

Inspection report for Clayton Children's Centre

Local authority	Manchester
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Reporting inspector	Rachael Flesher HMI

Centre leader	Christine Harrison
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Clayton Surestart Children's Centre, North Road EY301540 Clayton Surestart Children's Centre, Pioneer Street EY335280

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 of Her Majesty's Inspector's and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with parents, centre staff and representatives from professional partnerships, the advisory board and the local authority. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Clayton Children's Centre was designated in 2004 and is a phase one centre. It provides services for families in the area from two sites. The main site is situated at The Wells Centre on North Road and is co-located with the children's centre childcare provision which began as a neighbourhood nursery in 2005. The secondary site is situated on Pioneer Street and the centre's sessional care and out of school provision is provided from the same building. Both sites are situated in the Clayton suburb of Manchester, two miles north east of the city centre.

The centre serves families living in one of the 5% to 30% most deprived areas in the country. The majority of families are of White British heritage, with approximately 17% of families from minority ethnic groups. This includes an increasing population of Black African families, some of whom are asylum seeking families and Chinese families. For some of these families, English is an additional language.

Families may face issues of poor housing, unemployment, crime, financial problems, domestic violence and drug and alcohol misuse. Approximately 325 children aged up to four years old are living in households dependant on workless benefits. There are approximately 365 lone parents in receipt of benefits. On average 18% of families benefit from the childcare element of working tax credit.

The majority of children enter early years provision with skills below those typically expected for their age, particularly in relation to communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development. All three and four-year-olds are accessing their early education entitlement.

The centre is governed by the local authority and has an advisory board made up of representatives from the local community, parents and partner professionals which it now shares with another children's centre in the cluster. The centre also has a well-established parent's forum group, 'Friends of the Wells'.

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

Clayton Children's Centre is a satisfactory centre overall with some good features. The recently appointed centre leader has swiftly identified the centre's areas for development and with the support of staff and the leadership team, has begun to address these with vigour. However, due to the short time the centre leader has been in post, improvements to systems, such as regular evaluations and data analysis have yet to be embedded among all staff and partners. Currently the centre lacks robust evidence to fully monitor and demonstrate how well services are matched to need and the impact of provision on outcomes for children and families, particularly in the long term. A particular weakness lies in the lack of available evidence to demonstrate the progress and achievements of adults in developing their employability skills and progressing to training and employment. In addition, less than half of all children aged up to five years are engaged with the centre services. The centre has had varied success in engaging families from other key target groups but is satisfactory overall. Nonetheless, the families the centre has engaged with in the area are some of those with circumstances that make them most vulnerable.

The centre's safeguarding policies and procedures are robust and embedded among staff and effectively promote the safety and welfare of children and adults. This is further enhanced by the good information sharing and referral processes between partners and the centre ensuring the right support is provided swiftly to families with circumstances that

make them vulnerable. Due to the strong partnership working with professionals, families and the very effective parents' forum, 'Friends of the Wells', the centre is truly established at the heart of the community and highly valued.

Families using the centre receive good tailored support and guidance particularly in times of crisis from caring, approachable and dedicated staff. Children and adults are making satisfactory progress from their often low starting points. They enjoy the activities provided and participation rates are overall sound. The centre adequately promotes equality and diversity and the inclusion of children and families. As a result, the centre is meeting the needs of and improving the outcomes for a satisfactory range of children and families from the reach area. Plans for the future are appropriately targeted and the centre has a satisfactory capacity to continue to improve the engagement and outcomes for more families based on what it has accomplished so far.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the engagement of, and thus the outcomes for, more children and families in the reach area, including those from target groups and those identified as in most need of intervention and support, in services and activities by:
 - locating and making contact with more families through outreach work
 - ensuring provision is matched to what children and families in the area need and want.
- Develop systems to monitor and demonstrate:
 - the long term impact of provision and services on parents progress and achievements from their starting points, both personally and educationally
 - parents' participation, completion and progression in further education and training designed to improve their employability skills.
- Embed systems for monitoring and demonstrating the impact of services and activities on the outcomes for children and families across all staff and partners, for example, through regular evaluations and data analysis.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Staff work well with other partners to support those children subject to a child protection plan, those involved with the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes, and looked after children following any referrals to centre services. There is evidence to demonstrate improved outcomes for these children. Evidenced based parenting programmes are improving the outcomes for families with circumstances that make them vulnerable through enhancing parenting skills. They state the centre has reduced their social isolation as they play with their children more and are accessing some further learning opportunities. The well attended and established parents forum, 'Friends of the Wells' are a very proactive and

passionate group of parents who successfully access a vast range of funding streams and make a very positive contribution to shaping provision and improving outcomes for families. They state the centre ensures 'parental participation, not just representation'. The centre also has a strong and developing volunteer programme which provides good training and development opportunities to those on the programme to improve their economic and social well-being. However, currently the centre has insufficient evidence to demonstrate that more than a satisfactory proportion of all adults are accessing learning and development opportunities, progressing to further training, education and employment and improving their economic and social well-being.

