

Inspection report for Langworthy and Belvedere Children's Centre

Local authority	Salford
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Reporting inspector	Sarah Drake

Centre leader	Kate Cleminshaw Berry
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	451 Liverpool Street Salford M6 5QQ
Telephone number	0161 212 4480
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	kate.berry@salford.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Lark Hill Community Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	511506 Belvedere Day Nursery
	EY401420 Lark Hill Day Nursery Ltd
	EY416660 Little Explorers Playgroup

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

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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 or telephone conversations with centre staff, the chair of the advisory board, users, volunteers, educational lead teachers, current and past headteachers of the linked primary school, local authority staff, health and other professionals.

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

Information about the centre

Langworthy Children's Centre and Belvedere Children's Centre were originally established as two separate phase one centres in 2007, with a satellite site opening in September 2010. The two centres merged to become one centre in September 2011 due to the local authority's restructuring of its provision. The centre serves the wards of Langworthy, Pendleton, Seedley and Weaste.

Around 1400 children aged under five live in the centre's reach area. Most are of White British heritage. Over recent years there has been an increase in those belonging to a wide range of minority ethnic groups, including refugees and asylum seekers. The area also includes families who belong to the Traveller and Showman Site communities.

Ninety-five per cent of the reach area is identified as among the 30% most deprived areas in the country, with many families identified as living in the 5% most deprived areas. It has the highest overall child poverty rate in the city. Over half of local children aged under five years live in households dependent on workless benefits. The area has a high number of teenage conceptions. Children's skills on entry to early years provision, especially their communication skills, are generally well below those expected for their age.

The centre directly delivers family support and outreach services, stay-and-play sessions, and crèche provision. In partnership with other agencies it delivers childcare provision at three sites, a toy library, adult learning classes including literacy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), health visitor drop-in clinics, baby massage, breastfeeding and young parents groups. The centre also provides specific sessions for families of children with disabilities or additional needs and those who are refugees or seeking asylum.

The centre is managed by the local authority and is led by one children’s centre cluster co-ordinator.

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

1

Main findings

Langworthy and Belvedere is a good children’s centre. Under the inspirational leadership and building on the strengths of the previous separate centres, it is already proving successful in improving outcomes for families in its reach area. Some aspects of its work, particularly the quality of care, guidance and support provided by the centre staff, are outstanding. This empowers centre users to take an exceptionally active role in influencing provision and in volunteering their expertise, for example, as breastmates. ‘If it hadn’t been for the support, friendliness and generosity of the staff I wouldn’t have survived’, is typical of parents’ highly-positive comments about the difference that the centre makes to their lives.

Excellent partnerships with many different agencies and professionals greatly enhance the quality of provision. The range of services offered by the centre is constantly under review to ensure that it meets users’ needs. Families develop a good understanding of how to adopt healthy and safe lifestyles. With the development of consistent practices across most early years providers in the reach area, children’s communication skills are developing rapidly, providing them with a strong foundation on which to build their future learning. However, the sharing of data in relation to aspects such as emergency admissions of children to hospital or the progression of users to employment is still developing. This has an impact on the centre’s ability to demonstrate its effectiveness and to identify those groups it has yet fully to engage.

Tenacious and effective outreach work engages those families who are often more difficult to reach, such as teenage parents or those who speak English as an additional language. The centre's work to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination is good as are its safeguarding procedures. Centre staff work particularly well with other professionals to support families and reduce the numbers of children in the reach area who are subject to a child protection plan. The leadership's track record of bringing about swift, lasting improvements, which are always firmly focussed on improving the lives of local children and families, is greatly respected by families who use the centre, other professionals and all staff members. Self-evaluation is rigorous and on-going. This highly-skilled leadership combined with the high levels of staff morale in the face of significant change, excellent deployment of resources and evidence of improvements already made, for example to the accommodation and range of services, indicate that the centre has excellent capacity to improve further. A wide range of professionals and parents is represented on the advisory board which is at a very early stage of development. As such, it has not yet established strategies through which to hold the centre fully to account as well as offer support.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work closely with other agencies to develop systems through which the centre has timely access to relevant data, particularly related to health and employment outcomes, in order to ensure that gaps in the achievement of different target groups can be closed even more quickly.
- Establish clear systems through which the advisory board can more fully support the centre and hold staff to account.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Families enjoy coming to the centre and greatly appreciate its work, making comments such as, 'I feel as if I have left behind all the bad things that have happened to me. The centre has helped me to move forward.' The centre's work has had a good impact on improving the health outcomes for local families. Parents have responded positively to the provision of affordable lunches for children who attend the linked playgroup, which replace the less healthy packed lunches that were brought from home. Levels of obesity among local children in the Reception Year fell by more than half in the two years up to 2009–10, the most recent year for which figures are available. Instances of dental decay among children have reduced from the high levels recorded in 2001. Rates of breastfeeding have risen over the past two years but they are still below those for the city as a whole. Programmes designed to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies, such as those provided jointly with the local high school, are beginning to have a positive impact. The very swift contact made with pregnant women opens the door to much-appreciated high-quality emotional and

practical support. Immunisation rates for children for the year to April 2011 exceeded the target of 95% in almost every local general practitioner practice.

