

Inspection report for Fallowfield Children Centre

Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	383673
Inspection dates	25 - 26 April 2012
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Centre leader	Jeff Burns
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	131444 - Wilbraham Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY356017 - Brighter Beginnings Day Nursery Ltd

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.

Report Published: May 2012

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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 leader, centre staff and representatives from the local authority. Discussions were also held with members of the advisory board, a range of partners, parents and service users. The inspectors observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Fallowfield Children's Centre is located in central Manchester on the site of Wilbraham Primary School. The centre was designated as a phase one children's centre in July 2007. It provides the full core purpose. Governance is provided by the local authority and there is an advisory board in place.

There are seven super output areas served by the centre. Six of these areas are ranked in the top 30% poorest areas in the country with 30% of children aged under five living in households where no one is working. There are 3.5% of local people receiving Job Seekers' Allowance and 6% of those who claim benefits receive Incapacity Benefit or Disability Living Allowance. A large majority of local families are from a White British background with 31.4% of families from a range of minority ethnic groups. Approximately 20 different languages are spoken by those who live in the local community.

Almost all children enter early years provision with lower skills and knowledge levels than those expected for their age. The primary school and the registered early years provision at the centre are inspected separately. The reports are available on the Ofsted website at www.ofsted.gov.uk

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. The level of support for local children and families, the leadership of services and the outcomes achieved are adequate. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements and children and families feel safe. Parents value the activities and support provided, as indicated by the parent comment, 'I enjoy coming here, they help me with my child'.

The centre leader and partners have demonstrated flexibility and determination to improve services during a substantial and prolonged period of change and upheaval for many agencies and organisations, including the local authority. Space was identified as a constraint for delivering services within the reach area and, as a result, effective use has been made of outreach sites. Since the completion of building work in 2010, services have developed further on the main site. As a result, registration and participation rates have increased. A large majority of local young children are now registered with the centre and half take up the services on offer.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is promoted effectively across the centre. This is because of the effective cooperation between the on-site private nursery, on-site school nursery and reception classes and the work of the centre leader. Key messages about high-quality early learning are adequately displayed for parents and others using the centre including local childminders.

Families referred to the centre, and those with circumstances that make them vulnerable, receive satisfactory support from staff, who assess family needs effectively and coordinate packages of support. Their work is enhanced by the increasingly coordinated links between health, social care and education services.

Key partners are engaged in supporting and developing provision through the advisory board. As a result, services are linked to strategic planning and lead to satisfactory

outcomes. However, some partners are not fully enough involved in planning, reviewing and understanding how their own work is contributing to the priorities of the centre.

Equality and diversity are inadequate because the centre does not satisfactorily promote inclusion. For example, there is insufficient attention given to diversity of language, disability, festivals and cultures throughout the centre environment. Planning and evaluation do not reflect sufficient insight into the needs of some groups, for example Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people. Furthermore, the recently reintroduced annual conversation about provision and outcomes, led by the local authority, does not give sufficient regard to this area of the centre's work.

Overall planning, self-evaluation and use of data by the centre leader, members of the advisory board and the local authority are improving. As a result, they have a satisfactory understanding of the strengths of the centre and where improvement is required. For example, they recognise that provision for parents who wish to access activities that lead towards employment is adequate and requires a clearer focus. Together with the overall trend of improvement in centre provision and outcomes, this indicates that the centre has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve equality and diversity by:
 - reviewing self-evaluation and development plans in order to ensure all user groups are fully engaged and all characteristics of equality are promoted
 - increasing the range and quantity of print and positive imagery throughout the centre to promote the diverse languages, disability, gender, culture, faith and religion
 - evaluating inclusion in greater depth within the annual conversation between the local authority and the centre.
- Improve the economic and social well-being of local families by increasing the provision and take-up of accredited adult learning.
- Improve the effectiveness of partner involvement in the advisory board and wider partnership working by:
 - increasing the contribution of partners to planning and reviewing centre priorities
 - ensuring that partners understand with greater clarity how their own work is contributing to the priorities of the centre
 - ensuring that all partners are clear about the annual priorities for the centre.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