Police officers are located on site and their visible presence in the area and accessibility has resulted in the community feeling safer and has significantly contributed to developing community cohesion. Due to home safety visits commissioned by the centre, those families with circumstances that make them most vulnerable are safer in their homes. These visits provide families with accident prevention equipment and advice and a fire risk assessment. As a result, more families have smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors fitted and have fire exit plans in place.

The proportion of mother's breastfeeding their babies at six to eight weeks, has risen over the last year and although slightly below the national average of 45%, it is adequate overall at approximately 42%. A satisfactory amount of parents have been supported to stop smoking. Current data show that the number of children in the reach area in Reception Year at school who are obese is high at 16.6% compared to the national average of 9.4%. These children and their families receive weight management support and the centre promotes the take up of healthy lifestyles through a range of activities. However, the centre cannot fully demonstrate the impact this provision has had on improving health outcomes for families and reducing the high obesity levels. Current data also show that 62% of children aged five years of age in the reach area are reported to have dental decay. However, this is reducing and the centre fully promotes good dental hygiene and children routinely brush their teeth at the centre and understand the importance of this.

Despite the concerted effort of centre staff and partners to promote children's learning and development and school readiness, the gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest has not narrowed on the previous year and currently stands at 30.1%. Those children achieving 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile with at least six points in each of the scales for personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy varies between schools but is on average 50%. The centre has robust evidence to demonstrate that all children, including those who speak English as an additional language, disabled children and those with special educational needs accessing the childcare provision are well supported to learn and develop and make at least satisfactory progress. Effective transition arrangements are in place between the centre and local schools to ensure the continuity of children's care and learning. This includes the 'ready for school' sessions provided by family learning for those children at risk of not being emotionally and socially prepared for entering the school environment and being separated from their parents.

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	3
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	3
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	2
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.	3

How good is the provision?

3

Families using the centre feel safe and welcome stating, 'we love it'; 'it's like a second home' and we are 'part of the community'. This can be seen in the high number of walk-in enquires the centre receives on a weekly basis, including those deemed by the centre as in most in need of intervention and support, and the numbers visiting the privately run café on site. The centre has successfully engaged a good proportion of lone and teenage parents, children from minority ethnic groups and all disabled children and those with special educational needs registered with the centre, in services and activities. However, the centre does not have details of all disabled children and those with special educational needs under five years of age living in the reach area. A working group has been formed that will address this issue. In addition, only a small minority of fathers are accessing services and overall, only a minority of all children aged up to five years, and half of all children aged up to three years, are engaged in centre services.

The outreach worker is successfully working with those families identified as in most need of intervention and supporting them in times of crisis, including those newly arrived to the area seeking asylum. These families often face a series of complex issues and these are resolved swiftly, resulting in rapidly improving outcomes. However, there are limited available resources to represent and promote the centre to the wider community to encourage more to participate in services and activities and increase user engagement. Assessment is beginning to be used well to ensure the services meet the needs of those using them. However, the needs analysis is not fully developed to ensure services meet the needs and wants of the wider community.

Families using the centre are satisfied with the activities and services stating, 'the groups are invaluable and staff are knowledgeable and dedicated'. Some groups, for example the stay and play sessions and midwife drop-ins, are well attended. However, although rising, attendance and participation of families in groups is satisfactory overall.

Children make at least satisfactory progress, are engaged in their play and learning and behave well. The centre has evidence to demonstrate how it has helped to raise the aspirations for some parents and enabled them to improve their educational and personal development. A few parents have made very good progress from their low starting points, for example, accessing further education and employment. However, systems to monitor and demonstrate the long term impact of provision and services on parents progress and achievements from their starting points both personally and educationally is limited.

