

# Charlestown and Lower Kersal and Summerville Children's Centre

St Aidens Grove, Lower Kersal, Salford, Greater Manchester, M7 3TN

**Inspection date** 2–3 April 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b> Previous inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Access to services by young children and families		Good	2
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 centre staff do not always check children's progress closely, or work with local schools to help them find out the difference the centre is making to children's readiness for school.
- Not enough adults access courses which would help improve their parenting skills or job prospects, and centre staff and adult training providers do not track learners' progress from general courses to accredited programmes or towards employment.
- The quality of the centre's early years sessions is not consistently good, or focused enough on helping the parents support their children's learning and development. Assessment is not used effectively to plan the next steps in children's learning.
- The Common Assessment Framework is not used regularly enough to identify needs, and the quality of recording in case files is too variable.
- The local authority does not provide the full range of data the centre leaders need, or help them to analyse this information and use it to evaluate the difference they make. This limits how well leaders, management and governance can show improvements in outcomes or services.
- The advisory board does not contribute to the centre's self-evaluation, the members lack training to support their role, and some are unclear about the purpose of the advisory board.
- Too few parents are meaningfully involved in decision-making about centre services.

### This centre has the following strengths:

- The local authority provides some useful data which helps the centre to know about the families living in their area. This has helped leaders to register most of these families in the area, including most of those in their identified target groups.
- A large majority of the target group families use centre services until their needs are met.
- Most eligible two-year-olds, and almost all three- and four-year-olds take up their funded nursery education places in settings which provide good or better care and education.
- More children enter nursery and reception at a healthy weight than is seen nationally or in Salford.
- Families using centre services are safeguarded adequately and most develop a good understanding of how to support their children's well-being and safety in the home.

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

The inspectors held meetings with the parents who use this centre, the centre manager, local authority representatives and members of the advisory board, as well as with representatives from partner agencies from the early education, health and adult learning sectors.

The inspectors visited the Charlestown and Lower Kersall Children's Centre and the Summerville Centre sites and observed early years sessions for parents and children on both sites.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the self-evaluation form, development planning and data, a sample of case studies and case files, records of how parents' views are taken into account, programme evaluations and a selection of policies and procedures including those linked to safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Linda McLarty, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Bob Busby	Her Majesty's Inspector
Susan Walsh	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Charlestown and Lower Kersal and Summerville Children's Centre (affectionately known as CHALK) merged into one centre in 2011. The centre is a stand-alone phase two centre delivering the full core offer, which is based in Lower Kersal Community Primary School. Summerville Children's Centre, which is now a satellite centre, is approximately two and a half miles away from the main site and is situated within Summerville Primary School.

Governance is provided by the local authority and, during the week of the inspection, the authority launched a consultation about a proposal to close the CHALK as part of on-going budget cuts.

CHALK rents rooms to its linked childcare provider Oaklands Day Nursery. The centre also rents rooms from Lower Kersal Centre, a community group which offers adult learning opportunities and which provides registered childcare through the 'Yoghurt Pots' setting. The childcare settings and the schools on which the centres are based were inspected separately and their inspection reports are available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). Children enter school-based, early years provision in the reach area with skills and capabilities below the levels typically seen in children of their age.

There are approximately 2055 children under four years living within the centre reach area in a community ranked within the 30% most deprived areas nationally. A third of the reach, namely the Whit Lane area and Lower Kersall estate, are within the top 3% of deprivation. The centre offers child development and education sessions, adult learning opportunities, parenting courses, childcare and family services, with health services delivered from the Willow Tree Healthy Living centre, which is adjacent to the main hub at CHALK.

Unemployment across the centre cluster's reach area is 14.6%, and 29.3% of families are in receipt of benefits. The majority of families are of White British heritage with the most prevalent minority groups from the Black African and Eastern European communities. The centre has identified the families that require targeted support as: young mothers and pregnant teenagers; lone parents; children in workless households; minority ethnic families; children and parents with a disability; and refugee asylum seekers.

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

- Enhance the quality and usefulness of the child-development and early-education sessions by improving the assessment of children's learning and progress and use this to:
  - plan the next steps in children's learning
  - work with local schools to establish children's skills on entry to school-based provision in order to enable the centre to demonstrate their contribution to children's readiness for school
  - make better use of the sessions and environment to help parents to enrich their children's learning and development.
  
- Extend the opportunities for more adults to improve their parenting skills and economic stability by:
  - increasing the promotion and participation in parenting programmes and adult learning courses and volunteering opportunities
  - working more closely with adult-education partners to provide clear progression routes onto accredited programmes.
  
- Develop the precision of the centre's early identification of need by:
  - increasing the use of the Common Assessment Framework in order to ensure timely access to the correct level of support
  - improving the quality and consistency of the recording in case files.
  
