

Inspection report for Hope Sure Start Children's Centre

Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	362500
Inspection dates	22-23 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Marian Thomas

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Mr Peter Dahlstrom
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Hope School, Kelvin Grove, Marus Bridge, Wigan WN3 6SP
Telephone number	01942 824150
Fax number	01942 230361
Email address	headteacher@admin.hope.wigan.sch.uk

Linked school if applicable	Hope School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Hope Early Years Nursery and Childcare EY322987

The inspection of this Sure Start Children's Centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

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

No. 100024

© Crown copyright 2010



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 visited a range of provision across the centre. They also held meetings with senior managers from the centre, parents, members of the advisory board and a number of partners including Early Years Foundation Stage and childcare partners, health, education and employment professionals. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Hope Centre opened in 2002, initially as an early years excellence centre to support the families of children who attended Hope Special School. It became a phase one children's centre in 2004. The centre provides the full core offer including childcare and early learning, family support, health, and childminder network support. A privately run 14 place baby and toddler unit for children from birth to two years operates out of the centre. It was last inspected in 2008. A community nursery is also based at the centre which provides for up to 50 children at any one time and has 16 full-time assessment placements for children with additional needs. This was inspected as part of the special school inspection in January 2009. The centre operates a wide range of services. A satellite unit is due to open in October 2010 within St James's School, Wigan which is located within an area of high social deprivation. This will be led and managed by current children centre staff and will provide easier access for families living in that area.

Inspection reports for the childcare provisions can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk. Governance is through a federated advisory board with representatives from partner agencies, the voluntary sector and parents. The centre serves a mixed community many of whom experience high levels of social and economic disadvantage, including some who are in the top 20% of the most deprived wards in the country. The vast majority of families are of White British origin and there are few families for whom English is an additional language. Children enter the early years provision with a very

wide range of attainment and many have significant additional needs. In recent years, a number of Eastern European families have moved into the area, but have tended to stay for only short periods of time. Levels of unemployment are high in many parts of the catchment and many of the existing jobs are low paid. Housing within the area is a mixture of social, privately rented and owner occupied.

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 users and the wider community

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

1

Main findings

Hope Children's Centre provides an excellent quality of service for all its users. The centre is exceptionally well led and managed. Evidence of this can be seen in the warm and friendly welcome which centre staff give to all users. As one parent said: 'It's like coming home'. This energetic centre offers an exciting array of activities which meet the needs of all groups most effectively. Its highly inclusive approach ensures that the many drop-in sessions offered are full to capacity with enthusiastic parents and their children. Close links with midwives and health visitors ensure new and prospective mothers benefit from a full range of services which are exceptionally effective in promoting their health and well-being. The centre runs many targeted group sessions including a carers' support group, a Connexions weekly drop-in session and a fathers' group. These groups provide excellent opportunities for social and emotional support and further education. Many centre users came to talk to the inspectors and said how much they enjoyed the activities offered and how exceptionally well the caring staff supported their needs. The inspection team agreed with their views.

The centre makes an excellent contribution to improving the health of families. Centre staff, health care professionals, and nursery staff work very closely to promote health. Family cookery classes, support groups, growing vegetables and swimming sessions with nursery children all help to promote and support a better understanding of healthy lifestyles. As a result, health outcomes are improving strongly from a very low baseline. Children, who attend the day-care and nursery provision, including those with additional needs, make excellent progress and are well prepared for further learning. Parents and children say that they feel very safe in the centre. High priority is given to the promotion of safety and welfare, and excellent safeguarding arrangements are in

place. All staff are subject to suitability checks. Risk assessments are thorough and rigorously undertaken and the site security is excellent. Children are very well behaved and interact confidently with staff and each other. They settle quickly and grow in confidence because their contributions are valued and encouraged by staff. Family relationships are similarly supported. The centre makes an excellent contribution to the economic stability of parents through provision of a wide range of accredited courses including childcare, literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT). The views of centre users are requested regularly and have a direct impact on the type and level of courses offered.

A key strength of the centre is the way in which all partner agencies work together to deliver support and a full range of services. As one parent said: 'It's a one stop shop for life'. Representatives from different agencies including health and social care, who spoke with the inspectors, praised the centre's open and proactive approach. The excellent level of care, guidance and support offered to all families, including those who are hard to reach or facing difficulties, is reflected in comments from parents who felt staff, 'always go the extra mile to help us'. As a result, many families benefit from the full range of provision offered by the centre. Parents of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are exceptionally well supported in all aspects of the provision and are very appreciative of the highly inclusive approach of all staff.

