

# Inspection report for Ridge Hill Children's Centre

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Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	384067
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Silver Springs Primary Academy URN 137951
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Quackers Kids Day Nursery @ Ridge Hill EY365144 Bright Futures Day Nursery EY265349

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## Introduction

The inspection covers 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 one additional early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre early years senior practitioner and staff, parents, representatives from the local authority and the advisory board, voluntary service providers and partner agencies.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Ridge Hill Children's Centre is a phase one centre that was designated in 2006 to provide the core purpose of children's centres. The centre is centrally located in the reach area. The accommodation is on the site of Silver Springs Primary Academy. It is purpose built and is shared with Quackers Kids Day Nursery @ Ridge Hill. Services delivered by the centre by the children's centre team and partners include health services, family support, parent and child activities, targeted support for vulnerable families and family learning. Centre services, such as stay and play sessions, are also delivered from Bright Futures Day Nursery, which is within the reach area.

The local authority is responsible for governance of the centre and there is an advisory board made up of partners, parents and local representatives. In April 2011 a local authority re-structure of children's and young people's services introduced multi-agency Youth and Family teams. The centre is one of three centres and two satellite centres in the Dukinfield, Stalybridge and Mossley locality cluster. The early years senior practitioner is responsible for the day-to-day management of the centre and co-ordination of the services it delivers.

The area served by the centre is in the top 20% most disadvantaged areas in the country and predominantly made up of White British families. Recently the area has seen an increase in the number of asylum-seeking families requesting permission to remain in this country. Worklessness in the area is high and the number of children living in households dependent on workless benefits is high. Children enter Early Years Foundation Stage provision with skills and abilities that are below those typically found nationally. Families in the area are known to have higher levels of health problems, low educational attainment and crime and teenage pregnancy levels are higher than those found elsewhere in the local authority.

## 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

Ridge Hill Children's Centre is a satisfactory centre. In April 2011 the local authority restructured its youth and family services into locality teams covering the 0-19 age range. This brought about significant change to the management structures, a reduction in staffing levels and changes to the working roles of the centre staff. The result of this is that the centre has focused its work on providing support to the families in the area who are most in need. At this time, the centre was supported by the locality management team, in the absence of the substantive manager. The centre is now ably led by an experienced early years senior practitioner who has been in post since April 2012.

The loss of many of the universal groups, courses and activities available in the past has been felt by families and is shown in their comments on the 'pants and tops' parents' comments board and in questionnaire responses. The 'Stay and Play' session is well attended and parents commented that it has been the only group available to them at the centre. In recent months, however, the early years senior practitioner has worked with volunteers, a local school and a local day care provider to introduce two new universal groups. These groups have been provided in outreach venues serving parts of the reach area that are not within easy travelling to the centre building for families. Voluntary groups, such as the National Childbirth Trust 'Bumps and Babies' group have also been accommodated in the centre building, meaning that use of the building is increasing again.

This is a good start to the centre reintroducing and increasing activities that are available to all families in the reach area. The refreshed focus on centre activity and in engaging with more community partners to enhance service delivery is a good indication of the centre's satisfactory capacity to sustain improvement in its delivery and effectiveness.

The centre is a safe and welcoming environment. It is open to all families in the community and its structure means it is accessible to disabled people. Equipment and information leaflets on offer in the centre reflect the diversity of British society while the centre displays reflect the Ridge Hill community. A major element of the welcoming atmosphere is the warmth with which all members of the staff team greet centre users. Parents feel safe and children are comfortable and settled in group activities. The centre has adopted and is working with the Local Safeguarding Children Board policies and procedures and in the main these are understood and followed. However, the systems for informing parents about safeguarding children procedures in the centre are limited. This means that parents are not always clear who to speak to if they have a concern or what staff will do if they have a concern about a child who is attending a session.

The locality management team has a clear strategic overview of the area that the centre is part of. This team takes advantage of all of the data and locality information available to it to analyse need and prioritise service delivery. At a centre level, data are not as easily available, but the framework provided by the locality team supports the centre's delivery to its priority families and groups. The centre supplements the limited data by using questionnaires, comment sheets and basic evaluations to find out from centre users what they think the priorities are for the centre's service delivery. Some partners provide detailed evaluation of courses they have delivered that is useful to the centre in assessing value and impact of the course. Evaluations of courses run by the centre are less sophisticated and the information they provide is not useful as a monitoring and development tool. The centre's action plan is clearly linked to identified local need, but there is a lack of measureable targets contained in it, which, in turn, limits its usefulness as a monitoring tool.

