

Inspection report for Pear Tree Children's Centre

Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	383793
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Centre leader	Mrs Lesley Sullivan
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Kirkham Pear Tree School 119887
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Pear Tree Holiday Club EY332431

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/partner 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

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

The inspectors held meetings with the local authority, centre staff, advisory board members, health professionals, voluntary and statutory partner organisations, two local headteachers, and parents.

They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation

Information about the centre

Pear Tree Children's Centre delivers services in the reach areas of Kirkham, Wesham, Newton and Clifton in the borough of Fylde, including four rural communities. It is on the same site as Pear Tree School which is a special school for children who have severe learning disabilities specialising in physical and sensory provision. The centre and school are fully integrated and share both expertise and resources. Pear Tree Children's Centre is a phase two centre and provides a core offer of services including support for children with special educational needs, adult education and a base for the network childminder co-ordinator. The centre serves local childminders, seven pre-school providers, seven primary schools and one specialist school. Childcare provision is provided by Pear Tree Seedlings at Pear Tree school and at other local providers.

The centre serves a relatively affluent community with pockets of deprivation. There are 556 families within the reach area registered with the children's centre. Out of these families 30.4% are lone parents and 15.7% are fathers respectively. There are 670 children under the age of five in the reach area. Of these children, 74% have accessed services in the last

year and 267 live in households where no one is working or is in receipt of some form of benefits. Of those registered in the previous year, 49 were lone parents, 14 were children with some form of learning or physical disabilities and nine were teenage parents. The large majority of families in the centre's reach area are predominantly White British with a small percentage of families from Eastern European groups, mainly Polish.

Children's skills on entry to Early Years Foundation Stage provision are generally well below those expected for their age in communication, language and literacy and in their personal and social development. The headteacher of the school is also the head of the centre. She is supported in the day-to-day management of the centre by a Children's Centre Coordinator. The governance of the centre is provided by the school governing body.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for families

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

With its excellent outcomes, quality of provision, leadership and management Pear Tree Children Centre's overall effectiveness is outstanding. Managed by an outstanding team and despite it being small the centre not only 'offers so much' as one grateful user stated, but is also locally recognised as 'the hub of the community'. In particular, it excels in providing targeted services to support the most hard-to-engage groups in the community, including disabled children and their families and those with special educational needs.

Overall outcomes are outstanding. An excellent level of enjoyment and personal satisfaction is extremely well demonstrated in all the sessions observed by the inspectors. As well as gaining in confidence, developing positive relationships and enhancing personal self-esteem, the majority of the adult users are currently following routes to gaining Childcare or Skills for Life qualifications or employment. Outcomes for the under-fives are improving equally well. Children are making good or better progress given their low starting points where even small steps or milestones of achievements are well recognised and celebrated.

The centre is highly committed to promoting healthy lifestyles. Health outcomes, including for breastfeeding and oral health are improving and good overall. However, the centre

recognises that it needs to continue to further improve its outcomes for obesity and smoking cessation.

Users benefit from a wide range of excellent services and purposeful learning activities that have been very carefully personalised to meet the needs of individuals and families. There are many opportunities for parents, grandparents and children to play, learn and develop new skills together, as well as benefiting from expert advice and support from various professionals including health workers. A popular place, one user said she 'would love to be here at the centre everyday'.

The centre is particularly excellent in supporting families with circumstances that make them vulnerable, including those with disabilities and with special educational needs, isolated single or young parents and families with twins. It does this by providing an excellent level of care, guidance, support and services. This results in outstanding emotional development and a better quality of life for the majority of the users.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Governance and accountability of the centre is extremely effective. Highly ambitious and driven to continually improve, the excellent centre staff and managers and the governing body, bring with them wide-ranging skills and experiences, which along with excellent planning and robust self-evaluation process helps to shape and improve the services provided. Similarly, there is excellent consultation and use of users' views including those of parent representatives on its parents' forum.

