

# Inspection report for Whitworth Children's Centre

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Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	384219
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	St Bartholomews Church of England Primary School 119374
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	N/A

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.

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and one Early Years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior managers, centre staff, parents, members of the committee and a number of partners including health, adult learning and education professionals. They observed the centre's work, accompanied staff on a home visit and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Whitworth Children's Centre, a Phase Two centre designated in September 2009, adjoins the building of St Bartholomew's Church of England Primary School in Whitworth, Rochdale. It provides a range of services including health, social care, family play sessions, parenting programmes, adult education and outreach services. The school is subject to its own inspection under S5 of the Education Act 2005. The report for this inspection is available on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The centre's reach area includes Healey, Whitworth, Facit and Shawforth. Currently 72.2% of children in the reach area aged from birth to five years are registered and of these, 79.5% live in the top 30% areas of deprivation. Within the reach of the centre there are significant issues surrounding alcohol and substance misuse. The reach area is mainly rural and 97% of the population are of White British heritage. Housing is mostly privately owned with some rental housing. The percentage of children living in households dependent on workless benefits is 33.8% and 22.7% of families in the reach area are receiving working tax credit. Childcare is offered through a range of local providers. Most children within the reach of the centre enter early education with knowledge and skills below those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development.

Governance of the centre is provided by a sub-committee of St Bartholomew's Church of England Primary School governing body. This includes the headteacher of the school who is also the head of centre, the extended services manager who is the centre manager, a representative from the local authority, a nominated officer from the Sure Start Early Years and Childcare Service and staff from the school.

## 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

Whitworth Children's Centre provides satisfactory support to families, including those in target groups. This results in satisfactory outcomes overall. Some outcomes are good. The centre provides a warm, welcoming and safe environment for those accessing its services and is becoming increasingly established in the community. Those who use the centre appreciate the good quality of care, guidance and support they receive. Users attending also appreciate how important the centre has become in offering a space to meet others, which is particularly important to those who often feel isolated. However, too few lone parents, teenage parents and fathers access the services of the children's centre.

Parents who attend the centre value the support extended to them, in particular, effective support to raise their understanding of dangers and how to keep themselves safe. The good safeguarding arrangements have a positive impact on the safety and well-being of families. Families enjoy the activities and services which are commissioned by the centre and many are regularly attended. Many parents indicate that they now have a greater awareness and understanding of how to keep their families safe and healthy.

Children's achievements, as demonstrated by results in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile, are improving overall and are now broadly in line with the national average. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest is steadily narrowing. The linked school recognises the positive impact of the centre's work and partnerships with the local play group in preparing children for school. The centre recognises the need to monitor the impact its work is having with other schools in the area by developing more consistent links.

Some parents have benefited from a programme delivered by outreach workers to improve confidence in managing children's behaviour; a small minority has undertaken a numeracy course. However, the range of further education, training and progression opportunities for adults to further improve their economic well-being is not sufficiently broad.

Sound day-to-day management arrangements contribute well to the smooth running of the centre. The leadership committee and management team meet regularly to consider ways of improving and developing the services provided for families. The local authority has provided the centre with information and guidance to enable it to set priorities. However, continued self-evaluation and systematic data analysis do not rigorously inform the centre's action planning. In addition, the centre committee, which acts as the advisory board, does not currently have representatives from the range of services provided, including parents who reflect the wider community. The positive impact of the centre's work on some outcomes for children and families since the centre opened, together with satisfactory leadership and management of the centre overall, indicate that the centre has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Users of the centre are encouraged to develop positive relationships with staff and partners. They complete feedback sheets and evaluations for many of the activities they attend. Their views are considered and activities adapted to better meet their needs. For example, days and times of activities are changed where possible to accommodate their requests. However, currently there are no parent representatives on the committee and no parents' forum or parents' meetings to enable families to contribute to the decision-making and governance of the centre. This is an inclusive centre and those who use the centre feel welcome and valued.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve provision and outcomes by:
  - Engaging more users from the target groups, paying particular attention to teenage parents, lone parents and fathers.
  - Improving the rigour and effectiveness of self-evaluation and data analysis in informing the centre's development plan, providing accurate priorities and setting challenging targets for improvement.
  - Developing collaborative working with partners to extend opportunities for adult training and learning by providing progression and a breadth of options in relation to adults starting points to further secure their economic well-being.
- Improve the governance and accountability of the centre by:
  - Ensuring that the committee has representatives from a range of service providers, and parents who reflect the wider community to offer an improved level of advice and recommendations to the centre.

- Improving the extent to which families using the centre contribute their views, participate in decision-making and the governance of the centre.