Outcomes for families in the reach area are satisfactory overall. Families who have one-to-one support from early years workers benefit greatly from the tailored work packages. Adults who access parenting courses and other targeted activities such as 'Baby Babble' positively comment on the difference that their learning has made to their children and families. 'Stay and Play' sessions are enjoyed by those who attend. The sessions provide a range of activities that adequately covers the learning and development needs of young children over time. The staff leading the sessions do not, however, have sufficient planning and preparation time to maximise the sessions' usefulness in supporting parents to understand how the activities on offer benefit their children's development.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the quality and effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - setting measureable targets to drive improvement in outcomes for children and families in the reach area
  - improving systems for evaluating and monitoring the effectiveness of the centre's work
  - collecting, collating and analysing data that is relevant to the reach area.
- Improve the quality and range of provision by:
  - enabling staff to plan more effectively for group activities so that parents and children both have enjoyable and beneficial learning experiences
  - reviewing the services on offer in the reach area by developing activities to close the gaps in provision in the centre and with other service providers.
- Improve the information provided to parents about safeguarding children procedures used in the centre.

## How good are outcomes for families?

<b>3</b>
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The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used effectively in the centre by staff and partner agencies. In the cases reviewed, the co-ordinated work packages completed by the teams formed around families have brought about appropriate and acceptable changes to reduce the risks to children. Families who currently use the centre or receive support are happy with the service they receive and the improvements brought to their family lives. Parents who have benefitted from parenting courses improve their relationships with their children and report that there is a calmer atmosphere in their homes. In group sessions observed by inspectors young children behaved well and parents, supported by staff and volunteers, used appropriate strategies to manage any unwelcome behaviour.

Sessions such as 'Stay and Play' are enjoyed and appreciated by parents and children. Activities in some groups such as 'Baby Babble' are used well to support parents' understanding of the development opportunities activities bring to their children and how this can be continued in the home. The focus in the area on speech and language development has contributed to a year-on-year improvement in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scores for children at the end of Reception Year in the school on the site shared by the centre. At 38.1% these are still below national levels, but have increased from 23.3% three years ago. The achievement gap between children who may find it more difficult to learn and their peers is also narrowing in this school.

The number of mothers who continue to breastfeed their babies six to eight weeks after they have been born is a real success story in the reach area. This has been increasing year on year and breastfeeding support groups are now seeing second-time mothers returning

with their new babies. Family learning opportunities on offer in the recent past such as 'Cook and Eat' and 'Money Matters' courses have had an impact on families. This is demonstrated in the noticeable reduction in the number of children who are obese at the end of Reception Year. Comments such as 'I now manage my money, my money doesn't manage me' are a clear indicator of the impact these services have had. Parents who use the centre now continue to develop their understanding of healthy lifestyles and healthy snacks provided at group activities help to reinforce this.

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>3</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>3</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>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships, and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment.</b>	<b>3</b>

## How good is the provision?

**3**

The care, guidance and support offered to families in the reach area are satisfactory. Targeted families and families who are experiencing severe difficulties, such as those experiencing domestic violence, are well-supported. Fewer families have benefited from the knowledge and skills of centre staff in recent times, although information leaflets are freely available in the centre and informative displays, such as the Jobcentre vacancy board are highly visible. The centre hosts a weekly session run by the Citizens' Advice Bureau which is well-used by adults seeking advice on subjects such as benefits, housing and employment.

Family and individual needs are sensitively and successfully assessed because of the well-understood use of the CAF processes. Teams are quickly formed to provide targeted and personalised support for families by the most appropriate agencies. Families whose circumstances may make them vulnerable or hard to reach have been the focus of the centre's work in the last year and the good proportion of teenage parents, lone parents, fathers and families from minority ethnic groups who have used the centre is testament to this.

The use of outreach venues is evolving as a result of a broad assessment of the activities for young children and families across the reach. There is recognition by volunteers that they can, with the support of the centre, provide needed resources in their community. While this

is a positive step in rebuilding the reach of the centre's services, it has not been undertaken as a result of sufficient analysis of local level data or systematic evaluation of the impact of services already delivered because of recognised weaknesses in this information. The locality team and the local authority are actively and robustly tackling these weaknesses. Provision of activities is satisfactorily based on the principle that there is a learning or development opportunity within the activity. This ranges from helping young children to develop their social skills at 'Stay and Play', to supporting adults to develop their employability through basic information and communication technology (ICT) courses that move them from using computers as games consoles to tools, for example, to help create a curriculum vitae.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.</b>	<b>3</b>

## How effective are the leadership and management?

**3**

Governance and accountability arrangements in the centre are satisfactory. The strategic and locality model of decision-making is clear and based on adequate knowledge of the area served by the centre and its needs. At a more local level the advisory board has recently been reformed following the local restructure and changes in staffing levels. Its input into decision-making and challenge based on local knowledge is, therefore, limited. The management structure provides support for the early years senior practitioner in developing the centre's action and business plan. The plan covers local issues and needs especially at locality level, but there is a lack of measureable targets to enable the centre and the local authority to track and monitor the centre's progress and impact effectively.

