

# Inspection report for Wayfield Children's Centre

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Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	362616
Inspection dates	28-29 September 2010
Reporting inspector	James Henry

Centre governance	The governing body of Wayfield Primary School
Centre leader	Valerie Rose
Date of previous inspection	N/A
Centre address	Wayfield Road Chatham Kent ME5 0HH
Telephone number	01634 843544
Fax number	01634 843544
Email address	office@wayfield.medway.sch.uk

Linked school if applicable	Wayfield Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Blossom Nursery

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

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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 registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

An inspection of the maintained nursery 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 our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with centre leaders, local authority officers, health professionals, Early Years Foundation Stage staff and users of the centre.

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

## Inspection judgements

**Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

## Information about the centre

The management of Wayfield Children's Centre has been delegated by Medway local authority to the governing body of Wayfield Primary School. The centre provides a range of services including: family support; outreach and home visits; community-based health services; and, child care and education. Wayfield Children's Centre serves an area with families mainly from White British backgrounds with high levels of deprivation and crime. The majority of adults in the area are on low income and

there is high level of unemployment compared to the national average. Children enter the pre-school provision with development below that expected for their age.

### **Overall effectiveness**

**The effectiveness of the children’s centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for users and the wider community**

**3**

### **Capacity for sustained improvement**

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

**3**

### **Main findings**

The centre is a friendly and welcoming place with a pleasant environment that parents and carers appreciate and feel safe in. This is due to staff being friendly and supportive as well as having a very professional approach to their different roles. Safeguarding procedures are fully in place and ensure the safety and well-being of children and users of the centre. However, despite concerted efforts by staff and volunteers, the services offered by the centre are not consistently used by the different groups of parents and carers within the area, especially lone parents and the settled Traveller community. Attendance at certain activities is variable and restricts the impact of the centre’s work on improving the social, economic and educational outcomes for some sections of the community. Where parents and carers access activities such as the ‘Parent 2 Parent’ course, they find them not only enjoyable but of real benefit in promoting their self-confidence and developing their parenting skills. Some parents and carers have benefited from adult education courses and, having gained qualifications, are now either employed or volunteers at the centre.

There is good communication between the local authority, service providers and centre staff. The centre manager and Early Years Foundation Stage staff have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the centre. There are sound systems in place to assess users’ needs and provide appropriate provision. Nonetheless, the centre is not successful in informing all potential users about its role in the community and the benefits that users could gain from its services. Therefore the centre, while improving, is satisfactory in its overall effectiveness.

Wayfield Centre is inclusive in its approach to meeting the different needs of users. It has positive links with a local housing project for teenage mothers providing a ‘Step4ward’ life skill course and has successfully run a ‘Me and My Dad’ course for children under five years and their fathers. There is a good focus on reducing inequalities in health, with users being offered opportunities to learn old fashioned recipes. The centre takes opportunities to celebrate cultural diversity as shown by one parent who enthusiastically explained about cooking skills she had gained through the centre and was now intending to share her Caribbean recipes with the group.

The use of data to effectively show the impact that the centre has on the outcomes for users is at an early stage of development. There are some data at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage indicating that the children of parents who access the provision provided through the centre make better progress than children entering school at the normal age. In one case identified, a child made outstanding progress in her academic skills and personal development. However, the consistent monitoring of children's progress as they move to pre-school, nursery and into Reception is not developed well enough to show if the work of the centre has been effective.

While the advisory board has been in place since the centre opened, its role is not fully developed. Due to professional commitments, attendance by different partners is inconsistent and there is a lack of parents and carers on the board. The centre and the local authority are aware of this and have responded by attempting to recruit parents and other representatives of professional partners who could give more time to attending meetings. The governing body of the school receives reports about the work of the centre. However, there is still too much reliance for monitoring and strategic planning resting with the centre leader and manager. The centre's work is not observed directly to ensure consistently good provision and outcomes and provide it with appropriate challenge. Hence value for money is satisfactory. However, the positive leadership shown by the centre manager in identifying and working towards addressing weaknesses shows that the centre has a satisfactory capacity to sustain improvements.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- With local authority support, improve the governance of the centre by strengthening the role of the advisory board to ensure key partners, especially parents, are fully engaged in monitoring and developing the work of the centre.
- Put in place more formal procedures to monitor children's progress through the centre's pre-school provision and beyond to clearly show the impact on the attainment and progress of children using its services.
- Increase the level of parental engagement through establishing sustainable links with hard to reach groups, especially lone parents and the settled Traveller community, to improve the impact of the centre's provision on the well-being of children in the wider community.

