

# Inspection report for Irlam and Cadishead Children's Centre

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Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	411166
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Reporting inspector	Linda McLarty HMI

Centre leader	Mrs Julie Carson and Mr David Fielding
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Fiddlers Lane Irlam Manchester Greater Manchester M44 6QE
Telephone number	0161 921 1708
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	david.fielding@salford.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	105917 Fiddlers Lane Community Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	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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Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
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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 four of Her Majesty's Inspectors. At the same time, an unpublished pilot inspection was carried out against the proposed revised inspection framework.

The inspectors held meetings with centre users, centre leaders, staff and representatives of the local authority. They also held meetings with representatives from the parents' forum, the advisory board and the school's governing body.

The inspectors observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Irlam and Cadishead Children's Centre was formed 18 months ago from a merger of the phase one Fiddler's Lane Children's Centre and the phase two Cadishead Children's Centre. The centre delivers a range of services to meet the core purpose. The community is mainly White British and approximately 8% of families represent a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds.

The centre operates from the site of the former Fiddler's Lane Children's Centre, and services are also delivered from the former Cadishead Children's Centre accommodation, approximately two miles away. The centre serves a community ranked within one of the 30% most deprived areas nationally. Within the reach area, the Mossvale estate in the Irlam ward is in the top 10-20% of the most deprived areas nationally, and the Counties estate in the Cadishead ward is in the top 20% most deprived wards.

Irlam and Cadishead wards have a relatively low level of worklessness overall, with 15.6% of families claiming benefits, which is less than the 20.1% average for Salford but higher than the 2009 national average of 13.4%. However, in the Moss Vale estate 34.1% of adults claim out-of-work benefits.

The head of centre is accountable to the headteacher and governing body of the adjacent Fiddler’s Lane Community Primary School, who provide governance on behalf of the City of Salford. There are currently 1414 children aged from birth to five in the centre’s reach area, 90% of whom are registered with the centre. The majority (59%) of these families overall are actively engaged with services, with 73% of all families with children aged from birth to three accessing services.

Children’s skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years provision are below those typically seen for their age, especially in communication, language and numeracy. Although not directly commissioned by the centre, childcare is delivered on the Fiddlers Lane site by private provider Fledglings Day Nursery and by private provider Mojo 6. The latter organisation rents rooms in the centre from which they operate a before- and after-school club. The reports for these settings and the primary school are available on the Ofsted website at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

## 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**

**2**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**2**

## Main findings

This is a good children’s centre. The leaders have formed strong partnerships which help local people to access early childhood services to improve their life chances and reduce inequalities of opportunity. ‘There’s always somebody who will help you, even for me, a man’ typifies praise for the centre’s support.

The care, guidance and support offered are outstanding, and parents report very high levels of user satisfaction with the centre services. This generates ongoing loyalty and outstanding user engagement. Parents are keen to join the parent forum, the advisory board and school governing body, where they have a genuine impact on shaping services.

The governance of the centre at local level is strong, with clear accountability to and challenge from the governing body and advisory board. This is despite a lack of challenge, precise target setting and budget information by the local authority. The leadership effectively obtains current information from their local partnerships to compensate for the

out-of-date information provided by the local authority. These partners confirmed that centre leaders know the needs in the area extremely well and use their strong local knowledge to plan services to meet these needs.

The leadership and management of the strategic and operational heads of centre, supported very effectively by the deputy, have organised good-quality provision which is delivering consistently good outcomes. The school's governing body and the advisory board consistently challenge the detailed reports presented by the operational head of centre. They contribute authentically to the centre's self-evaluation, holding it to account for the accuracy of its impact data and that of its partner agencies.

Value for money is good because the good provision is resulting in good outcomes for local families. The strong and persistent focus on target groups means that equality and diversity are promoted well.

The achievement gap between the lowest-performing 20% of children in the early years and their peers is narrowing. Data and case studies show that services prioritise improving the life chances of the most vulnerable adults and children. Attendance, completion rates, outcomes and onward progression are monitored to gauge the continuing relevance and usefulness of the services and activities offered, and this information is used to reshape services. Partners confirm that the centre leadership target their outreach and improvement work where it is most needed and will do most good.

Strong partnerships with education, particularly with the on-site school, with health colleagues and with the Early Intervention and Prevention team are key to the centre's success in equipping families for life and preparing children for school, particularly those disadvantaged by their circumstances.

Safeguarding is good, with all staff trained to the correct level to support their roles. They are able to advise colleagues from partner agencies on best practice in completing the Common Assessment Framework records. There is rapid and effective information sharing and careful monitoring of the impact of support offered. Salford council provides postcode details regarding children subject to child protection plans who do not attend the centre, but this is not enough to help centre staff contact these families without further contact details from social workers. The centre is used well to offer a safe and welcoming location for contact visits.

