

# Inspection report for Woodlands Primary School Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	383739
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<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Hilary Macdonald HMI

<b>Centre leader</b>	Nicholas Fiddaman
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
<b>Centre address</b>	Woodlands Road
<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 338370
<b>Fax number</b>	Not applicable
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:childrens@thewoodlands.org.uk">childrens@thewoodlands.org.uk</a>

<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Woodlands Primary School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Woodlands Primary School Children's Centre

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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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
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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 an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the children and families services manager, staff, representatives of the advisory board, partner services and local authority representatives, as well as talking to parents and carers. They observed the centre's work, including activities provided at the centre and in nearby community facilities and outreach schools. Inspectors looked at a wide range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Woodlands Primary School Children's Centre was designated as a phase one centre in 2008. It provides targeted and universal services to families from pre-birth to five years of age and additional services to the local community and to families with older children. It is situated in a purpose-built extension to the primary school buildings, having moved from older accommodation on the same site just over a year ago. It is immediately co-located with the Woodlands Primary School Children's Centre Nursery. A sports centre and performing arts facility and partner agencies, including health visiting and social services, are within the site. The centre itself has a large reception area used as a social meeting space and an eating area with tables and chairs. There is a large room where many of the activities take place, a sensory room and a number of rooms of varying sizes which are regularly used for training or for private consultations or counselling. There is an inviting, well-resourced outside area. The site is fully accessible for users and their families who may have a disability. In addition, outreach services are provided in other schools and in community venues.

Full-time early years provision is available on site, including eight two-year-old funded placements. In addition, the centre offers individual childcare arrangements to ensure that parents are able to access services. The centre is managed on a day-

to-day basis by the children and families services manager overseen by the headteacher. Governance is provided by the school governing body and there is clear liaison between the governing body and the advisory board which oversees the centre's work and activities.

The centre serves communities in nine super output areas. Of these, four fall within the 30% most deprived areas in the country. There is another primary school and an infant and a junior school within the reach area, as well as six private, voluntary and independent settings and a mother and baby unit. The percentage of workless families in the area, and those in receipt of benefits or subject to financial hardship, is well above average and a quarter of all children under five live in workless households. The proportion of mothers not ceasing smoking or not sustaining breastfeeding is high, and the proportion of children who are obese or overweight is significantly above average. Within this area live some 860 children aged from birth to five years. The majority of these live with lone parents. Over 560 families are registered with the centre and, of these, around 75% are regular users.

Evidence indicates that children's skills, knowledge and abilities are below the levels expected for their age when they enter early years provision. Most families are White British; the proportion from other heritage groups is well below average, but with an increasing population from Eastern Europe. A small but increasing number of families from other nationalities access the centre.

## 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**

**2**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**2**

## Main findings

This is a good, well-managed centre. It accurately meets the needs of its communities, and activities and services result in good outcomes for children and their families. The caring and positive approach shown by the centre's leadership, its users and partners is indicative of the impact of the centre's ambition and commitment. As one parent reported, 'It's a good place to be. I've learnt a lot and my daughter is doing really well. I know I am a better parent now, more confident.'

Over the past year, the centre has effectively met the challenge of moving into its

new location at the same time as significantly increasing footfall from all groups within the community. This effectively demonstrates its good capacity for further development and improvement. The centre is successful because of the skill, hard work and commitment of its staff and the dedicated leadership of the children and families services manager, as well as the total determination and creative approach of the headteacher. Teamwork among staff and the quality of the partnerships developed result in high quality services for families. Discussions with families and partners justify very clearly the positive views held. Despite this, inspection found that written evaluations are not well exploited as a tool for securing further improvement.

Staff seek users' views and respond to requests for new courses or suggestions for improvement. Feedback from families is overwhelmingly positive. Over the last year, the local authority has enhanced the quality of data it supplies and, as a result, the centre is able to track its own improvements as well as to compare performance with other local centres and national data. Data confirm that Woodlands Primary School Children's Centre is becoming increasingly successful in engaging with hard-to-reach groups. Sustained contact with teenage parents and fathers, through the monthly Sunday Dad's Group, facilitated by the Reception class teacher as well as centre staff, has been conspicuously successful. Observations made during the inspection revealed that families from a range of heritages use the centre regularly, although data suggest that bilingual and ethnic minority groups are not as well engaged as other groups from the community and this is appropriately reflected in the centre's development plans. Action planning accurately highlights the need to persist with activities designed to tackle obesity in particular, as well as to increase the proportion of mothers who sustain breastfeeding.

The centre recognises the need to strengthen the role of parents in strategic development. Although a parent has recently been elected as Chair of the Advisory Board, parents do not have the skills or confidence required to hold centre leaders robustly to account and this is reflected in minutes of meetings. Training is arranged for the school governing body, so that all members have a clearer understanding of the purpose and impact of the work of the children's centre.