The centre provides a welcoming, safe environment in which users can relax and enjoy being with their children. They say that they feel confident to talk about their concerns with staff because, 'you're never made to feel that any question is silly.' Centre staff work creatively to counteract reductions in funding for the home safety scheme, for example by conducting risk assessments and giving advice when making home visits so as to improve children's safety at home. Data related to emergency hospital admissions for children and young people have not been readily available but indications are that these rose during 2009–10 and are among the highest in the North West of England. Strong partnership working and good use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) between a range of professionals underpin the painstaking, effective work to safeguard children. Between 2009 and 2011 the number of new CAF cases almost trebled and the percentage of cases closed increased from 21% to 69%.

From 'baby splash' sessions to exploring 'gloop' or making discoveries outdoors, children, parents and carers thoroughly enjoy the available activities. Recent work by centre staff and lead teachers to improve the quality of outdoor learning and children's language development is leading to impressive outcomes. For the past two years, the large majority of children who had benefitted from the two separate centres' linked daycare provision and 'stay-and-play' sessions achieved or exceeded the personal and communication skill levels expected for their age by the end of Reception Year. Centre staff are skilled at helping parents develop their confidence in their own ability to learn. For example, some parents who initially attended 'stay-and-play' sessions have progressed to parenting, literacy and numeracy courses. Almost all parents about whom the centre has information successfully complete the adult learning programmes that they commence.

An atmosphere in which staff show tolerance and respect for everyone whilst clearly demonstrating high expectations of attitudes and behaviour, ensures that families behave well and are empowered to make their contribution. One parent who benefitted from support to breastfeed her child initiated the popular 'breastmates group' which is now run by a combination of volunteers and centre staff. A group of ten volunteers is currently receiving training to help them use their skills in a range of different areas throughout the centre. Users' views, including those of the children, are sought after every activity and have been instrumental in decision-making about changes to the provision necessitated by the merger of the two centres. The parents' and volunteers' forum contributes ideas to the advisory board which, for one of the previous centres, has had a parent as joint chair.

Families appreciate the support offered to help them access benefits and training. Through careful evaluation of their needs, staff help to ease the admission of very young children to childcare and nursery places, enabling their parents to continue to study or enter employment. Some users who were originally encouraged to become volunteers have progressed to employment in local childcare settings. Centre staff have also been successful in introducing members of refugee families to English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses. They have also gained the confidence of those belonging to the Traveller

community so that they now accept visits from health and children’s centre staff on a regular basis. However, data about the training and employment successes of the majority of families in the reach area are not available to centre staff.

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	1
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?

2

From the bingo hall, to the traveller site, to the paediatric accident and emergency unit of the local hospital, centre staff are indefatigable in their outreach work and successful in encouraging families from many parts of the community to sample its provision. Excellent liaison with midwives and health visitors means that staff can inform potential users of the centre’s services at a very early stage. Once parents have agreed to accept contact, staff conduct a home visit and complete a ‘starting points’ document which forms the basis of decisions about the level of support required. Often it is through this initial contact that any additional needs, such as housing problems or issues relating to domestic violence, begin to emerge. This enables staff to support and signpost families to the appropriate services. The centre is flexible in its approach and sensitive to changes within the community. For example, it has recently initiated ‘stay-and-play’ sessions specifically for families whose children show signs of autism and for those who attend a local centre for refugees and asylum seekers. Staff provide good-quality one-to-one parenting support in the home for some parents who have learning difficulties. Over 90%, an impressive proportion, of teenage parents registered with the centre has attended activities, including sessions on healthy cooking and caring for young children. However, due to difficulties in accessing information about the narrowing of the achievement gaps between different groups in the reach area, it is hard for the centre always to identify precisely what their needs are.

All the centre’s provision is carefully planned to reflect the Early Years Foundation Stage best practice. For example, ‘talking tots’ sessions help parents to play games with their children that encourage them to talk and parents use ‘baby massage’ sessions to promote their babies’ emotional well-being as well as introducing early number rhymes. Staff make

good use of the succinct observations of individuals' interests and achievements in sessions, to guide the planning of the following week's activities. Much work is devoted to preparing children for their transition to school. Headteachers and parents confirm that the efforts made by staff are very beneficial and say that, because staff are interested, their work 'does not just stop on transition.'

