

# Carnforth Children's Centre

Kellet Road, Carnforth, Lancaster, Lancashire, LA5 9LS

<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 January 2015
<b>Previous inspection date</b>	Not previously inspected

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
	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.

- As a result of a concerted effort by staff and the effective support of local health teams, most children and families living in the area are known to the centre staff. In addition, a large majority of local families, including those living in the most disadvantaged circumstances and those expecting children, regularly engage in the centre's activities.
- Staff know the community well. They have established strong and productive partnerships with social services. Together, they are committed to developing and delivering preventative services to enable children to live safely within their own home.
- The centre's sharing of useful information about children's progress between schools and early years providers in the area leads to a greater emphasis on preparing children for school. As a result, children's attainment at the end of Reception Year is rising, particularly for the children whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- Good quality leadership, governance and management ensure that the centre runs efficiently and effectively, despite the relatively low budget that it receives. This means that it continually improves, and successfully supports the well-being and life chances of local families.
- The centre manager provides strong leadership; she guides staff sensitively through challenges and change and is always on the lookout for solutions to foster the long-term success of the centre.

### It is not outstanding because:

- Despite having some good tracking procedures, leaders have yet to extend these to fully capture the impact of all of the centre's services. In particular, current tracking does not show the full progress made following the support given to families most in need.
- Not all staff make informative observations of children during their play to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles.
- While the centre's priorities to drive improvement are appropriate, not all contain sufficient information on how these will be measured to demonstrate success.

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

- Develop further the tracking systems to capture which families are accessing services, measure the impact of signposted services and monitor the trends in service usage by different groups.
- Improve the planning and observation systems used in all of the centre's services to track children's progress more consistently.
- Ensure that all of the priorities in the centre's action plans contain measurable targets with clear success criteria.

**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 governing body, representatives from the local authority and parents.

They observed the centre's work, looked at a range of relevant documentation and undertook a joint observation of an activity with the qualified teacher.

**Inspection team**

Janet Stacey, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Philip David Ellwand	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Carnforth Children's Centre is situated in Carnforth, Lancashire. The centre is a stand-alone centre. The local authority is responsible for governance of the centre, supported by an advisory board that represents five children's centres in the locality.

The centre offers a range of services which includes family activities, family support and parenting programmes. Health services are offered at Carnforth clinic and at the 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 their reports are available on the Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Local schools report that, in general, children in the reach area enter early years provision with a range of experiences and skills typical for their age.

There are approximately 695 children under five years of age living in the reach area. Families living in the area are predominantly of White British heritage. The area as a whole is fairly affluent. However, some children live in one of the most deprived areas in Lancaster; within this area, 18.4% of children live in workless households. The centre has identified lone parents in need of specific assistance, children living in workless households and children living in the most deprived areas as those who need the most support.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

Good

- Most families are known to the centre staff. This is in part due to determined staff seeking every opportunity to inform parents about the range of activities at the centre. Centre staff are motivated to increase the number of families that access services. At present, a large majority of all families, including those that live in more deprived areas, lone parents who need specific support and unemployed adults, have regular, meaningful contact with the centre through attending activities or through targeted support at home.
- Receipt of live birth data and good collaboration with midwives and health visitors keep the centre fully informed about the new babies born each month. In addition, the recent move to hold both antenatal and post-natal clinics weekly at the centre has enabled more families, including those expecting children, to understand what staff are able to offer in terms of additional support. This move has also contributed significantly to the rising number of families choosing to register at the centre.
- Weekly allocation meetings ensure that support for families is well focused. As a result, a thorough assessment of needs takes place and the right staff, with the right skills, work with families to help improve their life chances.
- Most three- and four-year-old children access their funded education place. However, fewer eligible two-year-olds take up their free early years place. The head of centre has already taken steps to find out the reason why these children are not accessing a funded childcare place. Staff have visited all the homes where these children live and have sent them a welcoming letter and followed this up by telephone call. As a result, the take-up is rising.

