

Inspection report for Foleshill Children's Centre

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| Local authority | Coventry |
| Inspection number | 404430 |
| Inspection dates | 7–8 November 2012 |
| Reporting inspector | Jai Sharda HMI |

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| Centre leader | Catherine Rix |
| Date of previous inspection | Not applicable |
| Centre address | Foleshill Children's Services 454 Foleshill Road West Midlands CV6 5LB |
| Telephone number | 024 7678 5575 |
| Fax number | 024 7668 6307 |
| Email address | kate.rix@coventry.gov.uk |

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| Linked school if applicable | Not applicable |
| Linked early years and childcare, if applicable | Freddie's Pride EY345617 |

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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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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 an early years' inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre's manager, staff, parents, representatives from the local authority, the partnership advisory board and partner organisations.

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

Information about the centre

Foleshill Children's Centre received its designation as a phase one children's centre in February 2007. It fulfils its core purpose by providing early years' education integrated with childcare, family support and outreach to parents, child and family health services and access to adult education. It operates in Coventry's Foleshill ward from two sites. The local authority directly manages the centre through its centre manager. An advisory board made of up parents, professional and community partners provides advice and support to the centre.

The majority of the families who use the centre are of Pakistani origin. A growing number of families using the centre are of African or Eastern European origin. Much of the centre's reach area encompasses localities which are in the 10% most deprived areas of the country. The centre has 1,713 children aged under five in its reach area. About 18% of the families registered with the centre come from homes that are dependent on benefits and where no-one is in work. When they start early years provision, the majority of children have skills, knowledge and abilities that are below those expected for their age.

The range of activities offered by the centre includes postnatal checks, breastfeeding support, open baby clinic, developmental checks and baby massage. The centre has links with health visitors, community midwives and speech and language therapists. It signposts families to a range of providers that offer adult education, volunteering

opportunities, and activities designed to support parents and carers back into employment and training. The centre is open on weekdays from 8.30 am to 5.00 pm for 50 weeks of the year.

Following a significant recent reorganisation of children’s centres across the city, the council implemented a number of staffing changes to meet the requirements of the revised structure. The local authority appointed Foleshill Children’s Centre’s senior management team about two months before the inspection. All had previously worked at other children’s centres in the city.

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

Although the overall effectiveness of the centre is currently satisfactory, it has a number of significant strengths. Centre staff have established effective partnerships with health professionals to meet the diverse needs of the families who use the centre’s services. This has resulted in some particularly positive health outcomes for users, such as the high proportion of women initiating and sustaining breast feeding at six to eight weeks. The centre’s promotion of the benefits of health through its range of well-attended sessions on healthy eating, fitness and exercise helps to ensure that children are at a healthy weight when they start school. Good links with community organisations, especially those representing the area’s large Asian and Roma Gypsy population, have contributed to the promotion of social inclusion and to the creation of a centre which parents report is safe and welcoming.

In conjunction with the local authority, the centre has developed a range of effective strategies for securing health outcomes data to enable it to assess the impact of its work. However, the city’s health service professionals do not currently share their data with children’s centre managers which make it difficult for the centre to evaluate the impact of some of its health services.

The centre is particularly successful in supporting families during times of transition or crisis. Staff make effective use of the Common Assessment Framework to target the most vulnerable families. Regular professional discussions during ‘raise, share and review’ meetings ensure that professionals work well together to share

information about individual families and children so that support is coordinated and effective. Staff are well trained in safeguarding and report any concerns promptly to ensure that the risk of harm to children in the most vulnerable families is minimised.

The new senior management team has quickly developed a sound understanding of the key characteristics of the reach area as well as of the families who use the centre's services. Though they have begun to develop appropriate action plans and improvement initiatives, but it is too soon to assess the effectiveness of these measures. Consequently, the centre's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

The very large majority of centre users are from all the key target groups. Nevertheless, centre managers are aware that the area's large transient population results in some sections of the community not using centre services. Managers have begun work to identify families not currently benefiting from the centre's services, but it is too soon to assess the effectiveness of this work.