Staff promote equality and celebrate diversity exceptionally well and as a result, barriers to access and learning are swiftly overcome. Inclusion and meeting the needs of the hard-to-engage groups, disabled children and those with special educational needs is a key priority for the centre. Safeguarding arrangements are excellent. The centre's leadership is acutely sensitive to the need to safeguard children and vulnerable families both in the centre and at home.

The outstanding leadership team combined with improved outcomes and the highly effective use of partnerships, resources, and specialist support for users indicates that the centre has excellent capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve further healthy outcomes for users, especially those linked to smoking cessation and reducing obesity.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

The centre makes a good contribution to improving the health of families. Healthy lifestyles are promoted throughout the centre and in all its work. Overall, the health outcomes have been improving, in particular for oral health and breastfeeding. The centre has been very

successful in promoting breastfeeding to mothers of all ages. For instance the initiation rates for breastfeeding for the last year has risen to 79.2% compared to the national average of 74.5%. This success is due to the creative strategies being used, for example, the 24 hour helpline for mothers, with 47 of those mothers benefiting from the breastfeeding support group.

The centre has offered a broad range of physical activities to support behaviour changes to reduce obesity, such as healthy eating in groups and through family fun days. This is to tackle the increasing obesity rate for the area which has risen from 4.1% to 7.1% last year. The centre is dedicated and focused to further improving health outcomes for users, especially for smoking cessation and in reducing obesity.

Adults and children experience a very high level of enjoyment in taking part in activities that enhance their knowledge, increases their self-esteem and personal and social development. The centre is extremely successful in developing the educational and employability skills of its users. Many parents, some of whom did not have a successful school experience, make good use of the adult and community learning opportunities provided at the centre and in local colleges. In particular, the centre supports adult users to develop their numeracy, literacy, parenting and volunteering skills which lead on to increased economic stability. Last year 494 users achieved 100% success rates in gaining qualifications on a number of learning programmes and in meeting the targets of their personal learning goals.

The centre works diligently and successfully to ensure that all children have a good firm start in their learning and development. Inspectors noted how children's communication and social skills are developing extremely well, enabling them to later settle into school far more quickly and to interact well in learning and play sessions with other children. 'My daughter learnt a lot and interacted well with other children, I was buzzing and she was buzzing' are the words of one happy mother talking about her daughter's progress whilst attending the children's 'Stay and Play' session held in a local primary school.

All children are either making good or better progress in their communication and language development given their low starting points. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% attending the local school is narrowing successfully including those identified as in need of intervention and support. Excellent support and information for parents regarding their child's transition into early years provision and/or school in particular help to continually improve outcomes for children.

Parents and children feel extremely safe, secure and recognise the centre as a place of great safety. Family outreach workers offer excellent guidance and support in making homes safe for young children. Multi-agency working is exceptional in safeguarding children and supporting those on child protection plans and the Common Assessment Framework is used extremely effectively when specialist intervention is required. Similarly ensuring the emotional well-being of parents is a high priority for the centre, particularly for those who have children with disabilities and those with special educational needs or those families who may be involved with statutory child protection agencies.

The centre is also very successful in promoting positive relationships and behaviour among users. Adults who previously felt isolated speak highly of the social aspect of the centre's life, particularly in helping them to make new friends. They report how much they enjoy socialising with other parents. One father informed us how he likes to 'meet other dads and appreciate opportunities to share our concerns and help each other.' Similarly, users appreciate the improved behaviour of their children. Currently five volunteers are engaged in making positive contributions to various centre activities and eight parents take an active part in the 'Community Forum' and in the centre's decision-making process to help shape the services offered.

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	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	1
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships, and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	1
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment.	1

How good is the provision?

1

Currently 556 families in the reach area have successfully accessed the services provided by the centre. Hugely benefiting from its excellent partnerships the centre offers outstanding services and learning opportunities tailor made to meet the diverse needs of its users. Services, including those for young parents and those with twins are targeted very effectively. Consequently, a high proportion of families who have specialist needs receive the support they require.