The centre has maintained levels of provision during the recent reorganisation of services, minimising the impact of change on users. The capacity to improve is strong and is not solely vested in any one leader but dispersed across the mutually supportive leadership team. This was shown when the deputy manager was supported by the headteacher to stand in for the operational head of centre when he was seconded to support another local centre recently.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the way the local authority provides accurate information to the centre about the profile of the families in the reach area, including a more systematic information exchange about the children who are subject to a child protection plan, and provides timely budget information to enable the centre to plan and prioritise its work.
- Improve the way the local authority challenges, supports and holds the centre to account by agreeing measurable targets by which the centre staff, its governance and its partners can assess the impact of its work.

## How good are outcomes for families?

2

The involvement of the midwifery service has increased registration levels well by introducing new parents to the centre, many of whom go on to access other centre services.

In the last three years the centre has successfully contributed to reducing the obesity levels in children entering Reception across the reach area by 9%. At approximately 12% this is now below Salford and national averages. Immunisation levels exceed all targets and are above the national and Salford average for all vaccines. The centre had limited data to demonstrate reduction in emergency hospital admissions and only two years of data relating to breastfeeding, which shows some improvement, although breastfeeding is still well below national levels. The community paediatrician works closely with the centre in a pilot programme to enhance provision for children with additional needs, although it is too soon to see the impact of this on outcomes for this group.

In response to a recent police report describing high levels of domestic abuse, low self-esteem and confidence in the area, the centre has delivered three targeted 'Time for mum' courses. These courses were devised in partnership with the locality team, the Health Improvement Service and Salford College. Attendees often progress to parenting or behaviour management courses, to volunteering opportunities or to employment. Feedback analysis indicates that 100% of mums reported experiencing more confidence, less isolation and reduced depression following the courses. 'I am my own person; I do have a voice', said one parent, continuing, 'where before, I wouldn't talk to a stranger.'

The welcoming and relaxed atmosphere of the centre is underpinned by rigorous safeguarding procedures. Children subject to a child protection plan and those who are undergoing the Common Assessment Framework processes are supported well. All users report feeling completely safe in the centre.

Data show that the achievement gap is narrowing in the reach area schools, from 28% in 2008 to 15% in 2012. Children using centre services who then attend Fiddler's Lane School consistently outperform children who did not attend the centre, as shown by their Early

Years Foundation Stage Profile scores. The large majority, 75%, of the schools in the reach area have increased the number of children achieving six or more points in communication, language and literacy, and personal and social development in the last three years. The centre analyses information about children's achievement in every school in the reach area to identify the main barriers to achievement at reach area level and at individual school level, and uses this information well to prepare children for transition to school.

However, the quality of practice observed during the inspection was variable. Some staff did not consistently show parents how to promote children's communication, speech and early writing. The centre leadership is aware of the need to ensure that staff who now provide the majority of the Education Lead role, following the redeployment of this post during the reorganisation, are fully trained to support this new responsibility.

The centre monitors the take-up of adult courses to ensure parity of access for target groups. Data show that high volumes of users access some courses, with strong attendance by fathers and lone parents.

Children behave well in the busy but calm 'Stay and play' and 'Time for rhyme' sessions, and adult relationships are respectful. Families are authentically engaged with the decision making at the centre in the parents' forum, the advisory board and at governing body level.

Strong partnerships with Salford Skills and Work Services and Pertemps People Development Group help workless families take the initial steps towards gaining the skills needed for future employment. Since February 2012, 31 families have shown 100% improvement in their long-term pathways to work. Overall, by May 2012, 63 adults had been helped to gain 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>	2
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	2
<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>	2
<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>	2
<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>	2

## How good is the provision?

Provision is based on thorough analysis of need, using effective consultation and evaluation processes. This ensures the range of predominantly evidence-based services and activities, including outreach services, meet the needs of users well. Some targeted groups, such as young mothers, fathers and lone parents are particularly well catered for through a successful blend of universal and directed provision.

Good- or better-quality day-care provision supports children's learning and development effectively. High-quality adult courses such as 'Babies' first foods' share the latest research in very practical ways and help parents to keep their children safe and healthy. Adult education focuses primarily on improving literacy and numeracy, with good progression rates from in-centre courses including 'family language' to accredited qualifications at levels one and two. There are lower volumes of adults attending some adult education courses, but the leadership is monitoring the impact of recent cuts to public services and how it may affect their adult education partners' capacity to deliver literacy and numeracy courses. Confidence is raised by the achievement of genuine learning and development milestones and accredited qualifications and is consistently celebrated at centre and local authority level.

The centre provided a very effective, very-well-coordinated response to families following an explosion in the Mossvale estate in Irlam, working day and night with other agencies and partners to support the community throughout this crisis. Individuals and case studies cite many similar examples of centre staff helping families to cope at times of intense personal need, including debt counselling and help with accessing benefits.

