

Willows Park Children's Centre

Calder Avenue, Longridge, Lancashire, PR3 3HJ

Inspection date 3-4 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:		
		Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Good	2
The quality of practice and services		Good	2
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a good centre.

- Effective partnerships with key agencies, parents and family members, early years providers and schools play a major role in the success of this accomplished children's centre.
- Highly qualified and experienced leaders skilfully identify priorities. They consistently look at ways to improve the delivery of services to support and empower those children and families who are viewed to be in greatest need. The centre is making a significant difference to the lives of vulnerable children, teenage and young parents, families living with domestic abuse, families experiencing mental ill-health, and families from the Traveller community.
- Staff employed at the centre are dedicated to improving the lives of children and families. The strong emphasis on the professional development of all staff results in very effective and competent provision of support and early help.
- The large majority of families access a wide range of exciting and well-attended groups, activities and services specifically designed to meet their needs. Children make good and better progress as they attend good quality early years provision. At the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, most children achieve well beyond expectations and above the national average.

It is not outstanding because:

- Leaders are developing the use of management and peer observations to further enhance the performance management and quality assurance programme. However, it is too early to fully assess the impact of the use of these observations on improvements to the quality of services.
- The centre is not able to fully demonstrate impact on outcomes for children who have attended services provided by, or on behalf of, the children's centre, in relation to breastfeeding initiation, and their achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage, including the achievement of children known to be eligible for free school meals.

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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders and managers from the local authority, centre staff, health, education and social care partners, parents, early years practitioners, schools, volunteers and representatives from the advisory board and parents' forum.

The inspectors visited families in their homes with their agreement.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation such as the centre's self-evaluation documentation and development plans.

Inspection team

Deborah Udakis	Her Majesty's Inspector, Lead Inspector
Tara Street	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Willows Park Children's Centre is led and managed by the local authority. Day-to-day management is the responsibility of the centre manager who reports directly to the Integrated Service Manager at the local authority. The centre is supported by an advisory board.

Willow Park Children's Centre is a phase two centre in Longridge in Lancashire. The centre shares its site with the Civic Hall and a local gym. Families living in the area are predominantly White British and there is a growing aging population as the area is a popular retirement location. Approximately 3% of children are of minority ethnic backgrounds. The area is not one of identified disadvantage. Around 20% of children live in households dependent on worklessness benefits. There is a mix of private residential homes and social housing in the area. The population is predominantly stable. Adult literacy and numeracy skills are high among the local population. Most children in the area enter early years provision with skills at or slightly below what is typical for their age.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Improve the monitoring and data analysis of the centre's work to further demonstrate impact on outcomes for children by:
 - working closely with health partners to produce accurate and up-to-date information about breastfeeding take up
 - analysing the impact of the early years provision and services in the reach, on children's achievement at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, including those children known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Make effective use of management and peer observations to further enhance the performance management and quality assurance programme within the centre and to continue to drive up the quality of services and support provided to children and families.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- Parents access a range of good quality learning and development courses to help them prepare for employment. The training provided has a very strong focus on helping parents to develop their confidence and self-esteem. One parent who attended the 'Mind, Body & Future' course said, 'The course has helped me to remember myself as an individual. I noticed a difference in myself and it has helped me to set achievable goals for myself'.
- Leaders use information well to match services to local needs. Membership of the centre continues to increase and the large majority of children and families are accessing services and activities on a regular basis. The centre targets its services and support to the most vulnerable families very well and engagement with those families is particularly good.
- Significant numbers (85%) of three- and four-year-old children access good quality early years provision in the area. There is an increasing number of two-year-old children accessing free entitlement to good quality early education based on the centre's accurate and careful assessment of need. All children receive good support to help them prepare for school.
- The range of services is extensive. The centre serves a very large rural area of approximately 90 square miles. Leaders ensure that services are delivered from various venues across the reach area and, as a result, there is always something for families to do close to their home.
- Home visits managed by outreach workers provide highly personalised support and access to other services. Staff work well with families, developing trusting and constructive relationships to support improving outcomes.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The 'Wonder of Boys' initiative has been highly effective and influential in helping parents to develop their understanding of how best to support boys' learning. As a result, there is positive evidence of improvements in the achievement of boys at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Programmes such as LIPPS, I CAN, and Tatty Bumpkins are supporting all children's good learning in their speech and language development at the centre, at home and in schools.
- At 73%, the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is better than seen nationally. Disabled children and those with special educational needs also make good progress in their learning as a result of their access to good quality provision. The data to show the narrowing of the gap between the least- and most-able children is impressive at 20%. However, the centre is not currently making use of available data at the end of Early Years Foundation Stage to securely measure the impact that services are having on reducing inequalities, for instance for children known to be eligible for free school meals.
- There is a strong emphasis on the promotion of good health from pre-birth to beyond as a result of highly effective collaborative working between the children's centre and health partners. Immunisation rates are high at 96%; incidents of child obesity in Reception have reduced significantly in the last two years, down from 20% to 9%; and, according to health professionals, breastfeeding rates are also high. However, data to support this was limited. Healthy Heroes, Smile 4 Life, oral health promotion, Families and Babies (FAB) support for families with premature babies are just some of the high quality health services provided to families, which support children's and families' good health.
- The 'Best Start' programme, delivered by the centre in partnership with local schools and families, has had considerable success at raising children's attainment and attendance in the early years. The impact of this is beginning to show in the impressive Early Years Foundation Stage profile scores for the area.
- Parents from target groups are well supported to access a wide range of accredited further education and employability opportunities, such as, first-aid training, food hygiene and safeguarding awareness, as well as courses specifically designed to help individuals to develop their employment