The centre, on-site private nursery and school nursery effectively use data and liaise about areas for improvement in children's learning. As a result, children who have yet to reach the

end of the Early Years Foundation Stage are making at least satisfactory and sometimes good progress from their starting points. This means that they are adequately prepared for school and benefit from satisfactory transition between settings. Parents also report that they are more confident in supporting their children with their speech and toileting needs. The gap between the lowest-achieving children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and others has decreased between 2009 and 2011 by 1%. A clear action plan is in place to consolidate this improvement and to address the fact that overall attainment is not yet showing improvement at age five years.

Through effective links with health colleagues, such as the midwives clinic, the number of children accessing mainstream health services has increased well. There is widespread health promotion: for example, a clear focus upon dental health has led to an increase in levels of oral health in young children. Levels of breastfeeding are above the Manchester average and between 2009 and 2010 increased from 63.2% to 64.4%. Healthy eating is strongly promoted across group activities and, as a result, obesity levels for local Reception Year children have decreased by 2.4%.

Parents report that the centre is a safe place to play, learn and have fun. Most parents using the centre say they have made improvements in their own learning and development. Those who access support from the clinical psychologist for managing their children's behaviour report positive changes in their parenting ability. Children who are subject to a child protection plan are well supported by family support, as are those in care and those involved with the Common Assessment Framework process. As a result, there is evidence that most children have become safer and parents have acted in safer ways with their families. For example, one parent commented, 'I used to think negatively and didn't think that I would get anywhere or get any help but the centre changed that'.

Across the centre, most children demonstrate satisfactory behaviour and are developing beneficial relationships. For example, they join regular adult and toddler group sessions with confidence. This was reflected by a parent who said, 'My child's confidence and independence is because of the groups at the centre that they have attended since birth'. The centre has developed effective ways for parents to express their views about provision at the centre. For example, all group activities are evaluated and regular surveys of parent satisfaction undertaken. A recent decline in parent engagement in governance has been addressed, with six new parents attending the March 2012 advisory board meeting.

Support provided by the centre helps to improve the users' economic stability and independence; for example, some of them lead group activities or take advantage of the volunteer opportunities. Some parents have attended training courses, been helped to access benefits and progressed to higher level courses or have been helped to access employment. However, provision for adult learning is not yet showing an impact upon the overall levels of worklessness across the reach area.

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	3
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	3
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?

3

The range and quality of services offered by the centre is adequate, but not yet good. This is partly due to the reorganisation, relocation and reduction of staff across local services over the past two years, described by one partner as 'turmoil and upheaval'. Nevertheless, registrations and take-up of services are slowly increasing, including for children under the age of three years. The centre has an appropriate understanding of families who are using the centre. As a result, it is meeting the needs of some target groups, including lone parents and teenage parents. This was illustrated by one parent who said, 'Staff have given me the tools to go in the right direction'. There are increasing opportunities for disabled parents and children and those who have special educational needs to enjoy learning and play together. The centre and local authority have identified that the reach and take-up by minority ethnic groups is unclear due to a high level of undeclared ethnicity at registration. They are taking steps to increase the accuracy of data.

Provision made by the centre to support children's learning and development, for example the stay-and-play sessions, is satisfactory. Although all activities are not sufficiently individualised, the improving links between the centre and the on-site school nursery are leading to improvements in planning. The personal development and achievement of adults through courses and groups are noted but not widely celebrated.

