

Inspection report for Sure Start Ribbleton Children's Centre

Local authority	Lancashire
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY317157 Little Achievers @ Ribbleton Children's Centre

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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 of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, senior leaders, front-line staff and representatives from the local authority. Discussions were also held with members of the advisory board, a range of partners, parents and carers, and service users. The inspectors observed the centre's work, accompanied staff on a home visit and at a group activity in the local park, visited a linked primary school and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Sure Start Ribbleton Children's Centre is located in the Preston district of Lancashire. The centre has developed from a Wave 2 Sure Start Local Programme and was designated as a Phase One children's centre in 2005. Since 2007, the centre has been linked to the nearby Sunshine Children's Centre. Staff work across both centres. Governance arrangements are shared and are through an advisory board reporting to the local authority.

The area served by the centre is economically and socially disadvantaged, being ranked as in the top 5% of the most deprived areas in the country. The proportion of children aged under-five who are living in households where no one is working is 44%. The number of registered families benefiting from the Childcare Element of Working Tax Credit is 20.9% with 3.9% of the Preston population aged 16 – 64 in receipt of Job Seekers' Allowance. A high proportion of local families is from a White British background with 15% of families from a range of minority ethnic groups.

The centre provides the full core purpose within purpose-built premises and is located within the grounds of Ashton Community Science College, Ribbleton campus. On-site childcare is provided by Little Achievers @ Ribbleton Children's Centre. The Early Years provision was last inspected in June 2009. Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with a much lower range of skills than is typical 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

This is a satisfactory children's centre. Families who use its services are well-supported and treated as individuals. However, data provided by the centre indicate that regular contact with target groups is only satisfactory. For example, only 6% of lone parents and 12.9% of fathers are attending the centre. A key strength is the approach to safety and safeguarding for children and families. Staff have an excellent knowledge of child protection procedures, they are well-trained and work effectively with other agencies to co-ordinate family support. The centre is very effective at sharing information with relevant agencies about safeguarding but the centre is not being informed about all local children on child protection plans.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is promoted across the centre and children's learning and progress is effectively recognised and celebrated in displays. High-quality assessment and tracking is in place to identify and recognise children's progress in all group activities. The quality of learning in groups for children and adults is particularly effective. Childminding support has also led to good and outstanding local provision. Families are regularly asked for their views about services and these are used to make improvements.

Whilst much of what is being provided is of good quality, it is not showing sufficient impact on the outcomes for children and families, particularly those in target groups. Overall outcomes being achieved by the children's centre are only satisfactory. For example, attainment by children at the age of five years is improving but the gap between the lowest 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the rest is starting to widen.

Under the leadership of the centre manager there has been a large increase in the registrations of local families so that almost all are registered. This has been achieved through improved partnership-working with health, increased home visits and greater use of outreach sites. Consequently, the overall take-up of services by families with children aged five years and under is good. Plans are in place to improve the centre's work around key priorities but some detail is not sufficiently clear. For example, the plan to reduce obesity does not include enough detailed actions about how to achieve centre targets. Nonetheless,

overall performance is improving, senior leaders are well aware of where improvements are required which, along with the commitment of staff, demonstrates that the centre has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

The cultural heritage of families using the centre and staff is valued and celebrated. For example, staff have learnt phrases in community languages to enhance communication. A range of festivals is also celebrated throughout the year. However, the centre's equality policy and plans for improvement include only a satisfactory level of detail about how it will promote greater equality across age, gender, disability, faith and religious belief, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, transgender/gender identity. This is reflected by the satisfactory range and quantity of print, positive images, books, resources and toys to promote diversity in language, disability, gender, ethnicity and culture.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Identify and implement strategies to increase the engagement of, and improve outcomes for target groups of children and families, particularly fathers and lone parents.
- Work with the local authority and with partners in schools and local nurseries to identify actions to narrow the gap between the lowest 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the rest.
- Improve equality and diversity by:
 - reviewing the centre equality policy and plans for improvement in order that they show how the centre will promote greater equality for all characteristics of equality
 - increasing the range and quantity of print, positive imagery, books, resources and toys throughout the centre to promote diversity in language, disability, gender, ethnicity and culture.
- Improve the quality of development plans by ensuring that all actions are clear and focus sharply on achieving the centre targets.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Outcomes for children and families using the centre are satisfactory. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, children in the reach area are showing improved outcomes year on year. However, the gap between the lowest-achieving children and other children has widened from 37.1% in 2009 to 43.7% per cent in 2011. Children accessing services provided or commissioned by the centre enjoy activities such as the weekly Baby Play sessions. The youngest children play and learn with confidence and are making satisfactory progress from their starting points.