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	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Staff and partners value the strong leadership and direction provided by the new centre leader and state they are well supported. They have confidence in her to 'take the centre forward' with one staff member stating, 'I have never had leadership like it'. The centre leader has a thorough understanding of the centre's performance and what it needs to do to improve. A recent development planning training day successfully engaged a wide range of partners and some parents in the centre's evaluation and performance management processes. This included setting targets and producing meaningful action plans and embedding accountability arrangements amongst partners. Self-evaluation correctly identifies strengths, areas for development and sets priorities that link back to strategic planning. However, due to the short time the new leader has been in post, systems for monitoring and demonstrating the impact of services and activities on the outcomes for children and families across all staff and partners, for example, through regular evaluations and data analysis, are not yet embedded.

Good safeguarding arrangements are in place. The centre ensures all those who may have unsupervised access to children are safe and suitable. Staff receive good quality up to date training and professional supervision to enable them to carry out their duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and their families. Effective support is provided to those subject to a child protection plan and children deemed in need through the joint working of the early intervention team, social care colleagues and centre staff which is having a positive impact on improving their outcomes. The good health and safety of users and staff is a key priority for the centre and risks are thoroughly assessed and minimised accordingly.

The centre is an established community hub and is well utilised by a range of partners and organisations delivering services to the wider community, including during evenings and weekends. For example, the Saturday club provided by Short Family Breaks delivers much needed and valued respite sessions to families with disabled children and those with special educational needs. Partners state they feel accommodated, supported and enabled to carry out their roles by the centre. The centre works closely with a range of partners, including those from the private, independent and voluntary sectors to ensure services are not duplicated, that those in place are utilised by the community and information is shared. The centre leader is beginning to ensure that the space is being used by the right services to enable them to meet their objectives.

Those accessing services reflect the diverse community the centre serves and appropriate support is provided to families accessing services for whom English is an additional language. However, all target groups are not fully engaged and therefore the gap is not narrowing sufficiently. Overall an adequate range of families are engaged in a sound range of services and activities and are well supported by staff. As a result, the centre provides satisfactory value for money.

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	3
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	3
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	3
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
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	2
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.	3

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

The findings from the most recent inspection of the children's centres co-located early years provision and other early years provision and primary schools in the reach area were used to inform the judgements made during this inspection.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Clayton Children's Centre on 27 - 28 June 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall with some areas judged to be good.

Thank you to those of you who contributed to the inspection. You told us you feel safe and welcome stating, 'we love it'; 'it's like a second home' and we are 'part of the community'. Like you, we found your centre to be welcoming and friendly.

Your centre provides a safe environment and staff work well with other professionals to ensure that children and vulnerable adults are safeguarded and protected. You feel safer in your community due to the police being located in the centre and out and about in your area. You are also safer in your homes due to the accident and fire prevention visits provided. Your centre is helping you and your children to adopt healthier lifestyles. However, despite this support, obesity rates in children in Reception Year at school remain high and 62% of five-year-olds have tooth decay, although this is decreasing.

Your centre is established as the hub of the community and families feel confident to call in and ask for help and advice. Families with circumstances that make them vulnerable in your community are supported well by the outreach worker and other staff and families receive good care and guidance, particularly when facing times of crisis.

Your children are making at least satisfactory progress in all areas of learning and development and are prepared appropriately for school. Your centre has evidence to demonstrate how it has helped to raise the aspirations for some of you and enabled you to improve your educational and personal development. Some of you have made very good progress from sometimes low starting points, for example accessing further education and employment. However, processes to fully monitor and demonstrate the progress of adults participation, completion and progression in further education and training designed to improve their employability skills, particularly in the long term, are not fully developed.

You are satisfied with the activities and services provided by your centre stating 'the groups are invaluable and staff are knowledgeable and dedicated'. However, not enough families

from your area are accessing your centre services to improve their outcomes. In addition, the centre has limited resources to enable them to promote the centre and services to the wider community, matched to what children and families in the area want and need and encourage them to attend. Your centre has been asked to improve this.

Your centre has a well attended and established parents forum, 'Friends of the Wells' who are a very proactive and passionate group of parents who successfully access a vast range of funding streams and make a very positive contribution to shaping provision and improving outcomes for your families on your behalf.

The new centre leader has a good understanding of how your centre can be even better and has begun to make improvements. Staff and partners are confident the centre leader will help your centre to achieve even better outcomes for your families in the future. However, due to the short time the centre leader has been in post, improvements to systems have yet to be embedded among all staff and partners. Plans for the future are well-targeted and your centre has the ability to improve the engagement and outcomes for more families based on what it has accomplished so far. We wish you all the very best for the future.

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