

# Ardwick SureStart Children Centre

Wadeson Road, Ardwick, Manchester, M13 9UJ

**Inspection date** 4–5 June 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>Previous inspection:</b>	Not applicable	
Access to services by young children and families		Requires improvement	3
The quality of practice and services		Requires improvement	3
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This is a centre that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- The range of services available for families is too narrow. This limits the impact of the work of the centre on health outcomes such as obesity, and means that opportunities to improve parents' understanding of how to keep their children safe are missed.
- The centre's contribution to improving children's knowledge and skills is limited by low attendance at activities such as Stay and Play. Staff do not track children's progress effectively so they are not able to provide full information about the level of children's skills when they enter early years education.
- Access to services is restricted by a lack of common systems for sharing information between partners and the limited involvement of centre staff in planning support for families.
- Leaders and managers do not always have a clear enough view of the specific needs of local target groups, or do enough to check on the impact of commissioned services.
- Parents are not involved enough in shaping the services offered by the centre and do not have sufficient access to basic skills courses such as in literacy and numeracy.

### This centre has the following strengths:

- The acting manager has quickly gained the confidence of a new staff team and local partners. She has identified where the centre needs to develop and is quickly implementing strategies that are bringing about improvements to the quality and impact of services.
- The appointment of a new Chair to the advisory board is helping members to ask more demanding questions about outcomes for users of the centre.
- Some families have accessed valuable support to help them to improve their lives, especially through the work of the Early Intervention Service.
- Services that support parents' and children's psychological well-being have a positive impact on the way that parents manage their children's behaviour and on their levels of confidence.
- The centre has worked well in partnership with local providers, including the Healthy Ardwick charity, to extend parents' opportunities to improve their spoken English and to develop other skills that will enhance their chances of gaining employment.

**Information about this inspection**

The inspection of this children’s centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the acting manager and substantive head of centre. They spoke to other staff who work in the centre, staff from the childcare provision, representatives from the local authority and the Chair of the advisory board. Conversations took place with staff from partner agencies including those from the Early Intervention Team, the Child and Parent Service (CAPs), Healthy Ardwick (a registered charity) and the adult education service. Telephone conversations were held with other partners including health partners. There were discussions with volunteers and users of the centre and the team looked at parents' evaluations of activities.

The inspectors visited Stay and Play delivered at Ardwick Sports Centre and at The Works, a Manchester University-led initiative that promotes employment services, as well as a Stay and Play session in the centre.

They observed the centre’s work and looked at a range of relevant documentation such as the centre’s analysis of its effectiveness and its development plans.

**Inspection team**

Susan Walsh	Additional Inspector, Lead Inspector
Wendy Pawson	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Ardwick Children's Centre is a phase one centre and operates from Medlock Primary School. It is managed by the local authority and governance is provided by an advisory board. A new Chair was appointed in January. There have been substantial changes to the way services are delivered by children's centres in the local authority, including recent changes to staffing. Bushmoor and Daisy Bank, satellite centres to Ardwick, closed in spring 2013. In April 2013, one full-time and one part-time outreach workers were appointed to replace agency staff. Currently the centre manager is on long-term leave and an acting manager is in place.

The on-site childcare provision is scheduled to close in September 2013. This provision is inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. The inspection report is available on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The centre serves an area with high levels of social and economic deprivation. Parts of the reach area house settled families, while other areas have high levels of privately rented accommodation. Families, including refugees and asylum seekers, are often in transit and quickly move on. There is a wide variety of minority ethnic heritages and a broad range of languages are spoken. Unemployment is above national average with almost half of families dependent on workless benefits. The centre offers access to health services, adult-learning and family support as well as play-based activities from a range of venues. Children generally enter early years provision with skills, knowledge and abilities that are below those expected for their age.

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

- Improve access to services by young children and families by:
  - developing common systems so that partners can share good quality written information about the needs of local children and their families
  - establishing regular meetings where key partners can discuss how support is planned and how outcomes for individual families can be improved
  - making certain that outreach workers from the centre are fully involved in those meetings.
- Improve the range of services available and the impact that they have on the quality of life for local families by:
  - developing more activities that will have a positive impact on health, including childhood obesity
  - enhancing the efforts the centre makes to keep children safe, including improving the way that the centre addresses domestic abuse
  - improving staff awareness of children's skills on entry to Nursery and Reception classes
  - raising attendance rates at activities
  - providing more opportunities for parents to develop their basic literacy and numeracy skills.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management on outcomes for local families by:
  - making more robust checks on the work of commissioned services
  - developing a clear vision for the future including a clearly articulated and well-considered assessment of specific local target groups, such as fathers, isolated families, refugees and asylum seekers, and how to meet their needs better
  - involving parents and families more in developing the centre, including making certain that they are represented on the advisory board.

