

Inspection report for Miles Platting and Ancoats Children's Centre

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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Miles Platting and Ancoats Children's Centre EY373479

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

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

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

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

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

The inspectors held meetings with staff including senior leaders, parents, grandparents, representatives from the local authority and partner agencies.

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

Information about the centre

Miles Platting and Ancoats Children's Centre is a phase two centre, commissioned to Family Action by Manchester local authority. Located in Miles Platting, central Manchester, the centre was designated in 2008 and operates from purpose-built buildings on the site of Parkview Community Primary School. Following a significant restructure within Family Action, the operations manager is now acting as centre manager and has been re-located from another service within the organisation. Strategic management of the centre is undertaken by Family Action alongside a newly formed advisory board. The centre has an on-site crèche which provides sessional care for 48 children. This setting was inspected separately and the report of the inspection can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

The two wards and five super output areas that the centre serves are among some of the most deprived nationally, with four out of the five being in 5% of the most deprived areas nationally. There are 582 children aged under five years in the centre's reach area. Of the 77% of children registered, 80% access the centre's services. Of the reach area, 50% of children under the age of five live in households dependent on workless benefits, with many other households claiming a range of tax credits. The vast majority of families in the area are of White British heritage, with the remainder from minority ethnic groups which are mainly Chinese and Black African.

The centre provides an appropriate range of services to meet its core purpose and includes specialist speech and language support; health and mental health services; housing advice; financial advice and support; and targeted support for families with circumstances that make them vulnerable. Children's levels of skills on entry to early years provision are generally at those expected for their age.

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

Miles Platting and Ancoats Children's Centre is a satisfactory centre that provides a suitable range of activities to the local families that access its services. The centre has overcome a number of difficulties in recent times and, following a complete restructure, is now beginning to develop stronger and more productive relationships with partner agencies. However, there is limited involvement of partners and parents in decision making, such as through the newly implemented advisory board and parents' forum, in order to improve the quality of the services being offered.

Safeguarding is given high priority and staff work closely together and with partners to ensure that children, parents and all users of the centre are kept safe. Safeguarding training for staff through Family Action is comprehensive and is supported by rigorous policies and procedures. Parents are very positive about the centre, with one stating: 'I couldn't live without them, they're always here when you need them.' Parents appreciate the care, guidance and support that are provided by the centre and its range of partners. Families that have been identified as having the greatest need have been targeted, and resources deployed to support them are used appropriately. The centre has 77% of families registered with them, with 80% engaging in its services.

From average starting points, children's skills at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage are at a level above what is expected, particularly for communication and language and personal and social development. Although improving, due to insufficient tracking of progress and attainment and previously poor links with schools in the locality, inspectors are unable to judge if the centre has any impact on this. The centre has recently reviewed services that are delivered. These are reflected in the activities that are currently on offer. Families develop knowledge, skills and confidence through activities that are offered, such as 'Parent survival skills', 'Let's do lunch' and 'Stay and Play' sessions. Attendance at

sessions, however, is often low. There are limited opportunities for parents to access adult learning opportunities, particularly in literacy and numeracy, to improve their social and economic well-being. Children and their families achieve satisfactory outcomes.

Day-to-day running of the centre is now well managed. However, a number of issues remaining from previous management have not yet been fully addressed. The centre recognises that data are not being utilised to their full potential to judge the impact that is being made or to set future targets for improvement. Data are not used effectively to inform self-evaluation or measure progress against targets within the development plan. The local authority is now very closely involved with the centre. It supports the centre well, through monitoring processes, to make improvements. The centre's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the involvement of parents and partners in decision making to ensure that provision meets the needs of centre users.
- Utilise data more effectively to:
 - analyse and evaluate effectiveness of the provision to inform target-setting
 - inform self-evaluation and development plans in order to measure progress.
- Increase adult learning opportunities, particularly in literacy and numeracy, to support parents in developing the skills to improve social and economic well-being.
- Improve partnerships with schools to ensure children enjoy and achieve by:
 - rigorously tracking progress and attainment of children to evidence impact at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and to identify and support children and families whose circumstances make them vulnerable
 - using information to measure impact and shape services and support.