The head of centre and coordinator provide highly effective leadership and vision that puts the needs of the community at the heart of the centre's work. As a result, staff are enthusiastic and committed in the pursuit of these shared goals. Centre leaders and the advisory board have an excellent understanding of the needs of the wider community and of the centre's strengths and areas for development. They deliver high-quality services. Self-evaluation is accurate and takes full account of contributions from users, staff and partners. It is supported by data provided by the local authority. However, further analysis of data pertinent to the centre would help even further inform the centre of its performance. Plans for improvement are well defined and driven by ambitious targets. The success of the centre is demonstrated very well by the improving outcomes in children's health and educational achievement. As a result, the centre has an outstanding capacity to improve further and offers excellent value for money.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Further improve the analysis of data collected by the centre to inform its progress.

How good are outcomes for users?

1

Outcomes for children and families who use the centre are excellent and are continuing to improve at a fast pace. Improving outcomes in health are the result of excellent partnerships between midwives, health visitors and outreach and family support workers. Together, they consistently promote healthy lifestyles in all the family sessions. The wide variety of stay and play sessions make a strong

contribution to both the physical and emotional health of parents and children. One parent told the inspection team: 'Coming here has changed my life, as I no longer feel isolated'. The centre is proactive and innovative in its engagement with many different initiatives including developing a well-used library and internet access point.

Staff are exceptionally supportive of families in need and help to ensure children are safe. Early intervention strategies are highly effective at preventing difficulties escalating. Parents who spoke with inspectors had a good awareness of how to keep their children safe as a result of safety awareness initiatives delivered by centre staff. Children who attend day-care provision and/or stay and play sessions make excellent progress in their learning. Parents' and children's enjoyment is evident through the very high attendance at drop-in activities and the high take-up of places at nursery, and baby and toddlers group. All children are happy and confident in their interactions with adults and each other. Despite the additional needs of many of the children, an increasing number are achieving 78 or more points on the Early Years Foundation Stage profile. Due to an increased emphasis on communication skills through the 'every child a talker' scheme, a significant number of children are now achieving six or more points in communication, language and literacy, and personal, social and emotional development. This ensures children are well prepared when they transfer to school. The high uptake and quality of accredited courses demonstrates the success of the centre's excellent contribution to the economic well-being of its users.

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	1
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	1
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	1

How good is the provision?

1

The exceptional effectiveness of the centre's approach to care, guidance and support is clearly demonstrated in the high uptake by users from the more economically challenged areas of their catchment. Strong links with the centre's link health visitor ensure that hard to reach families are identified and supported. The centre's link worker provides an excellent outreach service which is proactive in taking services to groups who are hard to reach and known to be vulnerable. For example, centre staff

deliver baby massage sessions in individual family homes.

Centre staff have an exceptionally sensitive approach to assessing the needs of parents and carers and ensure that the services needed to support them are provided. An individual approach is the key to many of the centre's successes. One user explained that she is no longer on benefits and works in a school thanks to the direct support of centre staff who tailored a course to meet her needs.

ICT, basic skills, and working with children are just some of the many accredited courses running at the centre. These, combined with close links with both Connexions and Job Centre Plus services help users and parents to maximise their skills and help them to improve their employment prospects whatever their level of need. A café is run in the centre once a week, staffed by students from the special school on the site. As a result of this experience, some of the students have obtained employment in the catering industry.

Because many children already have identified additional needs, staff do not often play a leading role in implementing the common assessment framework (CAF). However, where this has been the case, excellent engagement with partner agencies and parents is documented. A highly effective child protection plan is in place, which ensures centre staff work closely with social services and the child protection team. The centre provides an excellent resource for these services and for families in crisis. The centre has exceptionally strong links with the school on-site. Staff from both units work closely together to ensure assessment is used most effectively to record children's progress and to inform teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Childminders are very appreciative of the excellent support they receive in assessing children's learning and development through the well-organised network. These strengths mean that the centre promotes the learning and personal development of all children very effectively. Parents praise the centre's stay and play and family activities highly. Bedtime reading sessions are particularly popular with dads who feel this fun activity helps them to strengthen relationships with their babies and children.