The centre's work in the engagement of isolated families and support for those new to the country is an excellent example of improving community cohesion. For instance, members of the Latvian migrant group settled and working in the Kirkham area are very appreciative of the English for Speakers of Other Languages course and the difference it has made to their lives. Becoming competent in communicating in English has not only built their confidence but also enabled them to settle well into the local community. Similarly, the highly sensitive outreach work results in many of those parents engaging in activities out of the home after a period of home visiting. The important role that the centre plays in users' lives was aptly expressed by one user's statement, 'the centre of your world, everybody sharing experiences and supporting each other.'

Users highly appreciate the excellent learning opportunities and services provided by the centre which enhance in particular, their parenting and employability skills. For instance, the 'Work Club' sessions provide excellent opportunities for adult users to prepare for the world of work, by practising interview skills, preparing their curriculum vitae and using laptops for job research purposes. Similarly the broad range of enjoyable children's activities makes a strong and effective contribution to improving the communication skills of children who attend the centre, the holiday club and other early years' settings. This is helping to increase the proportion of children achieving 78+ points in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile.

The level and quality of care, guidance and support provided by the centre staff and its partners is excellent, both transforming and making a positive difference to the lives of the vast majority of families and users. Childminders are provided with training to enhance their childminding skills and users benefit from respite care and guidance on matters relating to benefits, volunteering and funding issues. Similarly, many working parents benefit from the centre's 'Holiday Club' childcare facility during the school holidays. A good listening ear, with someone to talk to, is what many isolated users appreciate. One lone parent experiencing personal difficulties informed the inspectors that, 'They don't leave you to sink, always somebody to talk to. Now I don't feel so isolated.'

The outstanding support well tailored for children with the most severe impairments ensures they make excellent progress. Children and adults with communication difficulties are able to express themselves in an environment which includes sign language, use of symbolic representation and objects of reference.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

The leadership and management of Pear Tree Children's Centre are outstanding. The centre's excellent management team demonstrate a clear vision, passion and a very strong commitment to supporting and making a real difference to the lives of the vast majority of families in the reach communities. The advisory board members are highly proactive and provide effective support and an excellent level of skills, knowledge and guidance in relation to the development of the services and improvement plans.

The centre's performance management systems, quality monitoring of its provision and staff supervision are robust. The planning of provision and much improved self-evaluation process is outstanding. Robust use of data, responses from users and partners are well

combined to inform self-evaluation and to shape future services. Results clearly show improved indicators for users and a narrowing of the gap for the most vulnerable children and families.

The safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults using the centre is outstanding and extremely well embedded in all aspects of its services. Improvement in safety at home is a priority for the centre and for its users. Stringent recruitment and induction procedures and policies are in place, which are clearly understood and followed by all the staff, including partners. Robust risk assessments are carried out daily to ensure the safety of the building and users. Key staff including outreach workers visiting homes are well trained, consequently, vulnerable families receive expert support and guidance. The Common Assessment Framework records are thorough and used well to support vulnerable families.

The centre has excellent partnerships with a number of multi-agencies and works exceedingly well with them. In particular, users benefit from the excellent on-site partnership with Pear Tree School and its specialist services, resources and staff expertise that the school freely offers. Similarly, the centre's effective partnerships with other local schools and imaginative use of the 'Best Start Lancashire' scheme, enables children attending the Holiday Club to receive high quality play sessions and receive personalised support with their literacy and numeracy targets.

Users' views, both formal and informal, as well as evaluations of all learning activities are welcomed and used well to inform centre decision making. Users' views, thank you cards and case studies highlight the tremendous difference made to their lives and the excellent level of support they had received. Children in particular benefit from the centre's outstanding range of suitable resources, including the use of the sensory room. The efficient and very effective use of its partnerships, staff expertise, resources, and accommodation contributes to the centre providing excellent value for money.

There is an excellent promotion of equality and diversity throughout the centre's work; it provides a very welcoming, secure and inclusive environment for all users. One parent described the centre as being, 'Very inclusive of all abilities and staff show great empathy and understanding'. The centre shares the school's ethos and excellent commitment to removing barriers. For example, the centre coordinator and the staff are acutely aware of any difficulties in communication with users of all ages. In particular, staff are extremely skilled in inclusive practice with regard to users with disabilities and those with special educational needs, ensuring they are fully included and valued.

