

Inspection report for Westgate Children's Centre

Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	411024
Inspection dates	24 - 25 January 2013
Reporting inspector	Kathryn Gethin HMI

Centre leader	Stephen Robinson
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Langridge Way Morecambe Lancashire LA4 4XF
Telephone number	01524 409569
Fax number	01524 418285
Email address	head@westgate.lancs.sch.uk

Linked school if applicable	Westgate Primary School URN 119347
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Nippers Nursery EY379224

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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100080.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



No.100080

© Crown copyright 2013

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 the centre manager and staff, representatives from the local authority, members of the governing body, representatives from a wide range of partner agencies and parents. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Westgate Children's Centre is a phase two centre that was designated in 2007. It is located in Morecambe and serves an area where deprivation levels vary. The centre is co-located with Westgate Primary School. There are currently 690 children aged under five years in the reach area. The reach area is amongst the 30% most deprived nationally. Some areas of Morecambe are within the 10% most deprived in the country and 26% of children under four years live in households dependent on workless benefits. The large majority of children are of White British heritage, with an increasing number of Eastern European families. Children's level of skills on entry to early years provision are generally well below age-related expectations.

The strategic management of the centre is undertaken by the governing body of Westgate Primary School, alongside a children's centre committee. The centre has links to a further four primary schools. The centre provides an appropriate range of services to meet the core purpose. These include: family support, health services, parent and young child-focused activities. Partner agencies include: health professionals, the speech and language team, employment services and housing advice. On-site childcare is provided and is subject to separate inspection arrangements.

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

Westgate Children's Centre is a good centre with some outstanding features. The centre is led and managed well. The senior leadership team and centre staff are passionate about the work of the centre and are committed to improving the life chances of the local community. The centre demonstrates a good capacity for further improvement. The centre has successfully registered most families in the reach area and is effectively engaging with the large majority, including those from target groups. All staff and partners give the highest priority to safeguarding children and families and are trained to the correct level. The development plan is accurately focused on priorities within the area and performance has improved. However, not all targets are sufficiently ambitious or easily measured. Services are regularly monitored but this information is not yet used to full effect to demonstrate the long-term impact on improving the family's well-being.

Joint working and good levels of information sharing is a noticeable feature of the centre. Resources are used well to avoid any duplication and the centre has an accurate picture of the target groups in the area. The centre has an excellent understanding of individual family's needs and superb partnerships, particularly with Housing Estates are key to the centre's success in identifying where most support is needed. Family's needs are swiftly assessed and reviewed on a regular basis. Outreach work is highly effective in supporting those most in need and some services are specifically designed to meet the needs of target groups. For example, teenage parents, disabled children and those who have special educational needs. Bi-lingual staff provide excellent support for those families who do not speak English as their first language.

Those using the centre speak highly of its importance in their lives. 'If the centre was a hotel it would get 10 stars,' and 'I don't know what I would do without it' are typical comments that reflect the confidence families have in the centre and demonstrates the

exceptional level of care, guidance and support given to families. As a result, the centre has become very well-established in the community. A strong parent forum is in place and parental views are fed back to senior management on a regular basis. However, there are fewer opportunities for parents and agencies to be more directly involved in the governance of the centre.

Learning and development have been given a high profile within the centre. The centre places a priority on encouraging adults to develop their confidence, and engage in more formal learning. Activities are of a high quality and promote purposeful learning very well. The delivery of the 'Empowering Parents' course has been instrumental in enabling parents to make positive changes to their lives. The centre can evidence a number of parents that have made rapid progress from their starting points and have successfully completed courses, progressing onto accredited training and as a result gained employment.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the opportunities for families using the centre and partners to become more involved in decision-making.
- Continue to drive improvement by:
 - sharpening targets in the development plan to ensure they are measurable and sufficiently ambitious
 - embedding and refining the tracking, monitoring and quality assurance systems to give a clear picture of the centre's impact on outcomes.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Families are successfully learning about the benefits of a healthier lifestyle because there are many programmes in place to support and encourage them. A large majority of families in the area engage well with appropriate health services. The proportion of mothers who remain breastfeeding at six to eight weeks continues to increase. Volunteer 'Star Buddy's' and 'Breastfeeding champions' provide support to mothers. A particular success has been the number of young mothers and those from Polish families choosing to breastfeed. The centre has been awarded the UNICEF Breastfeeding Setting Award. Healthy eating is promoted through the 'Healthy Heroes' programme and by raising awareness in 'Stay and Play' sessions. Parents say their children 'now sit round the table and eat healthy meals'.