Positive relationships and high quality care are at the heart of the centre. Discussions show there is a great sense of trust between families and the centre staff. Users feel entirely safe at the centre, and express confidence in the staff because they feel they will be listened to, given good advice and not judged. Families praise the impact of the variety of courses, including cookery and healthy eating and numeracy and literacy, on the quality of their own and their children's learning and well-being. The steady increase in children's achievements at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage illustrates this well. As another parent commented, 'I used to be really bad at maths. I never understood fractions at all! I've learnt more maths in the last three weeks than ever before in my life. Now I even know what a fraction is! I'll be able to help my daughter with her homework.'

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the effectiveness of governance and leadership by:
  - ensuring evaluations are used more to inform and improve provision further
  - increasing the role of parents in governance arrangements so they may fully understand the breadth of work of the children's centre and purposefully shape the service, drive improvement and systematically hold leaders to account.
- Improve health outcomes for children in the reach area by:
  - further increasing families' understanding of the importance of healthy eating and health issues related to obesity.

## How good are outcomes for families?

<b>2</b>
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Users feel safe and welcome when attending activities and children obviously feel secure as they approach staff readily. All staff have completed training in safety practice and policy. Case study evidence shows good improvements in the outcomes for vulnerable families, including those subject to child protection or child in need plans or subject to the Common Assessment Framework process. During home visits, staff further ensure that parents are helped to improve home safety for children.

The centre promotes health and well-being well through its range of activities, including use of the on-site sports centre and effective partnerships with health services. Childcare within the children's centre and arrangements made in response to individual needs enable parents to access counselling and attend training courses. The centre has a particularly positive impact on young parents who are developing a fine understanding of how to promote their own health. Information and discussions cover topics including drugs, alcohol and smoking, as well as helping them help their children to get off to a healthy start in life. During inspection, families were seen taking part in baby-led healthy eating. Parents reported that these sessions had helped them to understand more about weaning and had increased their confidence in introducing new foods to their children. However, rates of obesity in children aged five, at almost 24% within the reach area, remain too high. In the last year the uptake of breastfeeding has risen by 50% to 71% and the focus is currently on providing high quality support to increase the proportion who continue to breastfeed.

Through a wide range of activities, parents learn how to support their children's learning. The centre accentuates to parents the benefits of becoming involved in their children's education, so they can check on their child's progress and celebrate their successes! The proportion of children who attain the levels expected for their age by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has steadily improved over three years to 65% currently. The centre is successfully narrowing the attainment gap between the lowest attaining children and others at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Tracking of children who have attended the centre's services

shows that when measured at age five their achievements are higher than for those who have not attended. Children make good progress in most areas of learning and are developing a good range of skills to prepare them for primary school. One headteacher from within the reach area reported, 'Parents are more confident engaging with the school. There is a lot of support from the children's centre around starting school and we can see that children make a happier and more settled start.'

Adults report both how much they learn, and how much they enjoy this learning in courses they are signposted to or that are designed for them. Courses, opportunities to volunteer within the centre, reach schools and the community and referrals for employment advice help to improve the economic well-being of some families. Case studies and feedback from parents illustrate some very successful cases of individual support and training leading to permanent employment. Jobless families, lone parents and young parents have improved their literacy and numeracy skills as well as their parenting skills. Many parents report increased self-esteem and feeling happy.

Parents and children from different backgrounds treat each other with great respect. They support each other during difficult times and congratulate each other on achievements and this makes a positive contribution to the centre as a whole. Target groups are well represented in courses. For example 41% of lone parents and 56% of workless parents have completed parenting courses and 86% of parents attending the Toddler Tantrum Toolkit were from target groups. Parents contribute to shaping delivery through representation on the advisory board and more overtly by posting suggestions in the 'suggestions box'. The 'You said, we did...' board ensures that families can see how their suggestions have been responded to.

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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment</b>	<b>2</b>

## How good is the provision?

<b>2</b>
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The centre's good knowledge and understanding of the local community, drawing upon effective partnership arrangements, lead to the delivery of good quality provision. Centre buildings are well equipped and are significantly enhanced by the arts and sports facilities. Overall, there is a very wide range of services. Outreach venues and link schools extend the centre's capacity to reach and deliver services to even more families. The majority of families with children under the age of four living in areas of most need engage well with services at the centre. Once registered, the vast majority attend regularly because the care, guidance and support they receive are sensitive and highly individualised. Families rapidly appreciate the improvements the centre makes to their lives. The centre is particularly successful in providing support for families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Parents not only value home visits, but also the large comfortable reception and eating areas in the entrance to the centre. This space makes a safe and welcoming environment for families to meet and socialise with each other.

