

Inspection report for Belmont and Lancashire Hill Children's Centre

Local authority	Stockport
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	106103 All Saints Church of England Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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.

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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.

An inspection of the co-located primary school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on the Ofsted website at www.ofsted.gov.uk

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and one early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with staff and senior leaders, parents and members of the advisory board. They met with a range of partners, observed the centre's work, and looked at relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Belmont and Lancashire Hill Children's Centre is a phase two centre. It opened in March 2008, and was designated in March 2010. The centre is linked to, and located on, the site of All Saints Church of England Primary School, which is situated in the top 30% most deprived areas. The centre provides the full core offer and a range of supporting services, including a crèche, health support, adult courses and workshops.

In addition to the centre, services are also provided at other community venues, such as local church halls, community centre, schools and nurseries. The centre's reach area serves the communities of Heaton Norris, Lancashire Hill and Heaton Chapel, whilst slightly spilling over into Heaton Moor and South Reddish. Heaton Norris and Lancashire Hill are two of the most deprived neighbourhoods in Stockport. The indices of multiple deprivation show one area in particular to be the single most deprived neighbourhood in Stockport; ranked 225th in the country.

Nearby high-rise flats house some families whose circumstances make them more vulnerable and there are high levels of deprivation as well as high levels of crime, anti-social behaviour, mental health illness, teenage pregnancy, and alcohol and drug misuse. Domestic violence and health inequalities are also key issues within the area. This area is

referred to by the centre as a 'priority one' area and 81 families with young children currently live in the area.

The number of families attending schools in the reach area who are known to be eligible for free school meals is high, as is the proportion of children who are living in households dependent on workless benefits.

There are 978 children under the age of five living in the reach area; of these, 467, just over 50%, are registered with the centre and 332 are currently engaged in centre activities. This number is increasing. The centre has 40 children registered from minority ethnic backgrounds and most have an Asian heritage. Currently there are 70 lone parents registered and 58 fathers registered with the centre. The vast majority of families within the area served by the centre are of White British heritage. Children enter early years provision with a range of skills and knowledge well below those typically expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development.

The centre has an advisory board made up of representatives from the local community, professional agencies and parents and the local authority is responsible for governance of the centre.

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

2

Main findings

Belmont and Lancashire Hill Children's Centre is a good centre. All of its features, including the centre's capacity for further improvement, are good. The senior leadership team and centre staff are passionate about improving outcomes for families. There is a clear vision for the centre and effective governance and accountability arrangements have resulted in accurate self-evaluation of provision and outcomes. Staff morale is high; they effectively support each other and show great respect for their leadership team who support and inspire them well. Effective partnership working ensures that services are well integrated and cohesive for many families, thereby ensuring the needs of users are effectively met.

Outcomes for users are good in all areas. Those accessing the centre are kept safe and protected because staff complete detailed risk assessments and there is a high regard for safety at all times, which is effectively shared with families at every opportunity. The centre consistently gives a high priority to safeguarding all children and their families and the very successful care, guidance and support provided enables families to remain safe. Leaders and managers support staff in case supervision to ensure families' needs are closely monitored and reassessed regularly.

There are many successful strategies in place to improve the health and well-being of families. Obesity rates are low and breastfeeding rates are increasing well due to the effective support offered to new mothers and their partners. Healthy eating is actively encouraged by centre staff. As one parent reported, 'I have attended three healthy eating courses and I've change my eating habits beyond recognition, more importantly my family don't even realise they are eating healthy now'. Another described the centre as, 'Somewhere I rediscovered myself'. These comments demonstrate why the centre is held in such high regard by those families accessing services.

The centre offers good support and advice to families in order to improve their economic and social well-being. Staff are particularly effective at improving users' self-confidence and signposting families to advice on benefits and financial management. Good support for parents is offered through well-organised courses; success rates for those who complete courses are high.

The range of provision on offer meets the needs of most families well. The centre's teacher offers good support and guidance to parents, staff and childcare providers in order to continue to improve the quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision within the area.

The centre's leadership and management team evaluates the centre's effectiveness well and is consequently aware of the centre's strengths and weaknesses. Current action plans to address identified weaknesses are not yet clearly linked to the self-evaluation process to enable staff to more rapidly drive improvements for families within the reach area. The impact that the centre has had so far, alongside its ambitious strategies for further development, explain why the centre has good capacity for sustained improvement.

