

# Inspection report for Leigh Central Sure Start Children's Centre

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Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	383769
Inspection dates	21 - 22 June 2012
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Centre leader	Kelly Wall
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Sunbeams Childcare 501150 Leigh Central Community Pre-school EY415729

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 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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and one early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, partners and representatives from the collaborative leadership committee, and spoke with users of the centre during the inspection. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Leigh Central Sure Start Children's Centre is a phase two centre. It opened in 2007 and was designated in 2008 to provide services from a split site. The centre moved to its current location in 2010 and is located on the same site as Leigh Central Primary School and Sacred Heart Primary School in Leigh, Lancashire.

There are currently 754 children aged under five years in the reach area. Of these, 92% live within the top 30% deprived areas. Worklessness is high and many families rely on benefits. There has been a significant increase in the Eastern European and Pakistani communities in recent years. Many groups are represented in the reach area, including lone parents, teenage parents and those with disabled family members.

The centre coordinator manages the centre day-to-day and the headteacher of Leigh Central Primary School is the overall centre manager. The centre is governed by Wigan Local Authority and the Collaborative Leadership Committee support and advises the centre. There are six local schools are represented on the Collaborative Leadership Committee.

The centre offers health, midwife, adult education and employment support and a range of parent and young child focused activities. There are two childcare providers located at the site offering Early Years Foundation Stage provision; Sunbeams Childcare and Leigh Central

Community Pre-school whose inspection reports are available on the Ofsted website. Children's levels of skills and experiences when they start early years provision are lower than is typical for their age.

The centre holds the 'Breastfeeding 'Friendly Business' and 'Smiles for Health' awards.

## 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
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### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2
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## Main findings

Leigh Central Sure Start Children's Centre is a good centre. The centre has established itself as an integral part of the community because of the determined effort made by staff to develop links with community representatives and other service providers across its reach area. The centre is busy and the staff successfully advertise and inform local families of the available activities. As a result, the centre is popular and its activities are well used by families and children in its reach area. The care, guidance and support offered to families are outstanding. Users report that staff are warm, friendly and respond quickly to their needs. Users say they feel safe and their confidence is much improved as staff empower them to take control of situations impacting on their lives. This well-targeted support for families and children in its reach area enables better outcomes for users.

The centre is engaging directly with the majority of children under the age of five in the area. This number is rising all the time because of carefully constructed programmes, good links with other professionals and the staffs' concerted efforts to engage all families. The centre's work has successfully impacted on children's communication, language and literacy skills and schools are reporting improved attainment on entry to the Reception Year. Families play an important part in shaping provision at the centre. However, they are not always clear how they have influenced the services provided.

Children and their carers gain a wide range of skills and knowledge. Many parents improve their parenting skills and develop a greater understanding of children's development through parenting programmes or through the focus given during children's activities to discuss issues with staff. Children and adults develop their skills and abilities well as they participate

in and thoroughly enjoy the good range of activities provided. However, the detailed planning and assessment that has developed as a result of support from the qualified teacher has yet to transfer into all commissioned services.

Safeguarding is given high priority and a thorough vetting system and site security ensure users and staff feel safe. Leaders, managers and staff are ambitious for the centre and have an accurate understanding of how its work is impacting on the lives of families. Current plans for developing the centre reflect accurately the most important areas for improvement. Much has been achieved since the centre began to develop its services from its current location and it is well placed to continue its improvement.

Leaders use resources very well, including the use of venues across the area and the services of other providers to avoid any duplication and to make them readily accessible to parents. Positive steps are taken to ensure families, including those who speak English as an additional language, or who are disabled, have an equal opportunity to access the range of services available. Staff effectively challenges any discrimination and an ethos of respect permeates throughout the centre. Governance arrangements are effective and support the development of the centre very well, setting increasingly challenging performance targets and asking pertinent questions based on a thorough understanding of the centre's work.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

Further improve outcomes by:-

- providing feedback to users on the suggestions and requests that are put forward to the collaborative leadership committee so they know how they have influenced and shaped services.
- building on existing good practice to embed the observation, planning and assessment of children during all services delivered, and make session objectives more targeted to better meet the individual needs of children and users.