How good are outcomes for families?	3
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Outcomes for families are satisfactory overall. The new management team have reviewed the services offered and although they have made many positive changes, it is too soon to measure the full impact. Families enjoy the time they spend at the centre and appreciate the opportunities provided, such as the volunteering programme which helps them into work and further education. However, only a small number of parents have accessed this course. Healthy outcomes are promoted through courses such as 'Let's do lunch', 'Baby massage and yoga' and through the provision of healthy foods during snack times on courses and in

the crèche. These initiatives help families understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and boost parents' confidence and self-esteem. Activities around healthy living are a key priority for the centre as rates of childhood obesity are high at 24%, compared to the national average of 9.5%. Due to restructuring, a number of health services no longer operate from the centre. The centre is addressing this through the promotion of breastfeeding and has trained volunteers and staff in supporting this. However, this has not yet been fully implemented. Rates for breastfeeding at initiation are 69%, but drop to 37% for sustained breastfeeding at six-to-eight weeks. Health professionals such as mental health support workers and community midwives deliver clinics from specialist treatment rooms in the centre to ensure that families receive healthcare support when needed.

Views of parents are expressed through written evaluations at the end of each course. However, these are only just beginning to be routinely analysed to measure impact on provision. Parents are represented on the newly formed advisory board and parents' forum but the inaugural meeting of the advisory board has only recently been held. As a result, the level of involvement of parents in decision making at the centre is currently limited.

Families enjoy the time that they spend at the centre and are able to identify the benefits it has in their lives. They have undertaken do-it-yourself courses in tiling, with one parent soon to use these skills by undertaking tiling in the home. Parents attend courses, such as 'Work club' to support their social and economic well-being. However, there are limited opportunities for them to undertake adult education courses, particularly in literacy and numeracy, to develop these skills further to support them into work. For example, parents attend 'Work club' to develop skills for employment but may not have the literacy skills to complete an application form.

Children's skills at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage are above the national average. However, there is no evidence to support the work of the centre in achieving this, due to the lack of tracking of progress and attainment. Although relationships are improving with local schools, one headteacher felt that work under the previous management at the centre had not had any impact on outcomes for children attending the school. Inspectors were unable to judge the impact due to lack of analysed data.

The centre is safe and secure and risk assessments are regularly undertaken to maintain the safety of families. Families feel safe at the centre and regularly ask for help and support. Effective working with the local authority and with Family Action service teams ensures that families with circumstances that make them vulnerable are supported well. Effective engagement with partners, such as the Early Intervention Team, Self Help Services and the Children and Parents Service means that the number of children subject to a child protection plan is low. Good use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and targeted support mean that the number of children subject to a child protection plan has decreased by 75% since the new manager has been in post.

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	3
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	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?	3
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Under the new staffing structure of the centre, staff are now aware of the needs of families, including those in target groups. As a result, the number of families registering and engaging with centre services at the centre has increased. There is an appropriate range of targeted and universal services that are now tracked and evaluated through the priority development plan. Previous services did not fully meet the core purpose but this issue has now been successfully addressed. Courses, such as 'Parenting survival', are well received, with one parent commenting: 'I was at breaking point before the course, now it's like it has never happened. It shows how to play with your child and learning through play.' Parents enjoy engaging with their children in activities, such as 'Stay and Play'. However, there is a lack of focus on adult education programmes, particularly in basic skills, for parents.

Strategies to support families in times of crisis are good. Effective partnership working ensures that issues are dealt with in a timely manner. This can include referral to Self Help Services, the speech and language team, the Early Intervention Team and the Children and Parents Service. This results in positive outcomes for parents, increased confidence in parenting skills and a reduction in the need for higher-level formal interventions.

Care, guidance and support provided by the centre are satisfactory and steadily improving. Outreach services meet the needs of families requiring high levels of support. However, due to staffing changes, the outreach worker is very new in post and is still in her induction period. She is aware of her own role and responsibilities and knows the children and families well, as she has moved from a different role within the centre. Most groups are well supported by the centre, although fewer fathers are represented. Participation and attendance rates vary across activities with some very low attendances, such as 'Let's do

lunch' during the inspection visit.