- Strengthen the leadership, management and governance of the centre by:
  - working with the local authority to improve the collation and analysis of data so that it is easier to use this information to inform the centre's evaluation of outcomes and their development planning
  - providing training for the advisory board to help members understand and fulfil their roles so that they can better hold the leaders to account for the impact of their work
  - increasing the numbers of parents, including those from target groups, who are meaningfully involved in decision-making about the development of services and activities.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

Good

- By contacting families during pregnancy and after childbirth staff have significantly increased registration and engagement in the last year, particularly among their target groups. Of the large majority of families who need the centre's help, most remain in contact with centre services until their needs are met.
- Despite diminishing resources and on-going staff shortages since a restructure in 2011, leaders have worked hard to maintain a good balance of relevant universal and targeted provision. Leaders credit this with increasing the numbers of families regularly using centre services. Leaders prioritise outreach work on families in their target groups or those less likely to use the centre's services.
- The centre leaders and local authority acknowledge that too few adults, including those from target groups, access adult learning courses to promote their literacy and numeracy, as well as other courses which will give them a clear route to accredited qualifications. This is despite making crèche provision available to encourage attendance. Too few adults enter the volunteering programme, or progress from general courses into accredited further education or into employment.
- The centre provides a good range of parenting courses in partnership with the parent team. 'I feel like a better parent' is typical of appreciative comments made by the small numbers who attend and who report improved parenting skills. Although leaders know that take up of the courses is too low, they do not analyse the parents' evaluations of those who do attend to reshape the delivery of these services.
- The centre promotes access to funded nursery education well. Most of the eligible two-year-olds and almost all of the three- and four-year-olds take up their entitlement and all are in settings delivering good or better quality provision.

### The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The leaders have tried hard to maintain a good range of services despite on-going cuts and staff shortages but this has recently impacted upon their ability to sustain outreach work or run some groups such as the parent forum.
- More children in schools in the reach area achieve a good level of development and the achievement gap is narrower than is seen nationally. However, it is difficult for the centre to demonstrate how they have contributed to these good outcomes. This is because they do not track and analyse children's progress or liaise with the local schools to identify children's skills on entry to school-based provision.
- Children and their parents enjoy coming to activities but the early years sessions do not consistently focus on helping parents to give their children the key skills they need to start school. In the stronger sessions, for example, 'Little Learners', parents are given useful tips to help them promote their children's language and communication skills. However, in some sessions, staff do not use planning, assessment, the environment or displays effectively to promote children's early learning and development.
- Effective partnerships with a range of health professionals have helped the centre to promote healthy lifestyles for target families. The immunisation rate is good and a higher percentage of children enter Reception year at a healthy weight than is seen nationally.
- The centre is particularly successful at supporting the emotional well-being of parents and children. Parents say that contact with the centre has helped them to overcome social isolation and low-level depression and that attendance at sessions, as well as individual support, has helped them and their children to gain confidence.
- The centre is effectively helping young parents, in partnership with Brook and the local provider of social housing, to access useful advice and guidance, including information about sexual health and substance misuse.
- There is too little use made of the Common Assessment Framework processes and the quality of

recording in case files is variable. Occasionally, case files lack sufficient detail of the initial assessment of need against which progress can be measured. This means the centre cannot show that all families receive the exact help they need, including from more specialist services, in a timely manner.

- The centre works with three adult-education partners and two community venues to offer adult education but too few parents participate. Staff and partners do not sufficiently monitor the outcomes or the progression from adult learning programmes. Consequently, the leaders cannot convincingly demonstrate the impact of this work.

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

Requires improvement

- The local authority and centre leaders have worked exceptionally hard to increase the amount and quality of data they use to find out about the profile of the target groups in the reach area, and to focus their work on engaging with these families. However, the authority acknowledges that it is still not providing the data needed by the centre regularly enough, or in a sufficiently useful format for the leaders to use this information to evaluate their effectiveness, or to set targets for improvement.
- Governance arrangements at every level require improvement. The local authority acknowledges that until last year it has failed to offer robust challenge, or to hold the centre leaders sufficiently to account for the impact of their work. This, and the limited use of data, restricts the extent to which the centre leaders can fully evaluate the difference they are making to outcomes for local people.
- The centre leaders were praised in the latest financial audit for managing their resources very well.
- The business improvement plan is unmanageable, with over 100 target activities, many of which lack success criteria against which progress can be judged. This reflects the manager's keenness to improve every single aspect of the cluster's work. However, the plan does not help the leaders, the authority or the advisory board to measure progress towards most priorities other than registration and engagement.
- The advisory board has a stable and committed membership of partner-agency representatives. However, they are not yet holding one another to account for their contribution to the centre's targets and too few parents participate in the governance of the centre. The board is not involved in the centre's self-evaluation and some members have an incomplete understanding of what an advisory board is for. Some board members have not yet received training to support their roles.
- The centre leaders carry out regular performance-management meetings in which they always check that the staff's well-being and staff's training needs are met well. However, the meetings are not used effectively enough to provide developmental feedback to help staff improve in their work.
- Safeguarding practice is underpinned by good policies and procedures and a well-trained staff team. The variable quality of recording of case files is not compromising the safeguarding of families. The centre works well with partners to reduce the risk of harm to the most vulnerable including those subject to children in need or child protection plans.
- Parents express high levels of satisfaction with services and value the close relationships with staff, but are not involved enough in decision-making about the centre's services and activities through a parents' forum, advisory board or in consultations.

**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 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**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	20631
<b>Local authority</b>	Salford
<b>Inspection number</b>	443637
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority
<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	2055
<b>Centre leader</b>	Joan Parry
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 9212639
<b>Email address</b>	joan.parry@salford.gov.uk



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