## Inspection judgements

**Access to services by young children and families**

Requires improvement

- Families are able to access appropriate support because partners promote equality of opportunity through their work to identify the most needy families including refugees, asylum seekers and those dependent on benefits. This work fosters good relations and helps to tackle discrimination.
- Not all agencies use common systems or fully share information and so strategies to encourage participation are variable. Consequently, services are not always targeted as well as they might be or the individual skills of staff fully utilised.
- Most families in the area are registered with the centre and data indicate that the large majority have accessed a service or activity at the centre at least once.
- Since the closure of popular venues and the relocation of activities such as Stay and Play, fewer families attend. Staff are working hard to encourage more families to come along but they have not yet managed to match previous levels of attendance.
- The new centre staff are at an early stage of developing their work with families in their homes. The majority of support is currently provided by partners such as the Early Intervention and Child and Parent services (CAPs). Staff from the various commissioned agencies do not meet regularly enough to discuss families and centre staff are not fully involved in the allocation of cases.
- The uptake of free entitlement to early education is variable. When it is taken up, it has a positive impact on outcomes for children, including improved personal, social, physical and language development.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage progress check at age two takes place in the centre. Children who are in danger of falling behind in their development are helped to access additional support, for example, from the speech and language service.

**The quality of practice and services**

Requires improvement

- Some activities and services offered are of good quality. However, the range of activities offered is narrow and levels of attendance are sometimes low. This restricts the impact of the centre's work on outcomes for children and on reducing inequalities and improving life chances.
- There are classes for pregnant women on site and there is an effective partnership with the speech therapy service. However, even though obesity rates for Reception-aged children are above the national average, overall activities that focus on developing healthy lifestyles are limited.
- Although the work of the Early Intervention Service has a positive impact on some families and improves the quality of their lives, the centre's work on reducing the numbers of children who are at risk of harm has had limited impact. Opportunities to promote safe practices are missed and work on domestic abuse consists mainly of signposting to other providers.
- Stay and Play activities are of good quality and staff work hard to promote the development of children's speech and language. The impact of these sessions is restricted because only small numbers of families currently attend.
- Staff do not effectively track children's progress and so have limited information about the level of skills that children have when they join Nursery and Reception classes. None the less, data show that outcomes for children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage have improved.
- The centre works in partnership with Healthy Ardwick and other local providers, such as The Works. This has ensured opportunities for adults to develop their personal skills, education and employability. The available courses focus well on developing spoken English but there are fewer opportunities for parents who already speak English well to improve their basic skills, including literacy and numeracy.
- The centre is not yet a hub for the local community. A small number of volunteers have been recently trained but they are not all fully involved in supporting activities, building informal networks of support and contributing new ideas.
- Parenting classes are delivered by CAPs and are having a positive impact on parents' ability to manage their children's behaviour. The psychological service that is provided by CAPs is also helping to improve parents' mental health and general well-being.

**The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management**

Requires improvement

- The centre's impact on improving outcomes for local families is too variable. After a period of turbulence, centre leaders are now starting to rebuild the centre's services and the quality of leadership and management is rapidly improving.
- The acting manager has built on the good relationships that were established with partners by the substantive head of centre. This has enabled her to quickly establish good quality contact with partners and ensure that all concerned are confident to make improvements and move forward rapidly.
- In the past, the centre's judgements of its own work were too generous. This was because evidence of the impact of the centre's work, including data, was not used effectively to inform judgements. Robust challenge from the local authority has improved the practice of leaders and managers to use data to evaluate performance.
- The acting manager is clear about where the centre needs to improve and plans are more precisely designed to bring about improvement. However, there is still more to do.
- The centre receives data regularly from the local authority and target groups tend to be at the suggestion of the local authority. Although leaders are aware of local needs and, together with partners and staff, want to improve outcomes for families in the area, their view of local target groups and their vision for future provision for these users are not always sharp enough.
- The centre checks its own work but is not always doing enough to check the impact of commissioned services. These services hold a range of information about how they measure the success of their work but this is not shared with or analysed by centre leaders through a common system. Therefore, leaders cannot always be certain that the use of resources is maximised.
- Centre leaders follow local authority procedures for staff recruitment, vetting and safeguarding, and all staff attend appropriate child protection training. The use of the common assessment framework (CAF) by different partner agencies is variable. Although the centre often has regular contact with looked after children and those identified as being in need, the impact on their quality of life is inconsistent.
- Governance is improving although parents are not represented on the advisory board and their contribution to shaping the centre's performance or delivery is limited. The advisory board has a new Chair who has started to provide confidently an effective level of challenge. The board is aware of data and how staff's performance is being managed. The discussion of the annual conversation shows that board members are well aware of where improvements need to be made in the centre's performance and in reducing any inequalities.

**What inspection judgements mean**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
Grade 1	Outstanding	Practice consistently reflects the highest aspirations for children and their families and as a result inequalities are reducing rapidly and gaps are closing.
Grade 2	Good	Practice enables most children and their families to access good quality services that improve children's well-being and achieve the stated outcomes for families.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	Performance is not as good as it might reasonably be expected to be in one or more key areas.
Grade 4	Inadequate	The needs of children and families in its area are not being met and/or the leaders and managers are not providing sufficient challenge to bring about improvement to the quality of services.

**Children's centre details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	20106
<b>Local authority</b>	Manchester
<b>Inspection number</b>	424306
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority
<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	899
<b>Centre leader</b>	Jayne Haigh
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 273 5387
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