These are the grades for leadership and management:

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	1
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes	1

The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	1
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision.	1

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

The findings from the inspection of Kirkham Pear Tree School and the children's outcomes at the end of the Reception Year in personal, social and emotional development and in communication language and literacy contributed to the children's centre report and judgements.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Pear Tree Children's Centre on 1 and 2 May 2012. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

We really enjoyed listening to your extremely positive views about your centre which many of you regard as being 'fantastic' and as one of you said 'would be lost without it'. You told us about the excellent progress that you and your children have made in learning new skills as well as gaining knowledge especially about health matters. In particular we were pleased to note how you have all begun to adopt a healthier and safer lifestyle. We saw for ourselves how you have learnt about safety issues in the excellent 'First Aid' session, by a demonstration enabling you to master the safe technique of practising giving resuscitation to your babies.

The centre offers you a wide range of courses and services that help you all, parents, grandparents, teenage and single parents, to develop your confidence, self-esteem, and learn about parenting and budgeting matters. Childcare and parenting courses in particular have helped you to learn about improving family relationships, share ideas, make new friends and learn how to support your child's learning better and to deal with difficult behaviour. One parent stated that the 'parenting course made a fantastic difference to my life, my language changed and became more positive.'

We are really pleased that you have been helped to achieve qualifications in many courses including in literacy, childcare and mathematics. Trying out a new course at first can be a very daunting process but also very rewarding, as one of you told us by sharing your experience of your first day in a numeracy class, 'In the first session I was upset, with fear of numbers and went out smiling.' We are equally delighted that many of you are improving your employability skills by practising interview skills and applying for jobs in the centre's work club sessions.

Several of you have become volunteers at the centre and are successfully contributing to the work of the centre and other places. Most of you have also been active in informing the centre of your views, including through the governing committee and the parents' forum. This has helped to shape the services that the centre provides and in meeting yours and your children's needs.

The two headteachers of the local primary schools and other staff that we met told us how your children, as a result of using the centre, are far better prepared for entry into school. We are very glad that your children too, have developed good communication and social skills.

The centre offers many of you outstanding care, guidance and support, particularly for those experiencing immense personal difficulties, such as a crisis or coping with behavioural problems with your children. You particularly value the individualised support provided for you and your children, both in the centre and at home including those of you who have children with disabilities or with special educational needs.

Leadership and management of the centre are excellent. You thoroughly appreciate the hard working staff, their warmth and approachability and what they do for you and your family. Your centre is indeed led and managed by an excellent head of centre and an equally excellent Children's Centre Coordinator. They have your best interests at heart, are sensitive to your needs, ambitious, extremely good at running the centre and know their local community very well. They are extremely well supported by an excellent team of professionals consisting of the centre staff, governing body and the centre's many partners.

We are really pleased that you and your families benefit from the outstanding resources and accommodation that the centre and the school provide, including the use of the sensory and community room. Your centre provides a safe, secure and welcoming environment with 'staff who always have a smile on their faces', as one of you told us.

Pear Tree Children's Centre and on-site Pear Tree Specialist School provide an inclusive learning and play environment. Staff are very sensitive to the diverse needs of all users and are committed to breaking barriers to learning. A prime example is that in some sessions your children have opportunities to play and learn with children with disabilities and those with special educational needs. This not only extends their knowledge but also raises their awareness of disability issues at an early age.

We think Pear Tree Children's Centre offers outstanding value for money, in the way it uses its resources and supports you in so many ways. We have asked the centre to keep up its wonderful work and to continue to improve healthy lifestyle outcomes for you and your families, especially those linked to smoking cessation and reducing obesity.

We would like to thank everyone who contributed their ideas, came to speak with us, or wrote letters telling us about the support the centre gives you and how much you love using it and appreciate the work of the staff.

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