Health outcomes for children and families are satisfactory. Initiation of breastfeeding has improved slightly and the numbers of mothers still breastfeeding at six to eight weeks is small at 31% to 32% in the last year. More mothers are breastfeeding at the centre as they feel more confident to do so. Obesity levels for local Reception Year children have increased by 3.4% in the past year, a rise of 0.5% over the last three years. Following a successful 'Smile4Life' campaign at the centre, registrations at local NHS dentists have increased as has parents' knowledge of oral health.

The centre and outreach sites provide a safe environment where parents and carers feel confident to attend groups and to leave their children with centre workers. Families feel able to share their concerns and seek support. Support for families individual needs, which range from parenting to domestic violence and safe behaviour is particularly effective. As one parent commented: 'You can always talk to someone here – staff go the extra mile to support and help keep you on track'. The promotion of child safety at home has included home safety packs and access to subsidised safety equipment. The number of emergency hospital admissions for young children has declined over the past three years and deaths due to road traffic accidents dropped from four in 2009 to none in 2010.

Families at risk of harm or those needing greater support are assessed effectively using the Common Assessment Framework. In most cases, parents choose centre staff to be the lead professional. Such families are closely monitored and supported to improve a wide range of child and adult needs. This is achieved through regular meetings between centre staff and other agencies and effective use of an electronic recording system. One parent commented how they had been able to become a more confident and capable parent through the support of centre staff.

Support provided by the centre helps to improve economic stability and independence through, for example, volunteering opportunities. In addition, some parents and carers have attended training and secured benefits through on-site advice from the Citizens' Advice Bureau. Some have progressed to further study or returned to work through the support of centre staff or through access to the job kiosk in the centre reception area. For example, a group of five teenage parents was able to develop their confidence through running a group at the centre and then progressed on to further education.

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	2
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	3

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.	3

How good is the provision?

2

Almost all local families are registered with the centre. However, data on participation rates indicate that support is not regularly accessed by all target groups, for example lone parents. Some fathers and grandfathers participate in a successful 'Dads' Den' group, although they feel that the centre could do more to promote this to others. One father who did not attend said that he wished that more dads would participate in other groups that are on offer, as most participants are women.

For those families who use the centre, there is a satisfactory range of activities which takes account of their needs. For example, the 'Parents-to-be' course is a 12-week programme designed to help prospective parents prepare for the arrival of a new baby. Each family who chooses to access support and advice through on-site clinics, group activities or home visits receives effective tailored support. Whenever a crisis for an individual child or family arises, families feel well-supported to improve their lives across a range of outcomes including raising emotional well-being and reducing isolation. As one parent commented, 'If I did not have the centre, I would be a recluse'. Another parent said: 'I would be lost without the centre...it has become part of my routine and my life'.

The on-site private nursery was judged good when inspected in 2009. Other provision made by the centre to support children's learning and development is good and activities use a range of appropriate venues. For example, the 'Fun in the Park' group has provided a very effective opportunity for children to learn about the environment and improve their physical development in a local park with the park keeper. One parent commented: 'We enjoy the walks and activities and my child loves the outdoors. We plant vegetables and eat them, pick apples and look for bugs. It's fantastic.'

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	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Centre leaders are committed to securing improvement and are beginning to focus the work of the centre more clearly on priorities and outcomes. They have an improving understanding of what the centre does well and where further improvements can be made. The supervision given to staff to discuss individual work with families is very effective and supported by regular training opportunities. There are no shortcomings in the way in which resources are being deployed and increased use of outreach sites is enhancing best value. Given the need to engage more individuals from target groups in the centre and the satisfactory outcomes being achieved, value for money is satisfactory.