Good partnership working ensures that families receive comprehensive and timely advice, for example on accessing housing benefits or health services. Jobcentre Plus and Reach out to Work are highly accessible. Accurate data make it possible for the centre to demonstrate the positive impact of its services on target groups, for example teenage mothers and those living in the areas of greatest deprivation. The centre is improving the well-being, life chances and personal development of parents and children.

The centre promotes and celebrates learning effectively for children and adults. Sessions are well prepared and resources are of high quality. Staff have a good understanding of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. They model good parenting in activities and use every opportunity to promote children's and adults' learning. One parent noted to an inspector that she had just read a whole book 'for the very first time in my life'. Parents talked about their increased enjoyment of parenting and learning, including confidence in playing with their children, reading to them and managing their behaviour.

These are the grades for the quality of provision.

<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>



## How effective are the leadership and management?

<b>2</b>
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The headteacher and children and families manager complement each other well and provide charismatic leadership with ambition and sensitive care in equal measure. Teamwork throughout the centre, with staff and partners is strong. Partners are positive about the benefits of joint working, duplication is eradicated and families receive help and advice in a seamless fashion. While there are clear lines of accountability and good arrangements for professional supervision and staff training and development, the advisory board does not provide a strong level of challenge to the centre or drive its strategic development. While development plans and course plans are coherent and highly relevant, evaluations lack detail and are therefore not consistently used effectively to drive improvement. Nevertheless, outcomes are good and are improving well. The centre and all its staff are highly inclusive. They demonstrate commitment to, and promote, equal opportunities well. Displays and resources recognise a rich variety of faiths and cultures. Festivals are celebrated and differences valued. The environment is adapted in response to users' needs to ensure accessibility and to ensure that everyone is included. The timing of activities and support is flexible and responsive.

The centre is proactive in seeking views from families both formally and informally and parental views are included in course evaluations. Activities held as a result of parental requests, for example crafts and card making, have proved popular.

Safeguarding of children is afforded high priority. It is effective in ensuring children and families stay safe through appropriate attention to the child protection process and robust vetting and recruitment procedures as well as to understood and consistently applied policies and procedures. Resources are maximised through the children's centre, the school and the arts and sports centres, and as a result, good value for money is secured. The centre is open for long hours throughout the year and when not timetabled for centre use, facilities are made available to families and the wider community. An incredible determination exists to expand further and for senior leaders to ensure sustainability plans are secure. Close attention is paid to the expansion of targeted, universal and community services. In this way, those families most in need remain at the heart of the centre.

These are the grades for leadership and management.

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</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>2</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>2</b>

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

The findings of the October 2011 inspection of Woodlands Primary School, when it was found to be good, were taken into account. The centre is under the direction of the same senior leadership and governance as the school. The findings of the inspection of Woodlands Primary School Children's Centre (day nursery) in March 2009, when it was judged as good were also used to guide the inspection team's findings with regard to educational provision and outcomes. In addition, the views of senior leaders and Early Years Foundation Stage staff from other schools within the reach area were also considered.

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### **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Woodlands Primary School Children's Centre on 13–14 June 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank all of you who took the time to talk with us during our recent visit. The discussions we had with you about your experiences, and those of your families, were very helpful. Nobody had any criticisms of the centre's work, only praise for the way it works with you and your families. You clearly have confidence in the staff, and appreciate how the centre's work has led to good improvements in your families' lives and in your children's development. We saw that staff work together well to help keep your children and families safe and healthy. Safeguarding arrangements are good, and there is attention to your welfare. Your centre helps you and your families to develop and promote well your health and well-being. There are many activities related to physical fitness and healthy eating and these are extremely important as there is a greater proportion of overweight and obese children aged five in the locality than found nationally.

There are many good things about your centre. The most important include the fact that you feel confident in walking through its doors and knowing that you will receive not only a warm welcome but also valuable help and support. The centre and its partners are particularly good in the ways they support you when you and your families find yourselves in a time of difficulty. In particular, we also found that the children who have taken part in activities at the children's centre get off to a better start in school and that all of the adult and family learning activities are beneficial. We were pleased to see how many of you make suggestions for changes to activities or for new activities and learning opportunities and that the centre responds to your requests. We feel, however, that the centre should evaluate the effectiveness of services more clearly and use the information when planning further improvements. Although you are represented on the advisory board, your centre's leaders are aware that you are not fully involved in future planning or in holding centre leaders to account and we have asked that this is addressed.

Since moving into the impressive primary school site, the centre has been able to expand its programme. Many of you benefit from the wide range of activities and services delivered here. Others of you also take part in centre activities from outreach venues, for example Haslemere and other local schools. Again, you praised the selection of activities and the centre as a valuable place to meet. Inspectors agreed with your views.

We thank you again for all your contributions to the inspection and confirm that the headteacher, children and families services manager and Medway local authority agree with our recommendations. We trust that in the years ahead your centre will continue to grow and even more families from your communities and the local area will be able to join you and benefit from the wide range of services and activities.

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