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>	2
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	2
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.</b>	1

## How effective are the leadership and management?

The recent merger has been well managed by the leadership in order to minimise impact on the service users. The local authority has not always provided sufficient guidance or challenge for the centre and does not agree explicit expectations and targets for improvement. However, the local authority's strong commitment to focusing upon more vulnerable families underpins the centre leaders' development planning. The leadership prioritise their improvement activity effectively in response to information from their partners about the range of needs in the reach area.



Day-to-day line management arrangements are clear and understood by all staff within the centre. Staff receive regular professional supervision which holds them to account for their role in delivering the centre's improvement priorities. Since the reorganisation staff have been trained to take on additional roles, which helps the centre deliver value for money despite recent budget cuts.

The strongly reflective leadership give the governing body sufficiently detailed reports to enable them to hold the centre accountable for the impact of its provision, including for target groups. Some of the centre's development targets are vague and lack measurable success criteria to help the leadership and governance track their performance over time.

The governing body, staff and the advisory board are highly involved in the centre's self-evaluation processes, although some partners, such as health, do not have evidence of the impact of every aspect of their contribution to the centre's work.

The centre's 'Inclusion Forum' is being used Salford-wide as a model of good practice in partnership working to support children with additional needs. The centre uses parental expertise well to advise staff on how best to celebrate festivals like Diwali or Eid in a meaningful way, and there are good links with other professionals to support children with additional needs. The centre services are used well by families with English as an additional language. Use of centre services is closely monitored to ensure equality of access and opportunity, especially for those identified as facing particular challenge or discrimination.

Families using the centre are safeguarded well. Children subject to child protection plans and the Common Assessment Framework processes are well managed through highly effective multi-agency working, for example with the Early Intervention and Prevention team. Information is exchanged rapidly with key agencies to protect the most vulnerable children. However, arrangements to refer non-attendance at groups by families with children subject to Children in Need or child protection plans to social workers are not sufficiently systematic. There is some conflicting written information on the identity of the safeguarding officer given to adults attending adult education courses, with a similar lack of clarity in the childminding group about the onward referral of safeguarding concerns. However, this is not compromising the strong safeguarding of centre users. Joint home visits deliver high-quality support and guidance to those who are not able to access centre services easily.

Excellent relationships with partner agencies are firmly focused upon improving lives of the most vulnerable families in the reach area. Professional partners express high levels of confidence in the centre leadership's use of knowledge of the needs of the area to deliver services where they are most needed, and they contribute to the centre's self-evaluation and shaping of services through the advisory board.

The views of parents and users are collected in many different ways, including satisfaction surveys and ongoing evaluations of individual activities and interventions. This helps the leadership to check the ongoing quality and usefulness of courses and to plan future provision. Users are meaningfully involved with decision making at every level and are loyal

advocates of the centre's work. The engagement of target groups with services and decision making is carefully monitored to ensure equality of access.

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>	2
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes</b>	2
<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>	2
<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>	2
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	2
<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>	2
<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>	1

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

The inspection took account of the findings of the most recent inspection reports of schools within a mile radius of the centre, and the private day care inspection reports for the day care adjacent to both of the children's centre sites, as well as for the private provider Mojo 6 who hire rooms from the centre to deliver an out-of-school service.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Irlam and Cadishead Children's Centre during the week beginning 10 December 2012. We judged the centre to be good overall.

We would like to thank you for helping us to see the difference the centre staff and its partners are making to your life in Irlam and Cadishead. We can see why you enjoy attending so much, and how the advice, support, guidance, activities and courses are helping you as adults towards a brighter, more financially secure future. We appreciate why you join in the parents' forum, the advisory board and the governing body of the local school as a way of giving something back and helping to make the important decisions about what your centre provides.

Your children are being well prepared for school, both in their learning and development and in their overall health and safety, because of the children's centre's work. The courses provided are helping adults gain the skills, confidence and qualifications which prepare you for paid work. The centre works well with its partners to offer families useful support to cope with accessing benefits or managing debt. Some of the courses help you to cope with times of intense personal crisis, or give you more general advice, such as the latest research on, for example, how best to feed your babies.

We judged that the centre leaders are doing a good job at learning about your needs, despite a lack of up-to-date information from the local authority. Despite the recent merger of the Fiddler's Lane and Cadishead centres, the leaders have continued to provide you with useful services which are improving your chances of employment, long-term health and safety, and building a stronger community. The local authority is not helping the leadership enough, for example by agreeing clear targets. This means that centre staff and those who support, challenge and check the results of their work are not able to easily measure what difference they are making. Sometimes, the local authority figures do not tell the centre leaders soon enough about what funds are available for the leaders to use this information to plan the services. The inspectors also think that the way information is shared with social workers about some of the children most in need of support could be improved, so we have asked the local authority to make these aspects of their work better.

It was a privilege to meet you and to hear your comments, which helped the inspectors to reach their judgements. We wish you all the very best for your future.

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