

# West Didsbury Sure Start Children's Centre

Fielden Park Campus, The Manchester College Barlow Moor Road, Manchester, M20 2PQ

<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 August 2014
<b>Previous inspection date</b>	Not previously inspected

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b> Previous inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
		Not previously inspected	
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 centre has yet to track effectively which services families are attending or which families are receiving intensive support. This means that it cannot fully demonstrate improved outcomes for the majority of local families and the large majority of those living in the most disadvantaged areas, who engage with activities and access the centre's services.
- The planning of activities and tracking of children's skills and abilities are at a very early stage of development. They are not yet focused sufficiently on capturing children's learning, or planning for their next steps to ensure that all children make the progress of which they are capable.
- Data show that when children start school, a large majority have made good progress from their low starting points. However, this is not as positive for children living in the most disadvantaged communities. The centre has yet to engage fully with schools in these areas and to establish a transition into school programme so that all children get the best start in their education.
- Volunteering opportunities for local users are limited at the centre. The centre does not routinely track the few that are volunteering to see if these experiences are helping them into employment.
- The centre's development plan and self-evaluation system are not sharp enough, or fully focused on what areas need particular attention. As a result, the leadership and management are not improving the centre quickly enough and those in governance are not yet providing sufficient challenge to the centre on its performance.
- While parents access services at the centre and raise informal suggestions and ideas, they have yet to have a meaningful voice in really shaping the direction of the centre's performance.

### This centre has the following strengths:

- Effective collaborative working between the centre and key partners ensures that children with disabilities have access to good support and therapy services.
- Adults living with mental health issues receive very good support from staff and a wide range of agencies that work closely with the centre.

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

- Improve access to services by:
  - tracking which families are accessing services so that the centre is in a stronger position to measure improved outcomes, monitor trends in service usage by different groups of users, and to adapt services accordingly.
- Improve outcomes for families by:
  - improving the quality of observations and planning undertaken of the activities children attend so that the centre can fully demonstrate the progress these children are making
  - strengthening partnerships with local schools to enhance transition arrangements and track children's progress over time in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in the Ladybarn and the back of Pytha Estate areas
  - providing a wider range of volunteering opportunities to help adults to use their current skills, develop new skills and widen experiences to enhance their future employment prospects.
- Improve the quality of leadership, governance and management by:
  - ensuring that self-evaluation fully reflects the centre's achievements and that the development plan sets out clearer targets against which all priorities can be measured
  - increasing the contribution made by parents to the governance of the centre and its future direction.

## 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 senior leaders, members of staff and partner professionals from other agencies. Discussions were held with members of the centre's advisory board, representatives from the local authority and parents. The inspectors visited activities that took place at the centre and at the local health clinic.

They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation, such as the centre's evaluation of its effectiveness and its development planning.

## Inspection team

Janet Stacey, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Jackie Hughes

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

West Didsbury Sure Start Children's Centre is a stand-alone centre situated in the Didsbury area of Manchester. The head of centre is responsible for managing three children's centres. The local authority is responsible for governance of the centre, supported by an advisory board.

The centre offers a range of services which includes family support, early learning activities and parenting programmes. Health services are offered at Burnage clinic, Burnage Children's Centre and Didsbury Park Children's Centre. Linked childcare provision is provided by private and voluntary early years organisations in the local area. These provisions are subject to separate inspection arrangements and reports on their quality are available on the Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Local schools report that a large majority of children in the area enter early years provision with a range of experiences and skills below those typical for their age. The area includes families from a wide range of minority ethnic groups. However, the predominant families are of White British heritage.

There are approximately 849 children under five years of age living in the reach area. The centre is situated in an affluent area of South Manchester. However, there are two areas of disadvantage, Ladybarn and the back of the Pytha Estate, both being within the 30% most deprived communities in the country. Data show that the number of children living in workless households is higher in the Ladybarn area than in the rest of the reach. The centre has identified individuals suffering with mental health problems and children living in workless households as in most need of its support.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- A large majority of families and a very large majority of families living in the most deprived areas access services; this includes expectant parents, families living with mental health issues and those living in workless households.
- While the centre knows the families that need the most support, centre staff do not systematically monitor their attendance at activities or track the impact of these services. As a result, the centre is not in a strong position to demonstrate that its services are helping to improve families' lives and well-being.
- Most three- and four-year-olds access funded nursery places. However, a smaller proportion of two-year-olds take up their entitlement to free early education. The centre is just starting to identify the children that have not yet taken up a place, which is helping to increase numbers. In addition, the centre is in the early stages of putting tracking systems in place to monitor the progress of children that are accessing places. Consequently, it is not yet in a secure position to demonstrate the progress that these children are making so that they are ready for school.
- Health partners are based in three centres that families can access. As a result, health services are visible and accessible, and both ante-natal and post-natal sessions are popular and busy. Health partners share all live-birth data with the centre staff, which contributes to the high levels of registration and early identification of families that need the most support.

