

# Inspection report for Bamber Bridge Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	367739
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 September 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Alan Comerford-Dunbar

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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Walton Le Dale Arts College and High School 119743
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Not applicable

The inspection of this Sure Start Children's Centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

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## Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation. Meetings were held with the staff, parents, members of the advisory board, various health professionals, representatives of voluntary sectors and representatives of local primary and high schools. They observed the work of outreach workers in a home and various sessions provided within the centre.

## Information about the centre

Bamber Bridge Children's Centre is a phase two centre which opened in September 2008. The centre is located on the site of Walton Le Dale High School, which is situated in a lesser deprived area. Two wards within the reach area are in the top 20 to 30% most deprived areas. The centre operates a federated model which includes a phase one centre, another phase two centre and two phase three centres. These centres have integrated management and staffing arrangements. Staff plan, review and deliver services to the community from each children's centre as well as other community venues.

The centre provides a full range of supporting services including health support, adult courses and workshops. The centre's reach area serves the communities of Bamber Bridge, Coupe Green and Salmesbury. Children enter early years provision with a range of skills and knowledge below those typically expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy.

The vast majority of families are of White British heritage with a few of minority ethnic origin. The small Polish heritage community makes use of another children's centre nearby as there is a larger Polish community located there. Approximately 1,220 children under the age of five live in the centre's reach area, of these 857 are registered with the centre. Of these 185 live in the 20 to 30% most disadvantaged areas. The proportion of workless families is 15% and the proportion of children attending school in the area who are known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. There are 52 lone parents

registered at the centre in receipt of benefits. On average, 29% of families benefit from the childcare element of working tax credit. The area has a mixture of types of housing with some privately owned, a significant proportion privately rented and a high number of families living in social housing.

The local authority is responsible for governance of the centre. The centre has an advisory board made up of representatives from the local community, professional agencies and parents. The advisory board is responsible for all five children's centres.

## Inspection judgements

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

### Overall effectiveness

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

**1**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**1**

## Main findings

Bamber Bridge is an outstanding centre. The centre, situated at the heart of the community, makes a significant difference to the lives of families who use the centre. Parents were unanimous in their praise for the work of staff at the centre, as one mother said, 'Every family is treated as unique, special, no-one judges you.'

The centre is extremely effective in raising the aspirations of parents. Excellent strategies enable parents to become more confident mothers and fathers. Children's readiness for learning is boosted significantly. Work with two local primary schools is increasing the levels of speech and language of boys who are most disadvantaged. Excellent close working arrangements with partner agencies such as health visitors exist. All health indicators are improving rapidly. An excellent programme to improve work readiness for parents exists; however, too few people benefit from the programme. The centre recognises this and plans to address the situation.

Excellent links exist with the high school in which the centre is situated. Many innovative activities ensure that users of all ages are attracted to the centre. Proactive outreach workers diligently run a wide range of activities in the community, thereby ensuring that families with circumstances that make them vulnerable are reached. Almost three quarters of families from the most deprived wards are registered with the centre. Safety of users and

staff is outstanding and, despite significant funding cuts, safety in the home is promoted at every opportunity.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The centre exemplifies high-quality practice in safeguarding and equality and diversity. The centre is successfully narrowing the achievement gap for learners. Self-evaluation is used well to plan for future activities. However, data are not always collated or used effectively at a reach level to measure the impact of activities. Managers are highly supportive of well qualified and conscientious staff. The local authority clearly supports the centre to achieve its goals. Advisory board members are knowledgeable and passionate about the work of the centre. The outstanding results achieved by the centre and its commitment to improve the lives of families within the reach area demonstrate why its capacity to improve is outstanding.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Continue to work with the local authority and other key partner agencies to improve the collation and use of information in order that the centre is able to target resources more effectively.
- Ensure more opportunities are available for adults attending the centre, thereby increasing the number of people who will benefit from the excellent programmes on offer.

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

<b>1</b>
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Excellent partnership working ensures the centre is having an outstanding impact on community health. Breastfeeding at six to eight weeks is improving significantly and has increased 5% in 2011 to 43%. Obesity of children in Reception Year is low at 7.6%, down 3% from the previous year. Centre staff are highly effective in engaging with families to promote healthy lifestyles. A recent survey revealed that over 80% of parents stated that they were confident concerning health-related issues. Excellent links with other agencies ensure early notification of families in the community who may benefit from the work of the centre. A recent pilot scheme, working with the speech and language of 26 boys identified as being significantly below expected standards, was a resounding success. After only six months work, 21 of the boys had improved so much that they were at the level expected for their age group. The centre intends to expand this project so more children can benefit.

The behaviour of children is excellent. Staff are highly skilled at influencing parents, constantly reinforcing effective parenting strategies throughout activities. The uptake of positive parenting courses is excellent. Parents value the training, as one mother put it, 'I now know what I am doing, I can divide my time equally between my three children and I don't feel stressed.' Parents and children are kept extremely safe by the centre through the

rigorous reinforcement of health and safety. Contact visits at the centre are managed sensitively. Currently, only five children are subject to a child protection plan, this number is a dramatic drop from previous years. All agencies work cohesively with families whose circumstances make them vulnerable, to provide the support they need at the time they need it most. This multi-agency approach ensures the best possible support for children and their families.

Children in the reach area are achieving extremely well. The centre clearly encourages parents to be, 'the first educator'. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage profile and the rest has reduced effectively having dropped by 3.6% since 2009/10 to 26.6%. More significantly, children in the target group who receive free school meals have dramatically improved their success rate from 39% in 08/09 to 63.6% in 2010/11.