## The quality of practice and services

Good

- All partners spoken to that work with the centre are full of praise for the cooperation and support they receive from the staff. Parents who receive support are highly appreciative of the way staff have helped them to change their family circumstances for the better. 'The centre is on a journey with us', was a typical comment from a parent.
- The centre works closely with health partners to support the improvement of families' health and well-being. Midwives and health visitors provide a good range of advice and information for new and prospective parents. The 'Breastfeeding Group' is popular and well-attended. As a result, breastfeeding rates at six-to-eight weeks are well above the national average. Groups such as 'Healthy Heroes' help children and their families to make healthier food and activity choices. This has contributed to a decline in the proportion of children starting school obese. However, the centre has yet to track whether these promising results are just as effective for children living in workless households, children of lone parents who need specific support and children living in deprived areas.
- Parents have access to a good range of learning opportunities and retention levels on courses are high. The centre's volunteering programme is starting to gather pace and is helping to provide unemployed adults with opportunities to gain the skills they need to move into employment or education and training. However, their achievements and any further training or employment they go on to are not always tracked by the centre. This means centre leaders cannot measure fully the difference their support has made.
- Effective integrated working with a good range of partners, particularly social services, helps keep children and families safe. Good information sharing, particularly for cases that are being 'stepped down' from social care or referred to them, ensures continuity of care. As a result, the numbers of child protection cases and child in need cases in the area are low.
- Families benefit from good-quality services which are open to all and those specifically for the families identified as most in need of help. Outreach visits in particular are used very effectively to assess each family's needs, offer advice, guidance, learning and development opportunities and agree personalised packages of support. These are improving families' life chances and are helping to reduce inequalities.
- Partnerships with schools, early years providers and childminders are good. The school readiness program, 'WellComm', is used by all early years partners and the centre to identify children who need additional support, particularly to develop their communication and language skills. Good links with the speech and language team and activities such as 'Chatter Play' are helping children to be better prepared for school.
- Planning, observation and assessment of the progress that children make are good in most areas. This applies equally to the learning journeys completed for children receiving targeted support and the tracking of children receiving the two year nursery entitlement. However, this level of tracking is not consistently applied across all services, which include the crèche provision.

## The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- Governance arrangements are effective and contribute to the centre's success and continual improvement. The local authority reviews the centre's performance on a regular basis and keeps a careful check on what is happening and how resources are used. Governance monitors how staff performance is managed and knows how well inequalities and ability gaps are closing for all children and families.
- The advisory board members offer an effective level of challenge and support to the head of centre. They understand the data produced for them and the centre's performance in comparison to the other centres that they oversee.
- The local authority provides the centre with a good range of useful data. However, while the priorities in the centre's action plan to help improve the life chances for families are accurate and appropriate, leaders do not always use the data sufficiently so that they can measure the progress that is being made.

- The head of centre uses regular supervision, training and appraisal effectively to set goals, give constructive feedback and monitor the centre's performance. Staff have an excellent knowledge of the local area and the families who live in the area. They are passionate about their work and have access to a very good range of training opportunities to support their continuous professional development.
- The centre takes all the necessary steps to safeguard children and parents. Many of the courses and displays in the centre place a strong emphasis on safety. Good relationships with health and social services ensure joined-up provision for families in need, especially those with children subject to child protection plans, looked after children and those who have been assessed under the Common Assessment Framework. The Extended Services Coordinator maintains detailed tracking of caseloads. This demonstrates that, in most cases, the intervention and support given have resulted in improved home circumstances and a de-escalation from the highest levels of concern.
- Staff are fully aware of the difficulty for rural families accessing services. As a result, they deliver 'Play At Home' one-to-one support to help reduce inequalities, develop children's learning and educate parents on how to extend play in the home. Transport for some families is provided to ensure that resources are used effectively and help remove barriers to engagement.
- Parents feel free to give their views through the parent representatives on the advisory board or via social media. The Chair of the Advisory Board regularly visits activities to seek parents' views and record their satisfaction relating to the centre's services.

**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>	23164
<b>Local authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	454027
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority
<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	695
<b>Centre leader</b>	Judith Thomas
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01524 727900
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