

Inspection report for Wellfield Children's Centre

Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	383846
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Date of previous inspection	Not Applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Wellfield Business & Enterprise College 119723
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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 secondary 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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation. Meetings were held with the staff, parents, members of the Advisory Board, various health professionals, representatives of voluntary sectors and representatives of a local primary school. They observed the work of outreach workers in a home and joined various sessions for parents provided within the centre and community.

Information about the centre

Wellfield Children's Centre is a phase two centre, which opened in 2008 and is managed by the local authority. The centre has an advisory board made up of representatives from the local community, parents and partner professionals. The facility is situated on the site of Wellfield Business and Enterprise College closely located to the town centre and its amenities including a health clinic. The centre operates a federated model which includes a phase one children's centre, another phase two centre and two phase three centres. These centres have well-established integrated management arrangements. Staff plan, review and deliver services to the community from each children's centre and other community venues through outreach work.

The vast majority of families are of White British heritage with few of minority ethnic origin. Approximately 1320 children under the age of five live in the centre's reach area. Of these 105 live in the 30% most disadvantaged areas. The proportion of workless families is 15.5% and the proportion of children attending school in the area who are known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. There are approximately 35 lone parents registered at the centre in receipt of benefits. On average, 29% of families benefit from the childcare element of working tax credit. The area has a mixture of types of housing with

some privately owned, a significant proportion privately rented and a high number of families living in social housing.

Children start in Early Years Foundation Stage provision with a range of skills and knowledge that is generally below that expected for their age.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding centre which makes a significant difference to the lives of the families it serves and the life chances of the children. Users are very appreciative of all that the centre offers. The view of one mother is typical of that made by so many users, 'We are listened to here and know that if we need help, something is done about it.'

Staff have an excellent knowledge of the locality and the children and families with circumstances that make them vulnerable. Exceptionally strong professional relationships exist with other children's centres in the federation and a wide range of voluntary and statutory agencies. This enables staff to meet the needs of all groups and individuals. An excellent level of information sharing with the health services ensures early support to expectant families. The promotion of healthy lifestyles is excellent. Breastfeeding is successfully promoted and major inroads have been made in reducing obesity and the prevalence of smoking.

Employment prospects are enhanced greatly by the actions of the centre. Innovative courses assist many to develop personal confidence and acquire essential academic skills and open the doors to further education, training and work. Children's readiness for learning is boosted significantly. The boys' project is increasing the levels of speech and language of boys who have the most disadvantage. The centre is very effective in growing pride amongst local community members and raising their aspirations. Parents remark on how the centre has changed their lives and those of their children.

Excellent outreach work takes activities out into the community to support a diverse range of needs in the target groups. Local pre-school providers and childminders are well supported in improving their provision as a result of advice and guidance from the centre staff. Over four-fifths of families in the target groups access the centre and its services. Safety is exceptionally well promoted amongst families and much effort is placed on promoting safety in homes. Parents' views and suggestions about the centre's services help staff to shape services and evaluate their effectiveness.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Skilled, caring and innovative leadership by the manager has created a highly skilled and very professional staff team. Self-evaluation is thorough and used extremely effectively to plan and prioritise challenging targets. The centre is in the process of refining the way it stores data and evaluations to make the information even more accessible. Staff development is excellent and contributes to a wide range of relevant expertise among the staff. The advisory board members are fully committed to the centre. It ensures that the centre is meticulous in ensuring safeguarding for all involved in the centre. There is genuine sense of growth and effective strategies to ensure that the centre meets community needs exceptionally well. The capacity to sustain improvement is, therefore, outstanding.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Enhance further the systems used for recording data and outcomes from evaluations of the centre's performance.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

The centre has a considerable impact on community health and well-being. Effective links with health experts have contributed to raising awareness amongst the community of healthy eating and nutrition. This has had a dramatic impact on child obesity in the area, which has reduced dramatically over the last year. Dental health is improving significantly, which is helping some children to overcome difficulties speaking. A good percentage of new mothers continue to breastfeed beyond eight weeks at rates above the local average. The high attendance at the physical movement sessions 'Jumping Beans' and 'soccer mites' demonstrates how parents have embraced a more active healthy lifestyle for themselves and their children. The centre promotes healthy snacks and parents using the centre develop an excellent understanding of healthy diet.

Parents and their children are kept very safe by the centre through the rigorous attention to health and safety. They benefit from close supervision during activities and a fully secure environment. All families' circumstances are assessed very carefully and sensitively through regular meetings where centre staff discuss individual cases. This involves, where beneficial, the full cooperation of other agencies. This multi-agency approach ensures the best possible support for children and families. Families are supported exceptionally well when they most

need it. Case studies demonstrate the excellent impact of the centre’s intervention and the positive impact it has had upon the lives of parents and children. Home safety checks contribute to parents’ understanding of how to keep the home a safe place for children.

Children make good progress in their learning and development. They enjoy learning and make rapid progress from their starting points. Children with the greatest need entering the Early Years Foundation Stage at the local schools benefit from high quality support initiated through the centre. Success is evident in closing the gap, in particular for boys and girls in their literacy skills. The centre records significant success in adult learning in improving parenting skills, improving levels of literacy and numeracy, and gaining qualifications. Carefully tailored courses suited to users’ needs have encouraged adults interested in working with children towards accredited courses. Such courses have a high take-up and are greatly valued. This is typified by the comment of one parent, ‘My course has made me realise that I can get my life in order’. Where required, the centre guides adults seeking employment to consult with a representative from Jobcentre Plus. The centre involves parents in decision making about its work. Parent representatives participate as members of the advisory board contributing to the governance of the centre.