Families feel very safe within the centre and learn to keep themselves safe as they develop an understanding of dangers within the home through the 'Whoops' home safety course. There is a strong commitment to preventative work. Weekly multi-agency meetings identify and prioritise the individualised support needed and review this on a regular basis. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used well and the number of children on child protection plans is low. No children have been subject to a second child protection plan.

Safeguarding is very well promoted throughout the centre and collaborative working with a range of partners by centre staff has helped families to remain safe during times of crisis. Parents who attend courses for victims of domestic violence report an increase in their confidence and the realisation of the impact domestic violence has on children.

The on-site school serves many families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Data show that children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy skills. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% and others has narrowed from 36% to 34%. For all children who attend the crèche their learning is very effectively tracked, assessed and recorded in well-documented individual learning journeys. The 'Rattle and Rhyme' and 'Happy Talkers' programme enable parents to learn how to best support children's speech and language through practical, fun ideas that are easy to use at home. Parents report an increase in their confidence and parenting skills as they learn how to establish routines and manage behaviour in better ways through attendance at a wide range of parenting programmes such as, 'Family Links' and 'Incredible Years'.

The centre is well used by the community. Children behave well and parents and staff treat each other with respect and consideration. The centre has supported a large number of volunteers both within the centre and out in the community on the 'Homestart' programme and at a local doctor's surgery. The volunteers are known as parent representatives and they offer good support in sessions and collate parents' views. The active Parents' Forum group takes these views forward. As a result, these views are used to help shape the development of services. For example, the times of the baby massage group and child health clinic were changed to allow parents to attend both.

The centre has been successful in engaging with families to improve their economic and social well-being. The majority of families engage with the centre and the 'Empowering Parents' course has been hugely successful in increasing parents confidence and encouraging them to realise the benefits of education to improve their employment prospects. Nearly 50% of parents who complete this course continue onto National Vocational Qualifications and 27 parents have gained employment. A parent from the Gypsy Roma Traveller community and lone parents quite rightly spoke with pride about their achievements and awards they had gained or been nominated for.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

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	2
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2

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	2
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.	2

How good is the provision?

1

The centre has been highly successful in increasing the numbers of families engaged in services to 79%. Target groups are very well-represented within this figure. Through excellent working with health partners and Housing Estate managers, centre leaders have gained an insightful knowledge of their community. This has enabled them to ensure services are effectively tailored to meet need. The Saturday 'Dad's club' enables fathers who only have weekend contact with their children to access activities. The excellent attendance levels and participation rates on courses confirm that services offered meet the needs of most of the families who attend. Outreach work is of a high quality and parents are unstinting in their praise for these workers. 'If I didn't have them I don't know what I would do' typifies the feeling the families have. The aspirations of families are taken into account when assessing need and awards are proudly displayed within the centre. 'I finally succeeded in my dream' sums up the outstanding impact the services provided by the centre has had on families.

All achievements are celebrated as the centre believes in inspiring parents to believe in themselves. For many the centre is the first place where they feel they have not been judged for their lack of qualifications or because of their background. Activities are well-located and of a high standard. Staff have high expectations and excellent links with adult education enable staff to use parents' prior learning and interests to further their ambitions. Some parents make rapid progress in their personal development and achieve beyond their own expectations. Childminders have a regular group session at the centre and have benefitted from the exceptional training and advice given. Children engage in purposeful play, and learning and development for children is of a very high standard.

The centre provides excellent care, guidance and support for families. Staff recognise that families too often face a raft of complex issues, including housing problems, domestic violence and isolation. Superb multi-agency working and consultation with families results in well-coordinated services. As a result, families feel exceptionally well-supported. For example, families are confident to ask for help and particularly appreciate the times when staff accompany them to appointments. In times of crisis, the centre provides immediate support. In one instance this involved administering emergency medical treatment. Clear information on smoking, alcohol, substance misuse and sexual health are readily provided. Parents say they are now more confident to speak to their children on these issues and the conception rate for the youngest teenagers has fallen.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Senior management, supported by the local authority and children’s centre committee have high aspirations for the centre and a shared vision of how these will be achieved. Governance and accountability arrangements are clear and the work of staff is monitored on a regular basis. The day-to-day management of the centre is undertaken by an experienced centre manager. Staff are highly committed, work well together and feel supported. Parents share their views through the Parents' Forum and have an impact on how to improve services. However, fewer opportunities are available for parents and partners to become involved in the governance of the centre.