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	1
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

The visionary leadership of the centre's management team is moving the centre on

and is providing excellent outcomes for users. Leaders have very high expectations for the community and this aspiration is at the heart of the centre's work. The advisory board and staff work closely together and are motivated and proactive in taking services out to hard to reach and vulnerable families within the community. The recently restructured advisory board has excellent representation from partner agencies and parents. They have an excellent understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for improvement and are constantly looking for ways of improving the centre's role within the community. Ambitious future targets have been set, based on excellent self-evaluation, data analysis and input from staff and users. This has resulted in high-quality action planning supported by excellent partnership working.

The inspection team spoke with representatives from a range of agencies, all of whom spoke very highly of the centre's open approach to working in partnership for the benefit of the community. There are active partnerships with health professionals, social care and the children's disability team, local schools, early years settings, Connexions service, the local college and the police. The strength of these relationships secures the health, safety and achievement of families and children very well. Families of children with special educational needs are supported particularly well through outstanding links between the on-site special school and the centre staff.

Excellent safeguarding arrangements are supported by the strength of communication and collaboration between agencies to ensure children are safeguarded at all times. Staff checks, vetting and recruitment processes meet and exceed current guidelines and staff have up-to-date training in safeguarding, child protection and first aid.

The centre is highly inclusive and promotes equality and celebrates diversity to an excellent standard. Staff are very sensitive to the needs of those who use its services. There is a high level of registration from all groups. The centre is a highly cohesive community where positive relationships flourish. The key groups including families of children with special educational needs/and or disabilities receive excellent support which is tailored to their needs and delivered through strong partnership working.

The local authority very effectively supports the centre's self-evaluation and action planning by providing a comprehensive data set based on national indicators and local data. The centre's leadership and management recognise that further analysis of data specific to the centre will benefit future planning and organisation.

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	1
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider	1

community	
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	1
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	1
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community 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

Information from the most recent Ofsted inspections of Hope Special School and the baby and toddlers unit have been taken into account to a limited extent when writing about early years provision and outcomes for children.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected Hope Children's Centre on 22 and 23 September 2010. We judged the centre as outstanding in all aspects.

Thank you for making us feel so welcome during our visit to the centre. During our visit we looked at the centre's plans and documents and talked to the professionals who work with you. Many of you went out of your way to tell us how brilliantly well you feel the centre supports you and your children.

You told us that staff are very friendly, hard working and give you excellent support. We agree with you. We found the centre to be welcoming to all families with lots of different activities for everyone. We really enjoyed joining you in the excellent Jo Jingles sessions. We feel the staff have a high level of expertise and are very good at offering excellent practical and emotional support to families who need it.

The centre does many things especially well. Professionals from the different agencies work exceptionally well together to make sure you receive the right advice and support. Those of you who are facing difficult or complex problems receive excellent support and staff provide excellent care, guidance and support for all centre users. Their highly inclusive approach means that families from different parts of the community are all welcome. The nursery, baby and toddler unit and stay and play sessions provide excellent support for all children including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

We feel the centre makes an excellent contribution to improving families' health and children's educational achievement. It does this through the many stay and play sessions, the nursery, baby and toddlers provision as well as visiting some of you at home. Because of the excellent work of the centre, health outcomes are improving rapidly and children make outstanding progress in their learning and personal development. This means that they are very well prepared for school. You told us that you feel very safe at the centre. This reflects the excellent work the centre does to promote safety and welfare through its safeguarding arrangements.

We were very impressed by the excellent behaviour of the children we met as they confidently explored their learning environment. We were also very impressed by the positive and supportive relationships you have with one another and with your children.

The centre makes an excellent contribution to help improve the economic stability of its users. Some of you that spoke to us told us how much you were gaining from opportunities for further training and work experience. Many of you told us how much you had gained from meeting other parents in similar circumstances through groups and activities at the centre. The centre coordinator provides strong and effective leadership. She is very well supported by the local authority and the advisory board and the head of centre. We feel all staff have high ambitions for everyone in the community and all work exceptionally hard with great enthusiasm. They have a really good understanding of your needs and are constantly striving to improve and make things even better. Because of this, we think they have excellent capacity to bring about further improvements.

We have only asked centre leaders to do one thing:
To improve the way they use local data to take the centre forward.

Thank you very much for your welcome and openness with inspectors. We really enjoyed talking with you and seeing the work of the centre. We wish you every success in the future.

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