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	1
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

A high proportion of families within the target group in the area gain access to the centre’s services. By using information provided by health professionals and the centre’s own extensive knowledge of families, their needs are very clearly identified. These are reviewed regularly with partner agencies in order to adapt support packages accordingly. Users have excellent opportunities to participate in well-organised activities tailored to meet their needs. Isolation is a challenge for some in the community. Initiatives have been successful in rebuilding their trust and confidence and get involved once again in life. One comment by a carer was typical of many others, ‘the staff have given me the strength to support my grandchild’.

The centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment exceptionally well. The outreach and family support team and health professionals work together closely to provide an extensive range of fully integrated services to support the welfare needs of all groups of users and the wider community. Excellent partnerships with a speech and language therapist have enabled the creation of high quality interventions for children needing support. The strategy has been so effective that it is held up as an exemplar for the local area. Many have clearly benefited from the successful parenting skills programme. For example, one participant stated: 'It has given me the confidence to say that I am a good mum. I now have the strength to avoid alcohol and drugs and do the best for my children'.

On-going allocation meetings, enable staff to review targeted support for children and families with circumstances that make them vulnerable. This leads to excellent support for families in crisis. The centre works exceptionally well with local voluntary groups, including religious groups to offer support and aid to those families struggling the most. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process is used very effectively to guide excellent multi-agency and collaborative working between the outreach workers team, health visitors and health specialists. The effectiveness of the centre's actions is demonstrated in the reduction, in recent years, in those children subject to a child protection plan. Care and support plan packages are reviewed and there is a wealth of knowledge and skill which significantly contribute to the quality of outreach work. Feedback from families shows that there has been excellent progress in resolving many cases through the expert support and guidance provided.

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 centre manager provides inspirational leadership. Astute management ensures that the very best is provided for the community. A talented senior leadership team sets high expectations for all and generates excellent relationships with everyone involved with the centre. The roles of staff are clearly defined and there is an excellent sense of teamwork. This leads to an integrated approach to providing highly effective services for users. Resources are very carefully used. Partnerships with a wide variety of professional and voluntary organisations ensure that the centre is extremely effective in responding to individual needs. The centre very accurately pinpoints what needs to be improved, for example, refining further quality of record keeping of data and evaluations. The federation with other centres in the area enables the excellent sharing of resources including the skills

of staff. This extremely wise use of resources greatly enhances the well-being and outcomes for families and ensures that the centre gives excellent value for money.

Excellent governance and professional accountability, including highly productive partnerships with the local authority ensure the centre's operations are highly effective. The advisory board carefully monitors the centre's performance, is closely involved with the centre and sets challenging performance targets. The centre is proactive in seeking the views of its service users. Services are evaluated by participants and findings used to constantly refine, improve and shape provision. The centre celebrates diversity and values all children and their families equally. All parents regardless of background, ethnicity, disability and gender are warmly welcomed by all. Equality of opportunity is excellent with services meeting the needs of all very well, including disabled children and adults and those with special educational needs. Safeguarding is outstanding. It is given high priority, and the centre's arrangements for keeping users safe are diligently managed. Staff are vigilant about safety and take prompt action to minimise any potential risks in activities. Leaders ensure the safe recruitment of staff and robust checks are made on all adults working in or with the centre.

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

Not applicable

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Wellfield Children's Centre on 14 June 2012. We judged the centre to be outstanding.

We really enjoyed our visit and saw how much you and your children enjoy an extensive range of activities in the centre. For example, the well-attended sessions supporting your children's language that you tell us have had such a positive impact of your children's development. You told us that the staff know you and your families very well and have helped with parenting support, helping you obtain qualifications and seek employment. We were impressed by the thriving 'Dad's Group', and how many dads, mums and children enjoyed the 'Jumping Beanz' sessions. The real strength of the centre's work is the way in which it works with its professional partners, such as health, and with the community itself. It is able to draw on an excellent range of expert knowledge to tailor programmes of support to meet your needs. Your cooperation in this process is an essential part of the centre's success.

The centre has great success in helping you and your families achieve healthy lifestyles. Work in helping you keep your homes safe places for your children and avoid accidents in the home is successful. Healthy cooking and eating sessions are improving your health and that of your families and you have managed to improve the dental health of your children. The percentage of mums breastfeeding has increased steadily and is better than the regional average. The combination of better eating, increased exercise and breastfeeding are successfully reducing obesity in the community. The positive relationships you have with the centre staff and their strong relationship with the local schools means children are extremely well prepared for school.

The centre manager and her staff provide excellent leadership and encourage a strong sense of ambition and drive. The views of everyone working with the centre are valued particularly those identified as in need of most support. Your feedback shows that the majority of you are highly satisfied with the services your children's centre provides. The advisory board checks on the centre's work effectively but it has to work hard to sort out a wide range of information which indicates how the centre can get even better. We have asked the centre to enhance further the way it develop better ways of recording the outcomes of its evaluations of the centre's effectiveness.