Staff collect regularly feedback from users on the quality of services so that the centre can make improvements and better meet users' needs and interests. Parents make a positive contribution by attending centre activities but few decide to take a more active role in shaping the services that it offers, for example, by becoming a member of the centre's partnership advisory board.

The centre generally supports children well to prepare them for school and most make good progress from their starting points through attending centre activities. However, the centre is less effective in promoting adult learning programmes to help parents gain important skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), as well as through more vocationally-oriented learning programmes.

The centre's partnership advisory board is insufficiently effective in providing challenge and strategic direction for centre leaders. Though there is a detailed set of terms and references for the board, members remain unclear about their roles and responsibilities. They do not sufficiently understand how they can use performance data to support decision-making.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Continue to work with health service professionals to ensure that data on health outcomes are made available to the centre so that it can shape provision accordingly.
- Continue to develop effective strategies to increase the engagement and participation of key target groups.
- Provide more opportunities for families to develop their economic stability by offering increased opportunities for them to develop vocationally useful skills, as

well as their skills in English, mathematics and ICT.

- Improve the effectiveness of the partnership advisory board by:
 - developing board members' understanding of their responsibilities for the quality of provision and outcomes in the children's centre and their ability to provide effective challenge and strategic direction
 - ensuring that users are fully represented on the board and that they are involved with shaping centre services.

How good are outcomes for families?

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The centre's good joint working with health partners ensures that it is able to identify quickly potentially vulnerable families who will benefit from using the centre's services. Childhood obesity levels as children enter school are roughly at national levels despite the high levels of obesity normally associated with high levels of deprivation. Nevertheless, the centre focuses well on developing healthy lifestyles. Groups such as 'Together like me', for children with additional needs and 'Family First', incorporate outdoor play activities and help families to increase their understanding of how to keep healthy and active. These activities have contributed to a large majority of children entering school at a healthy weight. The centre works closely with a local Asian women's support group to promote breast feeding. Users are able to discuss any concerns in a range of community languages spoken by staff working for the support group. The centre also train peer supporters to provide a breast feeding mentoring service. As a consequence, rates for initiating and sustaining breastfeeding have risen for the last three years and are now high at 62%.

All staff are strongly committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of families. One parent, commenting about the home support provided by the centre for her and her child, who was born with Down's syndrome, volunteered: 'I don't know what I'd do without the support from the children's centre.' The centre promotes effectively safety in the home and community through events and home visits by centre staff and the fire safety officer. Consequently, children and parents have a good awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe. Parents say that they feel very safe and secure in the centre. Attendance at parenting courses is good and many parents report that they have grown in confidence and made friends through attending such courses. Where families need more intensive help, good partnership working ensures they receive the support to prevent difficulties escalating. All families receiving personalised support have a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) undertaken, ensuring a multi-agency approach. The centre runs a programme of learning about violence against women and its effects on children. It also works with an Asian women's domestic violence support group to make a very positive impact on the relatively high number of families in the area experiencing domestic violence.

Children behave well and develop useful skills for the future, such as cooperation and independence, and families from a wide range of cultural and educational

backgrounds show respect for each other. Some parents benefit from opportunities to make a positive contribution to the centre through membership of the partnership advisory board. However, they have made a limited contribution to shaping the strategic direction of the centre.

The centre supports children well to prepare them for the transition to school. Its focus on early intervention and support has contributed to a narrowing of the achievement gap between the lowest-achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage profile across the area. The centre has prioritised the need to secure the financial security of vulnerable families. Users report how helpful the centre has been in enabling them to gain the benefits they are entitled to and to manage their debts. A group of parents are improving their economic well-being by volunteering at the centre. Though some parents attend classes to improve their English, the centre gives insufficient attention in the activity programme to help adults gain qualifications that will help them get back into work, or gain better paid employment.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

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| The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| 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?