Users make an outstanding contribution to the running of the centre. Families are fully engaged in its governance and drive improvements. They are able to express their views successfully in a variety of creative ways. Active parent forums are very effective in influencing day-to-day activities. Two parents on the advisory board are extremely effective in challenging and supporting the centre in its work within the community. Economic and social well-being for users is good. The centre is strategically located adjacent to the most deprived areas within its reach area. Adults benefit from an excellently designed and well thought out programme to improve employability skills. However, due to budget constraints, too few adults benefit from this programme, a fact recognised by the centre.

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>1</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>1</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>1</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>1</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?

<b>1</b>
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Over 70% of families within the reach area access centre activities. This figure has increased dramatically from 576 families in September 2010 to 857 families in September 2012, as a direct result of pro-active work by the centre to engage with more families. The centre regards each family as unique. All families receive careful and sensitive assessment by staff at the point of contact. Initiatives have been so successful in building the confidence and abilities of parents that some have gone on to become volunteers and even members of the centre staff team. As one proud mum, who is now a member of staff explained, 'I entered the centre as a nervous mum to be but by the care and devotion of the centre team I now have a degree and employment here at the centre.'

Learning and development for children is outstanding. The centre promotes purposeful, individualised learning very well. All activities are of a high standard, commissioned activities are extremely beneficial for all users of the centre. Personal achievement is celebrated well, with particularly good use made of the centre's web-site and social network page. Staff have high expectations of all users, who flourish as a result. Fathers at the centre are actively involved in healthy activities with their children and a men's group is about to commence. Teenagers receive excellent discreet advice and guidance on sexual-health matters. As one mum said, 'I always found education difficult but somehow the centre just seems to make it so natural.'

The tailored nature of guidance and support that every individual receives makes this an outstanding centre. Clear planning between agencies and early intervention effectively ensures that all families receive excellent support. Of 169 families who received multi-agency support recently only 15 remain in need of further support, this clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of the support given by centre staff and other professionals in the community. As one mum said, 'This centre is a lifeline for me and so many others in this community; I don't know what I'd do without it.'

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>1</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>1</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?

**1**

The management team provide high-quality professional supervision for all staff in this outstanding centre. All associated with the centre are crystal clear about the aims and priorities for the centre. The centre manager provides inspirational leadership through a number of strategies. All staff are well qualified and actively encouraged to develop themselves in areas that interests them and which benefit the centre. The senior management team, along with the advisory board, are passionate in their efforts to improve life chances for families within the local community. The federated model provides excellent value for money insofar that it allows for valuable resources to be available within the centre. Innovative strategies to obtain funding enable projects to take place for the benefit of families. However, the centre does not always collate and use data at a reach level. Whilst staff and managers are aware of the positive impact they are having in the wider South Ribble, it is difficult to measure the impact of activities specifically in the reach area.

Excellent partnership working with professional workers as well as the voluntary sector ensures all parts of the reach area are provided for, especially users from targeted groups. The centre is proactive in seeking the views of its service users. Equality of opportunity is excellent with services meeting the needs of all very well, including disabled children and adults and those with special educational needs. The centre has a wonderfully warm and friendly environment.

Safeguarding is outstanding. Staff are vigilant about safety and take prompt action to minimise any potential risks in activities. All legal requirements in relation to safeguarding are adhered to. Leaders ensure the safe recruitment of staff and robust checks are made on all adults working in or with the centre. Families who are most in need receive exceptional support during their time of crisis through the very effective use of the Common Assessment Framework and the close partnership working of agencies involved.

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>1</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>1</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>1</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>1</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>1</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>1</b>

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

Not applicable.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Bamber Bridge Children's Centre on 13 and 14 September 2012. We judged the centre as outstanding.

As part of the inspection, we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's documentation, and talked with a range of children and adults, including parents, staff and partnership workers. We were pleased to speak to some of you about the centre's work and to listen to your views. We really enjoyed talking to you around the centre and in the various activity sessions you were engaged in. You expressed your views very clearly and we appreciated your 'straight talking' in telling us how things really are.

We are pleased to tell you that the centre provides outstanding outcomes to you and your families through the range of excellent quality activities and services it has on offer. We are pleased that excellent attention is given to ensure you and your children stay safe. The way the centre offers you care, guidance and support during times of crisis is particularly impressive and we know many of you describe the centre as, 'A lifeline for you.' We were delighted to hear how you have benefited from coming to the centre, increasing your confidence and becoming involved in the many worthwhile activities available to you.

The centre is also superb at helping you increase your knowledge about play and how children learn through the many play activities and parenting sessions. The centre offers a fantastic range of high quality support to new mums and dads. Many of you are gaining confidence when cooking and are using new ideas to ensure your families are benefiting from a healthy diet. There have been impressive results in the work the centre is doing to tackle obesity in young children.

We judged that the centre manager is a wonderful leader who is passionate about the work of the centre. She is extremely well supported by senior managers from the local authority and also members of the advisory board. Centre staff are very well qualified and work very hard to make the centre as good as it can be. Centre staff are very effective at finding out what the centre's strengths are and have innovative ideas to improve what they do so that even more families can benefit from its activities.

The centre sets challenging targets in order to improve services to you and makes excellent use of resources. It was also good to hear about those of you who have undertaken training to increase your confidence and develop your skills, which may help you secure employment in the future. We have recommended that the centre runs even more programmes for adults in order that more of you can benefit from the high-quality courses available. We have also asked the centre, along with other agencies, to collate and use data that reflect the local communities and not just the wider South Ribble area.

We know that you love your centre and the work that it does, and we agree with the centre that it is an outstanding centre with outstanding results. Thank you once again for your welcome and your willingness to share your views with us. We can see why the staff enjoy working with you so much and wish you every success in the future.

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