Equality and diversity, as well as safeguarding arrangements are good. Partnership working is strong, increasingly so at a strategic level, where there is a clear desire for closer working arrangements between other partner agencies and the children's centre. Despite this, the details from partner organisations from their first contact with those families hardest-to-engage are not always fully shared with the centre. The centre also finds it difficult to secure regular and appropriate facilities to provide outreach support in the high-rise flats; an area where outreach is essential.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop further the outreach facilities in priority areas where most families whose circumstances have made them hard-to-reach reside.
- Drive improvements further by setting clear targets that arise directly from the self-evaluation process.
- Develop systems to ensure all partner organisations share contact data so that hard-to-reach families can be more readily identified and, therefore, helped.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Most families engage well with the services provided at the centre. Clear advice is given and acted upon by families covering a range of health related matters. Together with health partners, the centre has actively encouraged breastfeeding and data show that the number of mothers sustaining breastfeeding after six weeks has significantly risen from 26.7% to 53% in a year as a result of this support. Families also receive a range of information about healthy eating resulting in childhood obesity dropping to 7.5%, which is low. Centre staff are effective in educating families in how to improve children's safety, sensitively reminding parents of the need to be vigilant at all times. Many displays about safety throughout the centre consistently reinforce the message. As a result, the numbers of children needing accident and emergency services are low.

Children who are subject to a child protection plan are effectively safeguarded through clear protocols and good safeguarding arrangements. All partners working with families are keen to ensure that users need only inform one agency in order to access appropriate services. Staff are well-trained in the use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and discharge their responsibilities well. Senior managers encourage the use of CAF as they see it as an effective tool to acquire greater levels of support for families in crisis. Clear, detailed records are maintained and stored confidentially and diligent senior managers closely monitor all reports. As a result, those families most in need of intervention and support receive appropriate services to best meet their needs and enable them to be more independent.

Good transition arrangements ensure children are well prepared for their next stage of learning and Early Years Foundation Stage Profile point scores demonstrate improvement, particularly in personal, social and emotional development. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children in Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest closed significantly in the most deprived areas and standards raised by over 20%. The centre is ensuring this success is emulated across the reach area. Use of nursery education grant for

three- to four-year-olds for those most in need of intervention and support and in 2011, 93% of places were used; this is an increase of almost 8% from the previous year.

Adults regularly access learning opportunities in order to improve their skills. One explained how she is now enjoying the literacy and numeracy courses, despite not engaging in learning when she was in school. Although Jobcentre Plus is no longer able to offer surgeries at the centre, partnership arrangements remain good with agencies offering job centre services. Previous research by Jobcentre Plus staff and staff from the children's centre appropriately identified that most parents accessing the centre were not ready for employment; the centre, therefore, runs a number of very effective courses aimed at enhancing self-esteem and improving the mental health of parents. For some, this has led to literacy, numeracy and parenting skills being significantly improved as they progress onto higher-level courses run by the centre.

There are good opportunities for users to make a positive contribution. Children behave well and are learning to share and take turns. Families develop strong relationships within the centre and show respect and concern for others. Adults regularly express their views about the centre through activity evaluations and the active parents' forum. Those with low self-esteem and lacking in self-confidence are supported to express their opinions either informally or formally. The active advisory board includes parent representation and offers effective support and challenge to the centre. Many parents report that staff have given them the confidence to engage with centre activities and have helped them to raise their aspirations. One parent reported 'increased confidence' and, as a result, has joined the parents' forum and has expressed an interest in becoming a volunteer at the centre.

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	2
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

The centre provides good quality services. Accurate assessment is used to determine the needs of children and parents within the community. Consequently, the centre knows the community well and successfully meets the needs of users. There are good support systems

in place to help those most in need of support. Effective care and guidance plus good collaborative working with partner agencies, secure a swift and appropriate response to families in times of crisis. Courses run by the centre to enhance self-esteem are particularly effective. Literacy and numeracy courses are very well organised. Participation rates and attendance levels on most courses are good, particularly for those in target groups.

There are many examples of good quality support work, including regular baby clinics, play sessions designed to meet varying needs of children, a rolling training programme for parents, baby massage, a teenage mums' group and a popular fathers' group. All sessions involving children are planned with the Early Years Foundation Stage areas of learning in mind and successfully promote children's learning. All activities, for children and adults alike, are continuously reviewed and changes are implemented in light of families' views and evaluation of their effectiveness. All centre users report they feel valued and respected. Achievement is celebrated well throughout the centre where good use is made of wall space for displays.