A range of partnerships and systems of governance is improving. Currently these arrangements are satisfactory, as they have not yet had time to impact significantly upon outcomes. For example, partnership with primary schools has been strengthened through the 'Best Start' initiative launched in July 2011 and aimed at improving children's attainment. Across partners, staff, the advisory board and leaders there is insufficient clarity about the key centre priorities. These priorities are stated in the centre plans and are clearly linked to strategic priorities. The advisory board is beginning to offer effective support and challenge to the centre about its work. However, not all of the centre's plans have actions that are sufficiently clear and sharply-focused upon achieving centre targets.

Families are routinely asked for their views about the centre within groups and as part of regular consultations. The information gathered is then used to shape services. The majority of centre users express satisfaction with the centre's work. Two parents are actively involved in the advisory board and others are involved in a parents' forum. Plans are in place to extend these opportunities to others.

The quality assurance of safeguarding and risk assessment at the centre is good. Some aspects of safeguarding are excellent. For example, there is regular staff training and discussion about child protection including learning from Serious Case Reviews. Support on domestic violence is well-established and there is counselling support available for parents and carers in order to improve emotional health. All required systems are in place to check the suitability of staff. Centre workers have a comprehensive understanding of safeguarding and of broader aspects about safety such as safe sleep for babies. This excellent work is limited by a weakness in the system that passes information from the local authority to centre leaders about local children on child protection plans. This approach to information-sharing has frustrated centre leaders in their efforts to support all local children from this vulnerable group. For example, in September 2011, the centre knew only four of ten local children on child protection plans. The local authority has acknowledged this issue and is improving its information-sharing processes.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The centre treats individual children and families with respect and a range of festivals is celebrated. The language skills of staff and local people are being utilised to communicate with those members of the community

for whom English is an additional language. Data are used increasingly to track registration and take-up of services, for example 18 children with special needs and/or disabilities are registered, which is an increase of ten in one year. Children with speech and language delay are being supported through the 'chatterbox' group and through outreach activities at local primary schools. The range and quantity of print, positive imagery, books, resources and toys to promote disability and gender, language, ethnic and cultural diversity throughout the centre is satisfactory. However, the centre's equality policy and plans for improvement do not show how the centre will promote greater equality for all characteristics of equality.

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	3
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	3
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	3
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
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	3
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

Before the inspection, inspectors read the Ofsted inspection reports and RAISEonline reports for local primary schools and inspection reports for two private nurseries to learn about partnership-working, attainment of local children and contextual information about the area in which the centre is situated. The local authority provided comparative data about the centre's performance.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Ribbleton Sure Start Children's Centre on 23-24 November 2011. We really enjoyed chatting to you in your activities, around the centre and in the park. You expressed your opinions very clearly and they were very helpful to us. We were delighted to hear your

positive views about how helpful and friendly you find the staff. I am writing to say what we found out about the centre.

We judged the centre as satisfactory overall. This means there are some things that the centre does well alongside others where improvement is needed. You told us how much you value activities such as the 'Chatterbox', 'Dads' Den' and 'Baby Play'. You said that coming to the centre has given you more confidence and has helped you make new friends. We were pleased to hear that many of you feel more confident as parents and carers and that your children have enjoyed opportunities to develop and learn. We were impressed to hear the comment about the 'Fun in the Park group' that 'we enjoy the walks and activities and my child loves the outdoors. We plant vegetables and eat them, pick apples and look for bugs. It's fantastic.'

It was pleasing to see that the centre involves you in improving services and offers opportunities for you to be volunteers. You told us that you appreciate the fact that staff listen to your views and those of your children. The centre is making a positive difference to your lives. The comment of one parent demonstrated this when they said: 'I would be lost without the centre...it has become part of my routine and my life'.

The centre staff take great care to ensure that you and your children are kept safe and that the centre is a safe and welcoming place to be. Checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers are good. The centre gives effective support to individual families in times of crisis.

Although the staff work hard to make the centre as good as it can be, we judged that the centre should work with more dads and more lone parents. We have also asked them to find ways to improve the achievement of some groups of children by the age of five years. This is because information indicates that some children will not be as well-prepared for school as they might be.

We have recommended that the centre improves the way that it plans and provides for children and adults to learn about similarities and differences between people. We have indicated that this should be through increasing the amount and variety of diversity shown in print, pictures, books, resources and toys around the centre.

We have also asked the centre to make some of their plans clearer so that the work of staff is more likely to meet centre targets.

Thank you once again for your help.

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