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Some 80% of families in the reach area have registered with the centre but only around 43% of them are regularly using services. Owing to the nature of the reach area, the large majority of the centre's users are from its specific target groups. The centre is keenly aware that the area's transient population, such as the relatively large population of Roma Gypsies, results in some pockets of the community served by the centre that are not yet using the full range of services that the centre offers. The centre's new management team have begun to implement initiatives to increase the proportion of families who use the centre's services, but it is too soon to judge the effectiveness of these actions.

The centre provides a satisfactory range of activities to promote the enjoyment of learning. Many of the activities focus on improving children's social skills and their

ability to communicate with others, for example 'Rhyme time'. The centre evaluates sessions and takes note of users' responses using this information to shape its services. Children attending the centre's nursery receive high quality childcare and experience first-hand learning experiences, thereby becoming active learners. Children make good progress from their starting points through attending centre activities. They demonstrate an enthusiasm for learning, building up their social skills and preparing them for the future. They enjoy sessions and the achievement of children and of adults is well-celebrated.

Links with the local adult education service provide access to education for some parents, particularly for those for whom English is an additional language. However, the centre does not sufficiently promote learning programmes in English, mathematics and ICT, as well as in more vocationally specific programmes to help parents improve their employability.

The centre ensures that good-quality information about many aspects of parenting, including advice about how to keep children healthy and safe, is freely available to parents. Many parents receive good quality parenting support at home from the centre's outreach workers. Drop-in sessions with health visitors provide easy access to information about health matters and are very popular with families. One parent commented: 'I feel that my confidence is coming back. It's wonderful to have someone to turn to because we didn't have that before.'

The centre's outreach work is particularly successful in providing good support for parents in times of crisis. The centre ensures that families who are in most need benefit from the services it provides. It is good at sensitively assessing families' needs. Centre staff make good use of the CAF to target support. They are particularly good at helping to identify children who have additional needs and assisting parents to take advantage of the extra support they need. Health visitors work closely with the centre and make early referrals of vulnerable families to ensure that staff quickly identify issues and support families promptly. Staff make good use of the family support team's 'raise, share and review' meetings to promptly escalate support when required, particularly where there are delays in intervention by external agencies. Help for parents with poor self-confidence is good. Many of the centre's activities, such as the 'Triple P' parenting programme, 'Family First' sessions and speech and language support, are provided individually at home if that is more appropriate to families' needs.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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| 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?

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The centre's recently appointed senior management team has quickly developed a good understanding of the area served by the centre. Staff are effective in their roles and are appropriately supervised. Local authority managers make use of an appropriate range of performance indicators to monitor and appraise the work of the centre manager. The centre's self-evaluation was completed several months before the service was restructured and consequently does not provide an accurate account of the overall quality of provision. However, the new centre management team has quickly grasped the main issues facing the centre and has begun to develop appropriate action plans and improvement initiatives.

Safeguarding arrangements meet current statutory requirements. The centre has good procedures in place for recording information related to the vetting and recruitment and training of staff. Staff are trained in child protection to levels that are appropriate to their responsibilities. They have a good understanding of the issues and reporting procedures. The centre keeps comprehensive records of the Criminal Records Bureau checks that it carries out for all staff and volunteers. Staff are well trained to identify and report concerns promptly. Multi-agency co-operation is particularly effective and leads to timely interventions that reduce the risk of harm to children and helps keep the most vulnerable families safe.

The use of resources is having a satisfactory impact on outcomes for families. The accommodation is welcoming and the centre deploys staff strengths well to benefit families. As a result, the centre currently provides satisfactory value for money.

Centre staff work closely and very effectively with a wide variety of partners, either through mutual referrals but, in particular, through coordinated plans to meet the various needs of families within the target groups in the area. As a result, the centre is highly regarded by users and partners. One parent told inspectors: 'I have gained so much personally; I've met new people, made friends and now feel more useful and confident.' The centre offers a good range of integrated services that deliver cohesive provision leading to satisfactory outcomes for families. Outreach provision in a local library and in a community centre effectively extends the opportunities for families to benefit from the centre's services. Currently health service professionals do not routinely share healthy outcomes data with the centre. The centre is therefore unable to assess accurately the effectiveness of its work on some health-related outcomes, such as the proportion of women who smoke during pregnancy.