Advice and guidance given to all families is good. Parents spoke positively of the skills that they had acquired to enable them to cope with raising their children, as one proud mother said, 'I now think before I act'. Enthusiastic staff work tirelessly to make contact with hard-to-engage families. The centre is fully aware of the difficulties and challenges faced by families within its reach area, including feelings of isolation and issues of domestic abuse. Some innovative work has taken place to engage with families living in the high-rise flats, although this work is hampered by a lack of suitable space in which to run activities.

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.	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Leadership and management are consistently good at all levels. The inclusion of all children and families is prioritised well. Staff ensure that all children and parents, regardless of background, aptitudes or other differences, have equal access to the provision available. The centre meets its statutory duties well; it is fully accessible and has been successful in increasing the engagement of the families of children with disabilities. Consequently, the centre has had improved success in engaging with the community and with families whose circumstances make them hard to reach, although they have not yet secured suitable outreach facilities in the area containing the high-rise flats, where many hard-to-reach families reside. The senior leadership team, together with the local authority ensure the provision and services meet the needs of target groups well and the centre offers good value for money.

Senior leaders have a clear vision, communicate high expectations and ensure that the centre is effective in improving the life chances of all users. Day-to-day management, accountability and strategic leadership arrangements are clear and effective. Supervision arrangements are good and ensure staff are well supported and have clear direction. The advisory board is functioning well, holding the centre to account and challenging the centre to improve further. All staff understand how they contribute to the centre's effectiveness and know that they are accountable to, but also well supported by, managers.

Self-evaluation is accurate. Managers have a good understanding of the strengths in provision and where further improvements can be made. The centre is using innovative strategies to engage effectively with more families in the priority one areas. They are refining the centre's data collection system to enable the centre to become better informed about hard-to-engage families, although they do not always receive information from partner agencies to assist this work. Currently, action planning does not clearly link to self-evaluation and therefore, progress is sometimes not easy to track.

Staff are supported in their work through appropriate training which ensures they have the skills and knowledge to work effectively with target groups. Safeguarding training is effective and enhances staff awareness of safeguarding responsibilities. Staff's good knowledge of the safeguarding procedures means they respond swiftly and confidently to concerns. Increasingly robust procedures and protocols for sharing information about those whose circumstances make them vulnerable ensure that needs are prioritised effectively.

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 in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
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	2
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.	2

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

The recent inspection findings at All Saints Church of England Primary School, URN 106103 were used to inform this inspection.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Belmont and Lancashire Hill Children's Centre on 23 and 24 February 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

As part of the inspection we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's documentation, and talked with a range of children and adults including parents, staff, and partnership workers. We were pleased to speak to some of you about the centre's work and to listen to your views. We really enjoyed talking with you around the centre and in the various activity sessions you were engaged in. You expressed your views very clearly and we appreciated your 'straight talking' in telling us how things really are.

We are pleased to tell you that the centre provides good support to you and your families through the range of good quality activities and services it has on offer. We are pleased that careful attention is given to ensure you and your children stay safe. The way the centre offers you care, guidance and support during times of crisis is particularly effective. We were delighted to hear how you have benefited from coming to the centre, increased your confidence and become involved in the many worthwhile activities available to you.

The centre are also good at helping you increase your knowledge about play and how children learn through the many play activities and parenting sessions. The centre offers a range of good support to new mums to breastfeed their babies and to give them the best start in life. As a result of the support offered, breastfeeding rates are increasing very well. In addition, many of you are gaining confidence when cooking and are using new ideas to ensure your families are benefiting from a healthy diet.

We judged that the centre manager is clearly focussed and enthusiastic about the work of the centre. She is well supported by senior managers from the local authority. Centre staff work very hard to make the centre as good as it can be. Centre staff are effective at finding out what the centre's strengths are and have innovative ideas to improve what they do so more families can benefit from its activities. We have recommended that partner organisations share first contact information with the centre so help for families most in need can be even more effective.

The advisory board acts as an effective critical friend and challenges the centre to do even more. The centre sets challenging targets in order to improve services to you, although not all targets are precise enough for the centre to easily measure its success. We have, therefore, asked the centre to ensure all targets are clearly linked to its self-evaluation process.

It was also good to hear about those of you who have undertaken training to increase your confidence and develop your skills, which may help you secure employment in the future. However, we have asked the centre to improve the suitability of the accommodation it uses in locations, such as the high-rise flats; this should ensure that families in greatest need of support receive it.

Thank you once again for your welcome and your willingness to share your views with us. We can see why the staff enjoy working with you so much and wish you every success in the future.

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