**The quality of practice and services**

Requires improvement

- Overall, children from the area achieve well at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, data provided by the authority show large variations in children's achievement by the time they start school, with particular weaknesses in the Ladybarn and back of the Pytha Estate areas. The centre has yet to use this information to plan appropriate services or build links with the schools in these areas. This prevents staff having a good understanding of why some children fall behind, or why the achievement gaps are not narrowing, or how to prevent gaps from emerging.
- Activities such as 'Stay and Play' provide plenty of opportunities for children to explore, be creative and learn independently. However, the planning of activities and tracking of children's skills and development are not yet focused sufficiently on capturing children's learning or planning for their next steps. Consequently, the centre is not yet ensuring that all children are making the progress of which they are capable.
- The balance is good between services that are open to all and those that are specifically for families most in need of help. This is because they are offered across three children's centres that are all within walking distance of each other. As a result, families access a varied range of services that engage both new and existing users, including those who initially may be reluctant to do so.
- The centre is a safe environment and there is good attention to keeping users safe through regular advice and signposting to other agencies. However, the extent to which the activities and opportunities for parents are signposted to meet their needs is not always sufficiently tracked or evaluated. As a result, the centre is not yet in a secure position to demonstrate how it is improving life chances and reducing inequalities.
- Through good partnerships with 'Manchester Adult Education Service' and 'The Old Moat Learning Hub', parents gain useful, transferable skills and knowledge. However, longer-term progress of adults who attend education and training courses and receive benefits advice is not monitored well enough. As a result, the centre is not yet in a position to be able to demonstrate that these services are helping to improve life choices or leading to paid work, particularly for those living in workless households.
- The centre has yet to extend the use of volunteers to bring extra capacity to its work and provide an informal, reassuring presence for families using the centre. As a result, very few local users are in a position to act as good role models to the local community and to contribute unique skills and experience, as well as bringing practical support and advice to those that need it.
- Adults living with depression, isolation or mental health issues receive effective, timely intervention and support. Centre staff work closely with 'Women's Aid' and the 'Children And Parents Service' (CAPs) team to provide specific packages of support that focus on an individual's strengths rather than weaknesses, and work towards the individual's well-being and recovery. As a result, individuals report increasing levels of self-esteem, confidence and positivity.
- Healthy lifestyles are encouraged through the centre's work to promote nutritious diets. As a result, very few children are obese when they start school. The number of women breastfeeding their babies is high, as is the take-up of the immunisation programme. This results in most children getting the healthy start in life that they need.

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

Requires improvement

- The current targets, set out in the centre's development plan, do not have specific measures of success and timeframes in relation to the centre's identified priorities. In addition, the centre is not reflecting suitably on its practices and services. As a result, the centre cannot fully measure its success against set targets, or identify what it needs to do to progress and ensure that all of its resources are being used appropriately. This also means that the advisory body and the local authority are not in a secure enough position to measure fully any improved outcomes or to

challenge the centre's performance robustly.

- Staff are suitably supervised and attend a good range of training courses to develop their existing abilities and learn new skills.
- The centre places great emphasis on inclusion. Support for disabled children is particularly strong. Staff have received bespoke training to help support children with autism, communication and behavioural issues. Staff work closely with 'Rodney House' to obtain toys, equipment adaptations and advice to help these children get the best start in life that they need.
- Information-sharing and referral processes between partners and the centre ensure that the right support is provided swiftly to families. This includes those whose problems have been assessed using the Manchester Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process, or who are subject to a child protection plan. Staff have a good knowledge of families in the local area and show a genuine interest in their welfare. As a result, families speak highly of the support they receive, saying it has transformed their lives, helped to develop their confidence, self-esteem and improved their parenting skills.
- Parents demonstrate good levels of satisfaction with the centre and make their views known, but this tends to be informally through staff attending sessions. Currently, no parents from West Didsbury are members of the advisory board. While parents say that they feel listened to, some say that they do not yet feel that they have a meaningful role in helping to shape services at the centre.

**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**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	23500
<b>Local authority</b>	Manchester
<b>Inspection number</b>	442863
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	849
<b>Centre leader</b>	Margarette Lee-Chapman
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 443 1668
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