## **How good are outcomes for families?**

<b>2</b>
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Healthy lifestyles are promoted well through the centre's activities which effectively help parents to gain a good understanding of how to promote their families' well-being. Health professionals like midwives, dentists and health visitors, provide most services directly and are supported by centre staff who complement advice, listen to families needs and monitor their ongoing successes. As a result, families are appropriately engaged with universal and specialist services. For example, staff support parents in referrals for specialist support such as speech and language therapists. Breastfeeding is promoted well, although overall rates, when compared to other local centre's, are broadly average at 20%, compared to the national average of 47% for mothers sustaining breastfeeding at six to eight weeks. However, this is improving rapidly as more mothers are maintaining breastfeeding for longer periods of time. For example, those sustaining at three weeks are now over 65%. Some

mothers are becoming voluntary support workers and the breastfeeding support group is popular and positive. The centre has identified a need to tackle child obesity and has implemented an innovative programme to enable families to support their children's nutrition, oral health and physical activity from birth. The outcomes from this initiative are yet to be seen, although link workers report positive changes for many families.

Children's physical and creative development are given a high priority in many of the activities offered, such as 'Physibodies' sessions and 'Little Picassos' as this is an identified need in the reach area. These activities contribute well to the development of children's large and fine motor skills and promote problem solving and messy play well. Recent work with local businesses and volunteers has enabled the centre to develop a garden for use by users. This is effectively designed to encourage activities for groups, like fathers, to grow plants, fruit and vegetables together.

Children and families feel safe at all times, and children behave very well. Parents say that centre activities effectively help them to understand their children's development. Many parents have benefited from parenting programmes, often developing their confidence to manage their children's behaviour. This is reflected in a decline in the number of children subject to a child protection plan. The centre also provides support for looked after children through their links with 'Gateway', an integrated board of professionals coordinated by the local authority. Staff use the Common Assessment Framework process effectively to broker support and ensure that families with circumstances that make them vulnerable are given the help they need at the earliest possible stage. Often, this includes extended one-to-one help by the centre to make sure that families have continuity of support while they develop independence and confidence to manage issues for themselves. Many of the play and music sessions run by the centre, such as 'TLC,' effectively support children's early communication and social skills, for example by developing an understanding of sharing and taking turns, and are designed to give parents skills to use at home.

Effective transition sessions coordinated at the centre enable all local private, voluntary and independent childcare providers to meet school staff from the reach area. This is contributing to a steady improvement in the level of children's skills at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children achieving 78+ points with six points in all areas of communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development is now 58.1% and this is almost in line with the national average of 59% and better than children nationally in the top 30% deprived areas at 51%. In addition, the percentage gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest has reduced from 33.2% to 28.6%. These two scores show the attainment gap is narrowing for children in this area.

Adults confidently volunteer at the centre and are guided in finding the best pathway to employment or training. Those accessing adult learning courses gain qualifications with four adults last year attaining literacy and five attaining numeracy at levels 1 or 2. Non-accredited courses saw a total of 271 adults achieving and accessing learning in information, communication and technology, languages, arts and sport. The centre tracks their progress carefully using the 'Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement' tool to enable

learners to see their progress. This has a positive impact for those involved in improving their economic well-being.

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?

**2**

The centre provides outstanding care, guidance and support for families because staff know local communities and families extremely well. There is a well-designed range of services to meet the needs of families currently attending the centre. Services have been developed carefully, according to local need. There is a high take-up and positive evaluations of each activity currently on offer and the centre have a very good tracking system to ensure users attend and continue to benefit from activities.

Centre staff act as effective advocates for parents, and liaise with professionals from other agencies to ensure that those requiring the most intensive support are identified and supported. The demographic in the local area has changed dramatically over the last four years and the centre has responded to this rapidly and effectively, identifying new groups of users and providing resources to meet their needs. Centre staff effectively reflect the community and are able to translate and understand cultural requirements. Users say they appreciate this and feel comfortable at the centre.

The qualified teacher works well with the early years provisions on site and supports the observation, assessment and planning of appropriate activities for children. However, the planning of commissioned services is not always focused enough and based directly on the needs of those individuals attending. The centre's agreements with the Jobcentre, health professionals and training providers enable them to provide a wide range of services in a number of locations. This means that link workers have time to attend sessions with midwives, health workers, attend a 'hot desk' in the town hall, conduct home visits and work directly with families. As a consequence, the support offered to families is personalised and one user said that her link worker had, 'changed my life for the better'.

