

# Inspection report for Claremont Sure Start Children's Centre

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Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	383653
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	105408 Claremont Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY356018 Brighter Beginnings Day Nursery

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 Inspectors and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, members of staff and partner professionals from other agencies. Discussions were held with a representative from the local authority, a local headteacher and parents. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centre's development plans, evaluations, key policies and the centre's equality and safeguarding procedures.

## Information about the centre

Claremont Sure Start Children's Centre is situated in Moss Side which is an inner city residential area of Manchester. It is a phase one centre which was established in March 2006. The centre is on the site of Claremont Primary School. Childcare provision is affiliated to Brighter Beginnings Day Nursery. The linked provisions are subject to separate inspection arrangements. The primary school was last inspected in February 2012 and the childcare was last inspected in June 2009. The reports of these inspections are available from our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). Early years services are also provided by private and voluntary early years organisations in the local area. There are approximately 1029 children under five years of age living in the reach area. The centre serves the ward of Moss Side and the majority of families live in the 20% most deprived areas in the country. The main social issues affecting these areas are a high number of teenage parents, children living in workless households and a relatively high number of lone parents. Families face a range of challenges in the local area including overcrowded households, domestic violence and poor dental hygiene.

Family support and early years advice are offered at the centre. Health partners are based at Rusholme and Monton Street Health Centre. The social work team is based at Longsight and Chorlton offices. The ethnicity of the reach area is very diverse. However, the majority

of families are of South Asian, Somalian and Afro-Caribbean heritage and the centre is noticing a steady increase in asylum seekers moving into the area. The reach area is characterised by a mix of private and social housing.

Data show that children in the reach area enter early years provision with a narrower range of experiences and skills than those expected for their age. The centre operates some groups and activities on site and in designated sites across the community. The centre takes referrals from and supports families with children in two local schools.

Governance of the centre is provided by the local authority in conjunction with an advisory board. A range of professionals are represented on the advisory board including, Speech and Language, Gingerbread, Early Intervention Team and parents.

## 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**

<b>3</b>
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### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

<b>3</b>
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## Main findings

The overall effectiveness of the centre is satisfactory. The centre has recently been through a period of disruption, with staff re-organisation and a significant turnover in outreach staff. The centre has managed to sustain the large majority of families registering at the centre. However, the centre has seen a decline in those accessing its services. The management team have been somewhat successful in 'thinking outside the box' and have not simply relied on the funding made available to them from the local authority. They have trained and supported volunteers to take up active and successful roles in the centre. While this may be helping the centre to maintain services, the centre management acknowledge that this is not helping to engage more families, or improve outcomes as well as they would like to for the families that are engaging with the centre, particularly to reduce obesity and poor dental hygiene. The centre staff are very committed, but at times overstretched.

Some key partners are fully committed to an integrated approach, such as Manchester Adult Education Service. However, not all partners work with the centre as well as they could do to share pertinent data and the impact their services are having on improving outcomes for families in the area. The centre's range of policies and procedures are generally well embedded and applied routinely. The centre promotes diversity satisfactorily and this is

celebrated through resources depicting different faiths, cultures, and backgrounds. The support given to disabled children and those with special educational needs is good. However, the centre has yet to identify more families in the area to ensure that they are meeting the needs of all the community.

The centre collates evaluations from its activities but does not analyse this sufficiently to be able to show how they are helping to improve the life chances for the families in their area. The centre is engaging insufficient families from across the area. As a consequence, it is difficult for the staff to demonstrate how well they know the needs of all the families in the area and whether the activities they offer are meeting the needs of the whole community. All the parents spoken to were happy about the welcome and care that they receive in the centre. A typical comment which reflects the views of many is, 'This centre has helped build my confidence'. Safeguarding users is a priority at the centre and keeping children and families safe is at the forefront of their work. This is evident in the trusting relationships between centre staff and parents. Although a wide range of safety measures are in place, the gate to the centre is not always closed by parents visiting the site. This is despite centre staff reminding parents to close the gate and very clear signs informing parents of the dangers their children face if the gate is not closed.