Building on the 'starting points' information they collect, staff create confidential files which ensure that different agencies' contact with families is co-ordinated and recorded in a timely fashion. Their determination in the face of obstacles has led to, for example, their helping families in crisis such as homelessness or loss of benefits. The provision of a welcoming, secure space for parents to have supervised contact with their children, who are looked after or subject to child protection plans, makes a very strong contribution to the children's well-being. The excellent and sensitive care, guidance and support for families build their confidence and, as one parent said, 'makes me feel that I'm not on my own now.'

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	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

The outstanding overall quality of the centre's leadership and management is the driver that is improving outcomes for local families. Comments such as, 'I am very lucky to work with a co-ordinator who is determined to break down barriers and who strives for perfection and to get things moving', exemplify the respect and mutual support that staff have for each other. Rigorous self-evaluation of the centre's provision, based firmly on the views of its users, identifies areas for improvement and feeds into strategic planning. Centre workers each have areas of expertise, such as working with young parents or with children who have special educational needs. They also take lead responsibility for specific objectives in the business plan. This creates a strong sense of teamwork, uses resources to best advantage and in the words of one staff member, 'means everybody can see where they fit into the whole'. At a centre level, staff have access to regular, high-quality supervision and support but the newness of the advisory board means that arrangements for governance are not yet at a similar level.

The centre is highly proactive in engaging families and widening the uptake of its services, particularly by groups who are likely to be vulnerable such as those new to the country or whose children have additional needs. Centre staff have taken very effective action to support families experiencing bullying and racial harassment in their homes. Engagement in centre activities by, for example, teenage parents, fathers and those who speak English as an additional language is good but there is insufficient data to show how well this is helping

to narrow the achievement gap for different groups. Arrangements to ensure the safeguarding of users, such as staff recruitment procedures and training, and inter-agency working, fully meet requirements and are at the heart of the centre's work. Suitable procedures, such as risk assessments and emergency evacuation practices, support users' health and safety.

Outstanding partnership working between staff, outside agencies and users underpins the centre's success and helps to drive its work forward. For example, the co-ordinator currently sits on a new 'task and finish' group which is developing strategies designed to reduce the high number of accidents involving young children. Work with the local authority 'starting life well' team has led to significant improvements in children's communication skills and, through training for parents, childminders and other early years providers, has created a sustainable basis for further improvement. The health, confidence and participation rates of centre users have improved as have children's skills on entry to and from the Reception Year in school. The very recent merger of the two centres has been implemented extremely smoothly and, despite staffing reductions, is already delivering improved services. The centre provides outstanding value for money.

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 of ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
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	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	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.	1

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

When making their judgements, the inspectors took into account the reports for Belvedere Day Nursery and Little Explorers Playgroup both of which were inspected by Ofsted within the last twelve months.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Langworthy and Belvedere Children's Centre on 06 and 07 October 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank those of you who spoke with us and did not seem to mind us sitting in on some of your sessions. It was good to hear how much you appreciate the difference that the centre staff have made to your families' lives. You helped us to judge that the quality of care, guidance and support that the centre offers you is outstanding. It helps you to feel confident about supporting your children's learning. It also means that many of you are keen to volunteer your help in the centre, for example as breastmates. We were very impressed by how much your ideas contribute to the timing, place and content of sessions.

The activities that staff organise are well-adapted to your different needs. Families who use the centre are developing a good awareness of how to keep safe and healthy. We know that the 'baby splash' sessions are particularly popular, that children's oral health has improved and that levels of obesity among children have reduced over recent years. Congratulations! We also know that children's speaking and listening skills have improved so that they are better equipped to start school than children in your area have been in the past. The centre has less information about, for example, the numbers of local children who have accidents or the achievements of the adults that it supports. For this reason we have asked the centre to work closely with other agencies such as health professionals and Jobcentre Plus to help staff identify areas where they can provide even more support.

Staff go out of their way to welcome newcomers to the centre, particularly to support those who might be feeling especially vulnerable such as those who speak English as an additional language or who are young parents. They work extremely closely with other professionals to make sure that, for example, families in crisis receive well co-ordinated support. It was great to hear you say that, 'you're never made to feel that any question is silly', and that, 'the centre has helped me to move forward.'

You and all the staff told us how efficient and effective the leadership is at organising activities and other professionals to the best advantage of local families and children. We agree with you and have judged that the leadership and management of the centre are outstanding. We are particularly impressed by how smoothly the merger of the two centres has been carried out. It is good that you have representatives on the advisory board so that you can help to guide improvements but it is also important that the board has a system for holding staff to account as well as for offering them support.

We have every confidence that, working together, you and the staff will make sure that your centre goes from strength to strength so that more users can say, as one did, that 'I feel as if I have left behind all the bad things that have happened to me.' We wish you well for the future.

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