## How good are outcomes for families?

3

Safeguarding is given a high priority. The effective implementation of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) alongside secure referral pathways and cohesive multi-agency support underpins the safety, well-being and protection of families, particularly in times of crisis. Safeguarding procedures are robust and parents feel that they and their children are kept safe. The work of the outreach staff and support workers is effective in improving the awareness of safety as indicated in the uptake of home safety advice and equipment.

The centre effectively promotes healthy living through a varied range of activities. 'Gym Tiddle', 'Bouncing Babies', 'Little Explorers', 'Grubs Up' and 'Baby Massage' are some of the activities attended which promote users' health and well-being. One user explained the value of the cookery course she had attended in the past: 'I now cook healthy food from fresh and freeze it in ice cube trays for my baby'. All parents are encouraged to sign up to a 'Smoke-Free Home' pledge and staff offer encouragement during home visits. The centre signposts users for smoking cessation. However, health partners and centre staff report that gaps in data make it difficult to measure the impact of their work. Efforts to reduce childhood obesity have had a positive impact. Rates for children in Reception Year have reduced from 13.5% to 10.5% in the last three years. Collaborative working with health partners and effective use of the 'Early Notification' of new births in the reach means outreach workers are making contact with families to identify needs at the earliest opportunity.

The mostly good-quality play and learning sessions within the centre contribute well to children's enjoyment and achievement. This is helping to narrow the achievement gap between the lowest-achieving 20% and the rest. Children make good progress in their learning from their starting points. Data show that there has been a three-year improving trend, with 57.8% of children within the centre's reach achieving 78+ points in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and at least six points in each of the scales for personal, social and emotional development and language, literacy and communication. The trend for girls has significantly improved in the last year from 57.1% to 73.7% and for boys from 29.3% to 44.4%. Firm plans are in place to continue to narrow the gap between boys' and girls' achievement. Many users commented on how their confidence in supporting their children's development has increased through the good advice and guidance from staff. Comments include 'I feel I have learnt a lot to help my son' and 'They have taught me patience, not to lose my temper and better strategies like time out'.

Recently-developed partnership with the Volunteer Network Co-ordinator has resulted in three users attending the accredited training for volunteers. Of these, two are now volunteers within the centre, and they support staff in activities and sessions. However, overall there are too few opportunities for further education, training and development of literacy and employability skills. In addition effective consideration and planning is not given

to adults' starting points and progression to further secure their economic well-being. Partnership with the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) is a particular strength. Many of the users and those in the reach area have benefited from regular visits from the CAB volunteer. Consequently, their financial circumstances and emotional well-being have improved through receiving debt management, information on tax credits, housing and having debt cleared.

The friendly and approachable staff make it easy for users to feel welcome. One user expressed how much this means to her stating 'I cannot praise the staff enough. They know every child by name.' Children behave well and have positive relationships with other children and centre staff. They show respect and consideration for others. While the majority of users express their views about activities, there are no systems in place for families to be engaged in the decision-making and governance at the centre. A parents' forum or opportunities made for parents to meet more informally to begin to have their say and shape the service offered are not in place. Feedback to inspectors from some of the users clearly indicated they are keen to be involved in setting up and being part of a parents' group.

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>2</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>2</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>3</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?**

**3**

The varied range of activities effectively promotes users' enjoyment, such as socialising with other parents and playing with their children. 'I mainly use it for the social', and 'It's a chance for me to chat and socialise while my child is busy' are typical of users' comments. The number of families registered with the centre is relatively high at 72.2%. The most recent figures show that 38% of these actually engage with the centre. The centre acknowledges that few teenage mothers, lone parents and fathers access the centre and leaders and managers have yet to fully explore a full range of strategies to involve them further. The centre is aware there is more work to be undertaken to reach and engage more families within the reach area.

Many activities are regularly attended with 'Little Explorers', 'Kids Rock', 'Inbetweeners' and 'Gym Toddle' being firm favourites. Users of the centre benefit from health initiatives such as oral hygiene and the distribution of vitamin D, which are implemented well by the enthusiastic staff team. Those who have attended adult learning, such as the numeracy course, are keen to progress to the next level. Many of the users who spoke with inspectors are eager to pursue more purposeful learning such as accredited courses to further build on existing skills or learn new skills.

Good-quality care guidance and support makes a positive difference to families who may be vulnerable due to their circumstances. Parents were keen to tell inspectors how their involvement with the centre has helped them and that there is always someone to speak to about issues concerning them. In addition, a good range of literature and signposting to relevant agencies, provide parents with valuable information about sexual health, domestic violence and drug abuse. One parent said 'Coming here has improved my mental health' and another commented 'I feel I can ask staff if I don't understand something'.