Governance is satisfactory. The management team and advisory board know the strengths and weaknesses of the centre and have supported some good action plans to secure further improvements. For example, the increasing numbers of mothers sustaining breastfeeding with their children and the high uptake of the immunisation programme. In addition, data show that the achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest is narrowing from 33% in 2010 to 25.2% in 2011. As a consequence, the centre demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve the data used to plan and demonstrate the centre's impact by:
  - obtaining accurate, centre-specific data from partner agencies
  - developing evaluation and tracking systems in the centre to assess the longer-term impact of services and courses.
- Ensure users safety by developing a more robust procedure to ensure that the front gate to the centre is not left open.
- With the local authority assess whether sufficient funding is being made available to ensure the centre is able to meet the high demands placed on it, and to reach a greater proportion of families in the area.
- Work with local health partners to reduce the high levels of obesity and poor dental hygiene in the area.

## How good are outcomes for families?

The centre provides a broad range of activities across all of the five outcomes, some of which are developed in partnership with other agencies. However, there is insufficient evidence of how these are making a genuine difference and improving outcomes for families. For example, activities such as 'Movers and Shakers' and resources such as 'Busy Feet' materials are used to promote exercise through song and dance routines. In addition, the setting promotes 'Brush Bus' aimed to encourage children to brush their teeth. These initiatives have yet to have an impact on reducing the levels of obesity in young children as they start school, which at 12% is higher than the national average of 9.4%, or on the high levels of dental problems in the area. Anecdotal evidence indicates that the emotional well-being of mothers and their children is improved by attending the 'Parents Survival Course'. Here, parents are shown positive parenting strategies to improve the emotional needs of their children. Typical comments of parents who have benefited from this training include; 'I can now express my affection to my children and communicate with them more confidently'.

Children and families tell how they feel safe when accessing services at the centre but some parents fail to recognise the potential dangers of leaving the external gate open near a busy road. Children respond very well to the established routines and settle quickly in the crèche as they have positive relationships with the adult who runs the activity. Children's behaviour in the centre is good. Looked after children and those subject to a child protection plan are well supported through Common Assessment Framework processes.

Through 'Play and Sing' session's parents learn skills and activities they can try out at home to support their child's speaking and listening skills. In addition, parents use project bags with their children to provide opportunities in the home to explore sounds in meaningful contexts and learn about rhyming patterns. Whilst data show that the achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest is narrowing, the centre has yet to break down this data to ensure that these promising signs are across all their target groups, which include children of lone parents, those in workless households and children of teenage parents.

Parents contribute their views satisfactorily through the parent's forum that meets with the leadership team. Representatives from this group sit on the advisory board to ensure that any requests and suggestions are shared at a strategic level. Parents are kept generally well-informed of the outcomes of these meetings by the 'What You Asked For, What We did' notice board on display in the entrance area. Some fathers are seen in the centre and attend a range of the activities with their children. The English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) course was recently offered solely for fathers and was well-attended.

Interviews with parents and an examination of case studies provide examples of how some families previously with circumstances that made them vulnerable have been helped to access training and future employment.

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?**

<b>3</b>
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Centre staff generally know the needs of families that use their services. Joint home visits are often made with staff from a referring agency, ensuring that family support is carefully focused on parents' needs. A parent commented that she was glad she came into the centre as it's been a lifeline for her. Nonetheless, the centre's reach is not sufficiently extended to ensure that a greater majority of families feel this well supported. The centre provides appropriate support for user groups, such as childminders. They are helped to deliver quality provision for children through their attendances at a range of activities which are run by the early years team. Early Years Foundation Stage planning is on display in the centre so that childminders can link this to children's development records and provide purposeful learning outside the centre.

All parents who spoke to the inspectors were positive about the centre and explained the impact different services have had on their family's lives. They were particularly complimentary about the care, support and guidance offered at the centre and in their home, and about the varied range of activities they can attend. Parents value groups, such as 'Stay and Play', where they play alongside their children and staff and volunteers from the centre. During these sessions parents are able to see good practice in action across a variety of child development perspectives. The centre has formed good relationships with 'Gingerbread' and 'Women's Aid' to offer support and guidance to young parents and women who are experiencing domestic abuse. However, the centre does not routinely analyse whether the parents accessing these services are from their target groups, or whether this support and practical assistance is helping to give their children the best start in life.

The centre is a very welcoming place and resources are of a good quality. The centre ensures that information about many aspects of parenting, including advice about how to keep children healthy and safe, is freely available to parents.

The centre staff have created an interesting program of activities and groups, not only at the centre but also in community outreach sites. However, despite these efforts and the increasing signposting of its services by partner groups, and even after initial home visits from health workers, the centre is acutely aware that some families remain 'hard to reach' and are not accessing services. In addition, gaps in obtaining accurate centre specific data from partner agencies about the impact of services across the community, such as those subject to a child protection plan and looked after children from social services, mean that some families may be missing out on provision that could improve their lives.

