case studies

show how the centre makes a positive difference to families in the reach area, although there is insufficient monitoring of the overall outcomes of the provision. Users appreciate the consistently good-quality care they receive, as one parent described, 'It's about the welfare of the children using the centre and not just about meeting targets, it's about the whole family.' The centre uses its resources well including partnership arrangements to give information, advice and guidance about a wide range of care, health, learning and early years issues.

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>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are the leadership and management?

**3**

Users of the centre comment that managers and staff work hard to minimise the impact on the centre of changes in staffing and uncertainties about the future shape of the service. Support, supervision and accountability arrangements are clear, with effective communication throughout the centre. A wide range of effective partnerships with statutory, private, and independent providers extends the range of high-quality activities available in the area and ensures that there is a coordinated approach to most service provision. Accordingly, the centre provides satisfactory value for money. The service has a clear view of areas for improvement and is working towards improved joint commissioning of children's centre and health visitor provision. The service is also examining more efficient use of resources and staff, including the much-appreciated outreach provision, to serve more families in the community. It is too early to judge whether this is effective in improving children's achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The centre has no parents' forum, but parents and carers are consulted through community meetings and have formed the Friends of Ashbury Meadow to support and develop the attached school and other facilities in addition to the centre. Parents and carers are represented and active in the centre's advisory group. Users regularly give their views on the centre and full evaluations of the projects. However, the centre and senior managers recognise that the systems to monitor and analyse the outcomes and impact of their work need to be more fully developed and used so that self-evaluation, development planning and target setting can be more precise.

Good training opportunities for staff, partner projects and volunteers help support families. This includes regular updating on child protection and sharing good practice. The centre has appropriate policies for health and safety, child protection, risk assessment and safe



recruitment. These are all up to date, put into practice for all activities and visits and reviewed regularly. Parents and carers are fully informed of the centre's child protection policies, about the use of closed circuit television (CCTV) for monitoring safety in the centre and sharing information with other relevant agencies. The centre meets statutory requirements in promoting equality and diversity and is welcoming, safe and inclusive. The centre removes barriers to allow users to access services, for example, by providing parenting courses for families who mainly speak Cantonese. They offer children and their families with special educational needs and/or disabilities good support through the provision of the specialist home-visiting service and additional support sessions at weekends.

The centre contributes strongly to the wider community and has collaborated with its neighbouring school in developing the children's council and achieving green flag and Eco-school recognition. Partner agencies speak positively about the centre and the high regard with which the centre is held. A typical remark was 'I've heard nothing but good of the centre'.

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>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>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>2</b>

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

Information from the inspections of Ashbury Meadow Primary School and Ashbury Meadow early years provision that were taking place at the same time as the children's centre inspection was taken into consideration..

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Ashbury Meadow Children's Centre on 15 and 16 November 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We would like to thank those of you who were able to tell us of your views of the services provided by the centre. You told us that care, guidance and support are all of good quality, and that it is a very caring and welcoming centre and we agree. Some of you told us how you appreciated the information that was sent out, keeping you up to date with centre activities and making sure that you knew you were welcome to visit. We also heard of the helpful visits to your homes, which made it easier for you to find the services and advice from the centre which was of most use to you.

We saw that the centre works well in partnerships with health and education services to support your children and your families, and how the centre has good information services that you are able to use. There was special praise for the way reception staff are welcoming and can help you find information you need. This includes supporting visitors to use the centre's computers to access help, information and advice. You told us that services in the centre are good and are well integrated. We saw how the centre works smoothly with other agencies and how, when more help is needed in times of crisis, they can refer families on to the right agency. One centre user told us 'the outreach worker knows everyone and everything, so she can tell me how to get the best advice or help for my family.' Many of you described how the centre helps you learn more about your children's development and how to cope with the different stresses and concerns that this brings. We found that the support, the advice, the guidance and the learning at the centre are all of good quality. We saw the comments you made in evaluations and in case studies or 'Learning Journeys', to show how you have learned more about your child's development and how to support it.

Many children in your area need additional support to improve their progress, especially in speech and listening, and although the centre gives help with this, it is not fully measuring what difference it is making. This makes it hard for the centre to set itself targets and plan future improvements in its services. We were told about how the centre puts an emphasis on healthy lifestyles and the activities both in the centre and outdoors are helping the improvements in your families' health as a result of what you have learned and experienced. We found that the centre does not monitor sufficiently the effects of this work, so cannot show if it is successful in reducing some of the health risks in your area, such as being overweight, smoking and poor take-up of immunisation. The centre works well with adult education providers and Jobcentre Plus in finding opportunities to learn, train or find preparation and skills for work. Learning sessions are well used and many of you were able

to tell us of the progress you have made, including gaining certificates for succeeding in skills which will help you in the future.

Staff have a good knowledge of the families and issues in your area, and are well-trusted. Many of you described how you are confident to talk fully of concerns and problems with them. You also told us that you feel safe and secure in the centre and recognise that the centre regards this as a high priority. We feel that the centre and its partners are thorough in following the best procedures for child protection and safeguarding and explaining to you how this works.

Many of you are involved in the centre as volunteers, as members of the advisory group or as members of the Friends of Ashbury Meadow. We saw how those who use the centre feel fully involved and have extremely positive views about it. We heard about your strong campaigns when the future of the centre was uncertain, and about your strong response to the consultation about the centre's and the service's future. We saw how the centre is inclusive and promotes equality and diversity. There is good support so those families who might find it hard to use the centre get the right help, such as those families with twins or multiple births, those for whom English is an additional language or those with children with additional learning needs or disabilities. Partner agencies speak positively about the centre and the high regard in which the centre is held. A typical remark was, 'I've heard nothing but good of the centre.' The centre works well to involve the wider community and has worked with Ashbury Meadows School in developing the children's council, and achieving green flag and Eco-school recognition. Many of you have played a part in this and we hope you can continue to support the centre and enjoy learning and children's services there.

We have made some recommendations for the future of the centre. We see that the centre has made progress in reaching some families who previously have not used the centre, but we recommend that there is more outreach work to involve more of these families. We have also recommended that there is better sharing of information between partner groups, particularly health providers, so that the centre has a clearer view of numbers of families in the area with unmet needs. We are also recommending that the authority plans carefully so that in future the centre has the right amount of skilled staff to guide improvements in the levels of children's communication, language and literacy, as that is often identified as a problem when they go on to school in this area. We have also recommended that the centre does more to measure the effectiveness of what it does, so it knows better what works well and can plan in more detail how it can serve your area best.

Thank you again for taking the time to talk to us and we wish you and your families 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).