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>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</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**

The head of centre, centre manager and staff team are committed to the work they do to support families within the reach area. Despite staff shortages and budgetary constraints the programme of activities has continued for users, assisted partly through the centre manager being involved in delivering some of these sessions. This approach has contributed well to the smooth running of the centre. There are sound links between the centre's evaluation of its services and the priorities set out in its development plan. However, more work remains to improve the rigour and effectiveness of self-evaluation and use of available data and analysis to inform the centre's development plan. For example, accurate priorities and challenging targets for improvement have yet to be formalised for the coming year. The centre manager is focused on the need to increase the participation rates of families and children engaging in the centre's services and activities. However, participation rates for lone, teenage parents and fathers remain low. Consequently, the centre provides satisfactory value for money.



Performance management arrangements and staff supervision take place routinely. Staff feel valued and are able to develop their own professional expertise through training opportunities. As a result, they are enthusiastic about their work. Governance of the centre is provided by a sub-committee of the school governing body whose members take on the role of the advisory board. However, the committee does not currently represent a range of services provided and parents to reflect the wider community. The level of advice provided and recommendations offered by the committee to the centre is not always broad enough to give clear direction for the centre's work.

The centre manager has started to build and extend links in the community and recognises the importance of this in improving levels of engagement and outcomes for families in the reach area. The inclusion of all children and families, regardless of background, is central to the centre's vision. The centre and its health partners are aware of potential barriers such as transport links hindering some users accessing the service; including families with disabled children and those with special educational needs. To overcome this barrier some of these children are visited in the home. As a result, outcomes for the families attending and being visited in the home are positive. However, the centre does not have data about how many disabled children and children of disabled parents live in the reach. Consequently, it is difficult to measure the full impact of this work.

Good safeguarding practice is adopted across all areas of the centre's work. The premises are safe and secure. Training for staff is up-to-date. Robust risk assessments are conducted to ensure that families and staff are safe. A single central record evidences that appropriate vetting and recruitment procedures and checking of all staff, including those from partner agencies, are robust. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used well in supporting families with circumstances that make them vulnerable and those subject to a child protection plan. Case studies evidence some sensitive and valuable multi-agency work with social care and health partners. The centre is proactive in developing relevant partnerships such as the strong links they have established with CAB and social care services to support families when they need it most.

For those users who access the services there are clear gains and benefits with some good outcomes. User engagement in relation to routinely seeking the views of those attending the centre is satisfactory. However, a clear focus and further work is required in engaging users more fully in the centre's work and contributing to decision-making on key matters affecting the centre, for example, by representation on the centre's committee and through more informal channels such as a parents' forum.

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 secures 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>2</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>3</b>

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

None

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaining about inspections*, which is available from our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Whitworth Children's Centre on 17 - 18 May 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We enjoyed our visit to your centre, and would like to thank you very much for talking to us, letting us come into your sessions and visiting you in your homes. You told us that you find the staff friendly and welcoming. You enjoy visiting the centre, attending activities and meeting other families.

The manager and her team are committed to improving outcomes for families in the area. They ensure that good systems are in place to keep you and your families safe. Partnerships are particularly strong with social care services and the Citizens' Advice Bureau who support you well and offer you good advice on issues such as benefit entitlement, debt management and housing. Also, effective partnerships with health services have helped staff promote numerous health initiatives, which you tell us both you and your children benefit from. Many of you told us that your children have made progress since attending sessions at the centre, in particular in their language and social skills and you also thoroughly enjoy the social

aspect of these sessions. Many of you also expressed a real interest in gaining an accredited qualification, such as in the volunteer scheme. We have, therefore, asked the centre to find ways to increase opportunities for further training. The centre is successful at engaging with the some of the families that really need support but they still need to find ways of engaging with more of these families and in particular lone parents, teenage parents and fathers.

We found that you are happy with the range of activities available at the centre and some of you particularly enjoy 'Baby Massage'. You told us about the health benefits of using massage and how it has improved your relationship with your baby. Many of you told us that you particularly enjoy 'Little Explorers' as it keeps your children active and gives you the opportunity to socialise.

We have also asked the centre to increase opportunities for you and some of its partners to be more involved in the decision-making process and monitoring of the centre's progress. During our discussions some of you expressed an interest in being involved in a parents' group and the committee; we encourage you to take this forward. We have asked the centre to improve self-evaluation and to ensure that it has clearer targets for improvement and involve you more so you can see what the centre has improved and where further work needs to be done.

We would like to thank everyone who spoke to us. We are very grateful for your help and wish you every success in the future.

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