The local authority supports the centre to meet the legal requirements for safeguarding children and all staff and volunteers who work with children and families have Criminal Record Bureau checks completed. The centre works well with other agencies involved with children and their families to provide early intervention and support with the aim of preventing situations escalating. Early years workers provide early intervention support and are skilled in recognising families whose circumstances may make them vulnerable and who may be in need of a higher level of support. Where this happens the handover to the agency involved in higher-level support is well-planned to ease the transition for the family.

Centre users are treated with respect and appreciate this respectful approach by staff. The centre promotes inclusion and reaches out to groups in the community who might be



reluctant to access services, for example, because of language or cultural barriers. A group of families who were seeking permission to remain in this country were supported to attend groups at the centre using a 'walking bus' model. This gave the families who remained in the area the confidence to use the centre independently. Children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by the area's special educational needs co-ordinator. The settings attended by the children receive support and guidance that enable the children to have maximum benefit from their experiences.

There are well-established and successful relationships with health partners in the reach area. Fruitful partnerships are being developed with community groups and local businesses. There is a strengthening relationship between the centre and school on the shared site. Shared knowledge from the school's learning mentor and the locality management team have brought about the development of a young parents' support group that will be based in the centre. Use of the centre is once again building and establishing services that are universally available following a year of mostly targeted work with families most in need of support is an illustration of the centre's satisfactory use of resources available to it.

These are the grades for leadership and management:

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>3</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>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision.</b>	<b>3</b>

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

The inspection report for Quackers Kids Day Nursery @ Ridge Hill, the private day care provider that is located in the same building as the children's centre, was used. The quality of the day care provided to the children is good and they make good progress from their starting points.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Ridge Hill Children's Centre on 27 and 28 June 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you very much to those of you who spoke to us in meetings and in activity sessions. We found the information you gave us very useful. We also spent some time looking at the comments you have made about the centre and the activities you have used to help us to make our inspection judgements.

We know that you value the children's centre and that you have noticed fewer activities available to you and your children in the past year. We found that the centre is beginning to find new venues and partners in the area who they can work with to build up the range of activities on offer to you. We have asked the centre managers to get even better at this to give you more opportunities and activities to access. To do this the centre also needs to use more measureable targets in its business plan to help to monitor how well it is doing its work.

We were pleased to see that more mothers in the area are choosing to breastfeed their babies and that some second-time mothers are choosing to breastfeed again. The activities the centre has provided have been useful in helping some of you to strengthen your family relationships. We also know that courses such as 'Cook and Eat' helped you to build up a better understanding of how to have a healthy lifestyle. Using what you have learned has helped to reduce the number of children who are classed as obese at the end of Reception Year in school. We hope that you continue to use what you have learned. The range of activities on offer has been matched to what the senior management team for the Dukinfield, Stalybridge and Mossley area knows about this larger area. We know that the centre asks you about what you think is important for your area. Alongside this information we have asked the centre and the local authority to collect and use more detailed information about the Ridge Hill area so that the activities will be even more helpful to you.

We know that the centre building is a safe and welcoming place for you and your families to go to and all the staff and volunteers who work with you and your children have had appropriate checks completed to make sure they are suitable for the work they do. However, we found that the centre does not give you enough information about what to do if you are worried about a child's welfare, what to do if you are worried about how a member of staff has behaved or what the centre will do if they are worried about your child's welfare. We have asked them to improve this.

The centre has lots of useful information displayed on the walls and in leaflets for you to take away and read. The Citizens' Advice Bureau sessions are well-used by you too. We know that you enjoy the 'Stay and Play' sessions and 'Baby Babble' and that you find the information given to you at 'Baby Babble' very useful. We found that because staff are busy working in groups and with some of you in your homes they do not have a much time as they need to play some activities. We have asked the centre to look at how this can be made better so that the staff can give you more information about the activities they have provided and help you to learn even more about how your children learn and develop.

Thank you to all the users we met for your input into the inspection. It really was appreciated and we wish you all the best for the future and for the future of your centre.

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