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>1</b>

## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

**2**

Vetting procedures are effective and staff are rigorous in their application of safeguarding policies and procedures and have detailed knowledge of the signs and symptoms of abuse. The centre makes good use of professionals within the local authority to support this aspect of their work. Comprehensive risk assessments are undertaken on all activities and for all venues, and staff are vigilant during activities. Equality and diversity are promoted very well and staff are strong role models of respect and collaboration. Specialist staff and equipment support families and children very well where necessary to ensure they can access activities. This is particularly true for disabled people and those with special educational needs. All families are made to feel very welcome by reception staff who skillfully track attendance, offer warm and friendly support, and get to know the community and families as well as possible. Information can be provided in a range of languages. Parents and children of different age ranges and from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds mix very well with each other during activities.

The centre coordinator gives clear direction to the staff and is instrumental in the development of a service model, which closely matches the needs of the community. Available resources are used to very good effect, securing good value for money. The key to the centre's success lies in its good partnership working. Partnerships are well established, for example with the two early years providers and two primary schools on site. Partnerships enable the sharing of good practice. The centre coordinator commissions services on a short-term basis to better enable the centre to change and respond to the developing needs of the community.

Day-to-day management is very effective. Staff are experienced in their roles and gain from working with each other and the shared delivery of some services with other professionals. Their performance management is effective and regular and includes challenging targets related to engagement and long term tracking of outcomes for families. Good teamwork is a strength of this centre.

There are clear lines of accountability for staff and the centre's work is scrutinised effectively by a well-represented and cohesive collaborative leadership committee. The role of the committee is well established and clearly understood, and support and challenge for centre staff drives improvement effectively. A range of partners, including users, are represented



and parents' views are sought regularly by an effective parent representative. However, where users' views and suggestions inform changes at the centre, users are not always effectively informed.

Recent changes, in collaboration with the local authority, in how data are gathered and accessed by the centre are resulting in good use of very current data in measuring the impact of the centre's service. This ensures that managers have a strong understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the centre so that self-evaluation is accurate and used effectively to plan for improvement.

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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>2</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**

Inspectors considered previous inspection reports for Leigh Central Primary School and Sacred Heart Primary School, which are located on the same site as the centre and work closely with the centre and early years providers. The previous reports for Sunbeams Childcare and Leigh Central Community Pre-school were also considered.

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Leigh Central Sure Start Children's Centre on 21 – 22 June 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank those of you who gave time to speak to us during the inspection.

You were all very positive about what the centre does for you and how the activities give your children good experiences and help them to develop. We think the quality of care, guidance and support that you receive from the centre is outstanding.

During our visit, we looked at and discussed the centre's plans for development and a range of other documents and records with staff. We spoke with a range of partner agencies, including health and local authority representatives, together with representatives from the collaborative leadership committee. We also visited some of the activities taking place during the inspection.

The centre has established itself as an integral part of the community since it opened because of the determined effort made by staff to develop links with community leaders and other service providers across the area. Their dedication has ensured that the centre has a firm foundation to continue its development and engage with a wider group of adults and children in the locality. The centre coordinator and staff have rightly concentrated on ensuring that the services offered directly are of good quality and that families are helped to join in other activities already offered within the wider area.

Children and parents gain a wide range of skills and knowledge through their engagement with the centre. Parents are helped to improve their parenting skills and develop a greater understanding of children's development. Children develop their skills and abilities well as they participate in and thoroughly enjoy the good range of programmes directly meeting their needs. However, sometimes sessions are not focused enough to meet individual needs.

Families play an important part in shaping provision. Staff listen carefully to parents ideas, through programme evaluations and discussions. However, sometimes users do not know how they have helped to change centre programmes. Leaders and staff are ambitious for the centre and have an accurate understanding of how its work has an impact on the lives of families.

Leadership and management are good and resources are used well. Activities take place within safe and welcoming environments, located at many venues to make them readily accessible to families.

Thank you once again for your time and we hope that in future even more families will benefit from the services that the centre provides.

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