All staff provide a secure and welcoming environment in the centre and a satisfactory range of leaflets and displays are promoted throughout the building. The overall quality of care, guidance and support provided is adequate. It is having the most impact for those children and parents experiencing times of crisis. This is because support workers use an empowering model of assessment with families. Parents are asked about their needs and these are carefully reviewed with their involvement. During the planning and evaluation of family intervention work parents are also asked how they feel about key areas of their lives. Paradoxically, there is limited evidence that any local service makes extensive use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) but they do effectively utilise the pre-CAF for

assessment. The local authority is undertaking efforts to increase the use of the CAF across agencies in order to maximise the benefit for children and families.

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	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	3

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

The centre leader is beginning to focus the work of the centre more effectively on data, priorities and outcomes. All centre activities are evaluated and supervision procedures to check the work of staff from commissioned services are satisfactory. Centre plans demonstrate an improving understanding of the key areas for improvement and are linked to clear local targets. Governance and accountability arrangements give appropriate support in shaping and evaluating the direction taken. Parents are increasingly involved in advisory board meetings. However, although key agencies are represented on the advisory board, some partners have a limited understanding of the priorities of the centre. As a result, overall outcomes are satisfactory. The annual conversation with the local authority has recently been re-established and proved constructive for the centre.

All users of the centre are valued and treated with respect, and discrimination is not tolerated. Those using the centre are from a range of minority ethnic groups and several community languages are spoken. Where possible the centre tries to use colleagues or other parents to interpret for families. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people are signposted to a local support group. Posters around the centre positively portray men, women and Black people. However, the diversity of language, disability, faith and religion shown throughout the centre environment is too limited. Centre planning and evaluation mainly focus upon children with disabilities and minority ethnic groups but not on other characteristics of equality. The challenge provided by the local authority on inclusion is insufficient to guide the centre. Due to this range of weaknesses, equality and diversity are inadequate.

The centre's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. For example, Criminal Records Bureau checks are in place and monitored for all staff. Systems are kept under regular review by the centre leader and the advisory board. Referral and information-sharing protocols are in place and staff have been trained to the appropriate level. There is regular cooperation with social care and the centre is aware of all local children on a child protection plan. Supporting those affected by domestic violence and developing emotional well being are valued by all services linked to the centre.

Given the satisfactory outcomes achieved, the take-up of services by a minority of local children under five years and the adequate range and quality of services, the centre is giving satisfactory 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	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	4
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	3
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.	3

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

Before the inspection, inspectors read the RAISE online report for the linked primary school to learn contextual information about the area in which the centre is situated.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Fallowfield Children Centre on 25 and 26 April 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall. This means there are some things that the centre does well alongside others where improvement is needed.

Thank you for your help. We spoke to many of you about the centre's work and visited some of you at home. You expressed your views very clearly and they were very helpful to us. This is what we found out:

Your centre provides satisfactory support to you and your families and staff work together to make things better for you and to improve your lives. You told us that you and your children are supported and looked after. We could see this for ourselves in the adult and toddler group, the English for Speakers of Other Languages class and in the stay-and-play session. It was also pleasing to hear that, when life is difficult, the centre is there to support you.

We found that the centre is an adequately safe, comfortable and attractive place in which to learn, play, have fun and make friends. We were pleased that mums and dads use the centre. We were particularly pleased to hear that more parents and children are starting to use the group activities available. You told us that staff make you feel welcome and we particularly liked the comment from a parent who said, 'Staff have given me the tools to go in the right direction'.

Some of you told us how the centre has helped you to gain new qualifications and access opportunities that have led to employment. We have asked the centre to find ways so that more people can do this.

We judged that the centre is giving inadequate attention to promoting and celebrating similarities and differences between people. We have recommended that the centre improves the way that it plans and provides for children and adults to learn about differences including in language, culture, religion and disability. We have indicated that this should include increasing the amount and variety of print and pictures around the centre. In addition, we have recommended they have a clearer focus on involving all groups who access the centre and reflect all characteristics of diversity.

We have also asked the centre to work more effectively with other organisations and services so that they all understand the main priorities that the centre is trying to achieve for you and your families.

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