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	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.	3

How effective are the leadership and management?	3
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The last nine months have seen many changes to the centre, including a new operations manager, childcare coordinator, outreach worker and many of the crèche staff. The new structure is now becoming more firmly embedded and leadership and management are more transparent. Staff now have a clearer understanding of their own roles and responsibilities and participate in newly established supervision sessions.

Core priorities have now been set for improvement, with all staff being committed to meeting these targets. Local authority managers are supportive and have observed a transformation from a dull, dirty and underperforming centre to a newly invigorated one that is meeting the needs of the local community. The wide range of partners working with the centre ensures that the full core purpose is met; however, these partners are not yet fully involved in decision-making processes. For example, partnerships with schools are not yet fully formed to ensure that there are smooth transitions between the centre and schools, using available progress and tracking data. Moreover, this information is not used to evidence the impact of the centre on outcomes in order to shape services. Although partners and parents are represented on the advisory board, this is newly formed and not yet fully functional.

Centre managers are aware of the need to utilise data, which they have started to analyse more effectively. However, it is too soon to measure the full impact of this on services. Self-evaluation is accurately graded but is mainly descriptive; it makes too little use of data to measure progress through development plans and to set targets for future improvement. Resources are adequately deployed and are prioritised to ensure that all users, particularly families with circumstances that make them vulnerable, have satisfactory outcomes. The centre, therefore, provides satisfactory value for money.

The centre is generally inclusive. Equality and diversity are promoted through resources within the centre and there is equal access for all groups. Specialist services are provided for target groups, such as disabled children and those with special educational needs. User engagement is variable. Data are used to track attendances on programmes but do not always follow up on poor retention on courses. Although end-of-course evaluations are

beginning to be analysed, this is a recent development and information is only just beginning to be used to shape services.

Procedures and processes for safeguarding meet legal requirements and are rigorous. The safeguarding policy incorporates local authority and Family Action processes and is highly detailed. All staff have a good understanding regarding the process for referral. All staff are carefully vetted before commencing work at the centre with checks being updated regularly. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) training has been undertaken by all staff and the use of the pre-CAF has seen the number of children subject to a child protection plan decrease dramatically. All staff attend regular training sessions to support professional development needs.

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	3
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures 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	3
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

None.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Miles Platting and Ancoats Children's Centre on 14–15 March 2013. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We would like to thank you for taking time out of your busy lives to meet with us and share the experiences you have of the centre. You have seen many changes since the centre opened in 2008 and some of you have been accessing its services since that time. We thank you for being so open and honest with us; sometimes things have not always gone so well but you think that things are now getting better. We visited some activities and looked at many of the centre's documents. We too can see that things have now started to improve.

You told us that you like the centre because the staff are very friendly and welcoming and that it is a safe place to be. You and your children enjoy the activities and courses, such as 'Parent survival', which have given you hints and tips and you now have better parenting skills as a result. The committed staff team help you through the low points in your lives and services, such as the credit union and self-help skills, help you to get your lives back on track. We have asked the centre to widen its services to include mathematics and English courses to support you into work or further education.

An advisory board and parents' forum have been set up and some of you have attended the first meeting. We have asked the centre to make you more involved in the decision-making process so that the centre offers what you need.

The centre is working very hard to build up relationships with primary schools. This has not always worked very well in the past but is now getting much better. Staff understand what they need to do next. We have asked them to build better partnerships with schools to make sure that they track how well children are making progress and to help to identify children that may need some extra support. In building these relationships, the centre can use the information to make sure that they know how well your children are doing and can change activities and services to ensure children make the best progress that they can. This should then help your children to move smoothly into primary school.

The centre has started to use its information in a much better way, but staff still need to use this information to help them decide which services would be best to run from the centre. Staff monitor the work of the centre – a process called self-evaluation – but they now need to use the information that they have to help them review it more effectively and set more targets to improve what is happening at the centre.

Thank you again for all your help and support during the inspection. We really do appreciate the warm welcome that you gave us and we are very grateful for all your honest views and opinions. We wish you and your families all the very best for the future.

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