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?**

<b>3</b>
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The centre leaders are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses in their provision, particularly in regards to improving the use of data and evaluation and tracking systems to monitor the longer-term impact of services and courses. The centre has many families with complex circumstances that make them particularly vulnerable in the area and high levels of deprivation to address. With this comes a wide array of social and health issues that are embedded in the community. Many parents spoke of their appreciation of the support they were given in times of real crisis. Some developments to improve outcomes are at an early stage and managers have yet to evaluate the impact of their work systematically to know exactly how much difference they are making to lives within the community. However, some of the projects are starting to show that cultural attitudes are changing as more parents are taking a real interest in their child's early education, with more mothers' breastfeeding and stopping smoking during pregnancy. This shows that centre is providing satisfactory value for money.

The centre promotes diversity appropriately and is starting to be successful in bringing a wide range of ethnic communities together. For example, the 'Time for You' women's group worked together to create a banner reflecting their different faiths and cultures. This was subsequently displayed at Manchester Art Gallery. The support given to disabled children and those with special educational needs is good. A playgroup runs specifically for these children at the centre; this helps to bring families together for friendship, to share information and to support one another.

The centre has sought the voice of some parents and children through regular questionnaires and surveys. For example, children who participated in the 'Getting Ready for



School' summer crèche sessions were asked what they had liked or disliked and for those who speak English as an additional language, adults scribed what they said. Examples of how parents' views have contributed to positive changes in the centre include the formation of the centre's requested sewing classes, health and beauty and first aid courses.

Some partnerships continue to develop well with effective collaboration between the centre and several partners. There is close attention to child protection procedures and all staff are trained to use the Common Assessment Framework. Case study evidence indicates that families have received well-integrated and sensitive support in times of crisis. Safeguarding arrangements comply with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board requirements and include the recruitment and vetting of staff, and others who have unsupervised contact with children and vulnerable adults. Clear procedures are in place for reporting child protection issues and are understood and followed by all staff.

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**

None

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaining about inspections*, which is available from our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Claremont Sure Start Children's Centre on 4 – 5 July 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We would like to thank you for allowing us to join with you during some of your sessions and for sparing the time to talk with us about the centre and its activities. Through your comments we found that the centre promotes equality and diversity generally well. Everyone that attends the centre is included, treated with the utmost respect and able to access all that the centre provides. We noticed that the whole environment reflects the many faiths and cultures in your community. This goes some way to explain why so many of you told us that you felt welcome at the centre the moment you walked through the door. We can see how the centre is making a positive difference to your lives. However, the centre staff needs to do more to reflect just how well the activities they offer are not only helping you to improve your lives but how they can help more families in your area to engage with the centre.

Everyone we spoke to told us how much the centre had helped you and your families. We were delighted to see how much you enjoyed the first aid session and you told us how it had helped you to understand how to resuscitate a child if they fell ill. It was really encouraging to hear that many of you feel less isolated in the community and have been able to socialise more by popping into the centre or some of the sites used by the centre.

The staff work hard to try and make sure that everything the centre does for you will help to make a difference to the area in which you live. This is starting to be seen in the satisfactory quality of the individual support that is provided by the centre staff and the family support team at 'Big Life'.

We have said that some elements of the centre's work need to improve. We noticed several times during the inspection that the front gate to the centre was left open. We know that the centre has many signs reminding parents to close the gate but this is not working. We have therefore asked the centre to look at ways in which they can make the gate more

secure so that your children are completely safe when visiting the centre. We have asked the local authority and the centre's partners to make sure that the centre receives the specific, accurate data that it needs so that it can be sure it is targeting its work more efficiently. Whilst some of you are now cooking healthy meals in the home, there are still too many children in your communities starting school overweight or still drinking juice from bottles. We have therefore asked the centre to look at ways in which it can work with the health teams to help all of the children in your area get the healthy start in life they need, and to improve some of the many dental problems your children are encountering. We have also asked that the local authority continues to support the centre and provide them with the resources they need to start to build on the trust the centre has gained with you, and help more of you improve your family's life chances. The reason we have raised these issues is because once they are in place, the centre will be in an even stronger position to see how well it is meeting all of your needs.

Thank you to all that we met for your input into the inspection. It really was appreciated. We hope that you, your children and many more parents who live locally will continue to enjoy and benefit from all of the services available to you in the future.

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