readiness and self-confidence. Attendance and participation rates for all courses are good and learners' successes are celebrated with certificates and in written 'learning journeys'.

- Assessment of families with the most needs is accurate, rigorous and based on reliable information. These families receive good quality care and timely early help and support from the centre and its partners, such as, social care or health professionals. Case tracking and case reviews show that the centre and its partners make a significant and positive difference to those families in difficulty. For instance, families in most need are often supported in their own home by centre staff who provide timely help to overcome a range of challenges, including domestic abuse, drugs misuse, mental ill-health or a breakdown in relationships. One parent said of the support she had received, 'I feel I can deal with things better and I am dealing with my own issues rather than everyone else's'.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Leaders and managers have established a very strong partnership and collaborative working with key agencies and other professionals. A health professional commented, 'There is always a positive outcome when you work with the children's centre. I have full trust in the staff and, as a result, children and families are safeguarded effectively'.
- The centre's safeguarding arrangements are very thorough and leaders and staff provide confidence that all children and families are safe and protected in their care. The Common Assessment Framework, Team Around the Child, and Multi-Agency Resource Assessment Committee processes are all well-established in the centre. Centre leaders complete detailed and thorough audits of case files. They monitor the effectiveness and quality of interventions, decisions and record-keeping. As a result, children and families receive consistently good quality early help and continued support.
- Governance arrangements are effective. The advisory board has a firm grasp of what is happening in the centre, including the use of performance management, and knows its current priorities and target groups. Its members are clear about how well the centre is helping to close the gap for children and families, thereby reducing inequalities. The advisory board and parents forum are used very positively to enhance the leadership of the centre.
- Parents play an important role on the board as they influence the work of the centre and help to shape provision. For instance, parents were instrumental in the continued success of the Dads' group when they suggested it was moved to a Saturday morning to support even greater attendance. Parents also highlighted the need for continued support for a long-standing community parents' group which was in danger of closure due to dwindling numbers. With the support of the parents, promotion of the group and encouraging new membership, the group is thriving.
- Relationships among centre users and with staff are extremely positive. The centre's ethos promotes inclusion well, and, as a result, parents from different social and cultural backgrounds feel welcomed and involved in centre life. Survey responses and the regular feedback following sessions provide compelling evidence of the high level of satisfaction centre users have.
- The centre has established a strong track record and is very well respected within the community and by partners and professionals. This is reflected in the good access and high quality services which, together with good leadership, management and governance, clearly demonstrate good capacity to continue to build for further success.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
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 wellbeing 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

Unique reference number	23602
Local authority	Lancashire County Council
Inspection number	427814
Managed by	Lancashire County Council
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	995
Centre leader	Jane Baxter
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Telephone number	01772 786564
Email address	jane.baxter@lancashire.gov.uk

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