Although the local authority provides appropriate direction and challenge, there is limited supportive monitoring at a local level. In particular, the partnership advisory board has not fully understood its role in helping to provide strategic direction and challenge. Board members are not clear about their role in monitoring the centre's performance or in using data to support decision making. Parent representation on the board is low.

The extent to which the centre promotes equality and diversity is satisfactory. Centre staff work hard to narrow the achievement gap. It makes parents from minority ethnic groups, including those from Polish and other Eastern European backgrounds, very welcome. A particularly successful partnership with the Coventry Roma Group, has led to a very wide range of services being made available to families and children from this highly under-represented and marginalised community. Although there are some pockets of families in the area not yet using services provided by the centre, the families who use the centre represent a diverse range of communities, religions and ethnicities.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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| 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 secure 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

Inspectors used the findings of the inspection of Freddie's Pride day nursery in 2011 to guide the inspection team's findings with regard to outcomes for nursery-aged children. Provision and outcomes in the setting were judged to be outstanding.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Foleshill Children's Centre on 7–8 November 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We very much enjoyed our visit to your children's centre and would like to thank all of you who gave your time to speak to us and tell us your experiences of using the centre. Your views have helped to inform us how well the centre is doing.

Though we found your centre overall to be satisfactory, there are a number of significant strengths. We were pleased to see that the centre has such productive partnerships with local health professionals and with a range of local community organisations. This joint working has helped many of you to improve your health and well-being as well as of your children. The range of well-attended sessions promoting the benefits of outdoor play, healthy foods and exercise are particular strengths of the centre. Inspectors were also impressed with the success of the centre's work on promoting breast feeding, particularly through its peer mentoring programme. We would like health service professionals to share information better with the centre so that services for you can be better tailored to meet your needs.

Those of you who spoke to us told us how well you felt supported by centre staff, especially when you were going through a difficult period in your home life. The professionals at the centre work very well together to share information about families so that any concerns about individual children or family members are identified quickly and dealt with promptly. Centre staff are well trained in safeguarding and report any concerns promptly to ensure that the risk of harm to children in the most vulnerable families is minimised.

Though the centre's manager is very new in post, she and her senior managers, who were also appointed very recently, have developed a sound understanding of the Foleshill area and of the issues which matter to you. They have begun to develop a range of action plans and initiatives so that the centre meets your needs even better.

There are some things that we have asked the centre's leaders to improve. Though a very large number of families in the area have registered with the centre, not enough of them are currently using centre services. You told us how much you value and support the hard work of centre staff in meeting your needs. We have asked centre leaders to engage with more local parents like you so that they too can benefit from the centre's range of services.

Inspectors agree with you that the centre provides appropriate opportunities for you to give feedback on the services that the centre provides, so that it can make improvements. Some of you also take a more active role shaping the centre's services by, for example, joining the centre's partnership advisory board. However, our view is that the centre will really benefit if even more parents joined the partnership advisory board. We have asked centre managers to encourage more of you to do this. We have also asked centre leaders to provide clearer advice and

guidance to board members so that they can carry out their role even more effectively.

Many of you told us that the centre provides good opportunities for your children to develop a joy for learning, for example through play and story-telling. This helps to prepare them for school and many of you commented on the good progress that your children had made since they started attending centre activities. Though we agree with you that the centre helps to prepare children for school, we would also like the centre to provide more opportunities for parents to improve their skills in subjects such as English, mathematics and ICT, so that more of you are better equipped to become job seekers, volunteers or to further your own learning.

Thank you again for the time you took to come and speak to us. It is clear from these discussions and the feedback that you have supplied to the centre that those of you who use the centre's facilities are very pleased with what it provides.

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