Senior leaders have a clear understanding of local need and the development plan is linked to meeting the needs of target groups in the most deprived areas. However, not all targets in the development plan are sufficiently challenging. Courses are evaluated on a regular basis following completion. However, systems to track progress over time are not as well embedded. Most partners have a good understanding of their role in supporting the centre.

The centre provides good value for money. The centre prides itself on providing a safe and welcoming environment. This is enhanced with paintings by a local artist prominently displayed throughout the centre. The quality of resources is good. Services within the centre are used well and engage the majority of families from target groups. The centre ensures premises are effectively used and the duplication of any service is avoided.

The inclusion of children and their families is central to the centre’s vision. The large majority of minority ethnic groups and teenage parents are now accessing services. Families who speak English as an additional language are supported well by centre staff. A gap in provision to support the emotional needs of families who have babies in the neonatal intensive care has been closed due to the success of the family and baby support project. Early identification and intervention has ensured specialist support is in place for disabled children and those with special educational needs. The centre has worked very well with families from the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller community and several of their children have accessed childcare provision.

Highly effective safeguarding policies and procedures are in place to safeguard children and families. Staff attend regular training in child protection and robust vetting procedures are in

place. All staff and partners are fully aware of safeguarding issues. Parents have a clear understanding of their role in protecting children. A wide range of resources are accessible to support those parents and children who may not be able to communicate as effectively as others.

Relationships with all key partners are extremely well established. The Housing Estates managers provide the 'eyes and ears' for the centre as they meet with families on a daily basis. Close working with other centres and the private, voluntary and independent sector are well managed. Excellent links with other local schools are in place. Weekly visits by centre staff to meet parents on school playgrounds have had a very positive impact on families and children. The centre is currently promoting the 'Best Start' initiative. This demonstrates how by working together home and school can make a difference. Very good links have been established with the Polish community. Parents share their views after every course and feel they are listened to. As a result, there is a high level of satisfaction with the services provided by the centre.

These are the grades for leadership and management:

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
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	1
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.	2

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

Inspectors considered the previous inspection report for Westgate Primary School. The childcare inspection report for Nippers Nursery was also considered.

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. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the Westgate Children's Centre on 24 - 25 January 2013. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank those of you who helped with our work. You expressed your views clearly and they were helpful to us.

We visited some activities, looked at the centre's plans and documents and talked with a number of you. We found the centre is a safe and welcoming environment where you feel confident to call into at any time to talk to staff and other parents. Safeguarding children is a priority of the centre. The centre is very good at making sure it works with families who need the most help and support.

The centre provides you with a wide range of activities and is good at encouraging more of you to use its services. You told us how much you enjoyed the 'Empowering Parents' course and how it has given you more confidence to make better decisions in your lives.

We were pleased to find that more of you are choosing to breastfeed your babies and that there is a focus on helping you understand the importance of healthy eating. Your children receive good quality learning experiences when they visit the crèche. You are developing your parenting skills and as a result, are enabling your children to feel secure and make the best progress they can. We were pleased to hear how some of you enjoy being a parent representative and support other parents in the groups. We hope this continues to grow. We also found that training and adult learning opportunities are very well promoted and many of you have been successful in becoming volunteers and in some cases gaining employment.

The care, guidance and support offered by staff and other agencies they work with are a real strength of the centre. Staff are enthusiastic and committed to improving outcomes for you and your families. You told us you found that support extremely helpful particularly if you are going through difficult times.

We were pleased to hear about the strong and active parents' forum and how it supports the work of the centre. We have asked the centre to look at how more of you along with other partners can become more involved in decision-making and hope if this opportunity arises you take this offer up.

Managers and staff are clearly and accurately focused on priorities within the area and performance has improved. However, not all targets are sufficiently ambitious or easily measured and we have asked the centre to look at this. We have also asked the centre to consider how they can access more information especially when you have completed training courses and activities in order to ensure it has been a worthwhile experience for you and has continued to make a difference in improving your lives. You may be able to help with this.

Thank you once again for your time. We wish you all the very best for the future.

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