## **How good are outcomes for users?**

<b>3</b>
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Evidence from the centre's own evaluations and interviews with health professionals and users show the positive impact that initiatives are having on improving children's and families' health and personal well-being. There were examples of children in the pre-school provision learning about healthy eating and drinking water. One parent told staff that her child, when offered a choice, now regularly chose to drink water rather than fruit squash. Parents and their children feel safe in the centre because of the good relationships and the knowledge that staff will listen to and understand any

parental concerns or difficulties. Parents and carers value the work of health visitors, the family support worker and centre staff in supporting their emotional and social well-being, especially for vulnerable groups in time of crisis. 'I was at my wits end – I don't know what I would have done without them,' was the comment of one parent. While the centre does work hard to reach out to meet the needs of different groups, attendance can be variable and this lessens the impact on improving children's well-being. For example, 37 babies were registered at the first visit to the breast feeding group, 14 came to the check up six to eight weeks later and only two mothers attended the centre's breast feeding group 'Best Start'. Onsite antenatal care enables expectant mothers to learn how to be healthy during pregnancy.

The centre offers a wide range of activities to meet the needs of users. For example, during the inspection, there was a parent and child pottery class, run by the local adult learning service, that was not only being thoroughly enjoyed but also developing and promoting new skills for both parents and children. The evaluations carried out by the centre show that parents and children who use the facilities benefit significantly in developing their self-confidence and personal skills. Links have been established with a centre supporting families in France and visits arranged have broadened parents and children's experiences and raise parental aspirations. While this has impacted significantly on those parents and children involved, the centre continues to face the challenge of engaging other groups within the community that remain hard to reach.

Those parents who use the centre have good opportunities to feedback their opinions about the activities they attend. Their views are valued and acted upon. However, there is limited input by parents in the governance of the centre. In sessions observed, parents from different cultural backgrounds showed respect and tolerance towards each other, developing positive relationships and contributing to cohesion within the community using the centre.

Evidence from the Early Years Foundation Stage showed children with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress given their starting points. Good liaison and intervention strategies by health care professionals such as speech and language therapists ensure children are satisfactorily prepared to access their future education.

The centre has just begun to develop links with partners that can signpost parents to future employment. This is in an early stage of development and has not had any significant impact on widening training opportunities for users and consequently finding appropriate employment.

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in</b>	<b>3</b>

<b>their personal and social development</b>	
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training</b>	<b>3</b>

### **How good is the provision?**

<b>3</b>
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The quality of care for those who use the centre is good. This is because parents feel that staff are approachable and will give guidance, help and advice when necessary. The centre provides a wide range of activities aimed particularly at attempting to improve outcomes for children less than five years old. There is effective signposting for parents to flexible nursery provision allowing them to access further activities that develop their parenting and personal skills. However, the span of users consistently accessing activities provided by the centre is restricted, especially among lone parents and the settled Traveller community, despite the best efforts of staff and volunteers. The centre employs a range of methods to engage users in giving feedback about whether activities meet their needs or could be improved. While this has led to timings being changed and alternative arrangements being put in place, there is still reluctance among certain parents to access the centre.

Centre staff know children and their parents well. Individual children's needs are assessed well and staff are aware of the importance of sharing information within the pre-school in the Children's Centre and with other Early Years settings. A good range of opportunities for developmental play in a positive learning environment enables children to explore and have fun. This effectively promotes the learning, personal development and enjoyment of the children who benefit, either directly or indirectly through improved parenting skills, from the provision provided by the centre.

Effective provision is in place for the networking with other agencies to ensure the safety and welfare of children. Parents state that the quality of individual support is good, sensitively given and available for as long as needed. The range of services within the centre meets the needs of those who use it well, but the outreach activities are not as well developed. This has been partly outside of the control of the centre due to the closure of outreach facilities in a local school. Therefore, the centre's provision support and assessment of users needs are not having a full impact on the wider community it serves.

<b>The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</b>

<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
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<b>How effective are the leadership and management?</b>	<b>3</b>
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Leaders in the centre have a clear focus on creating a caring and supportive environment that provides good quality services that meet the needs of users. The centre manager effectively takes daily responsibility for the centre. She has developed good team work, has the complete confidence of staff, professional partners and, most importantly, the trust of the users of the centre. She has had a significant input into the self-evaluation process that has accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses of the centre. While the centre manager has a clear view of the priorities that need to be addressed in order for the centre to be more effective, not all partners are fully involved in the self-evaluation process. While the local authority and the governing body of the school oversee the work of the centre, systems to robustly challenge and hold the centre to account are lacking, particularly in the role played by the advisory board.

Safeguarding policies and procedures are fully in place with all staff, partners and regular volunteers having had appropriate Criminal Record Bureau and recruitment checks. There is effective communication between the different agencies, supported by staff safeguarding training, to identify and take appropriate action to ensure the physical and emotional well-being of all who use or are involved with the work of the centre. Risk assessments for the different activity areas and any off-site visits are conscientiously carried out and parents report that they value the safe and welcoming environment that the centre provides.

The centre is responsive to the needs of its users and soundly promotes equality and celebrates diversity. This is seen in the activities that the centre organises, such as 'The Grove Group', which is a support group for parents of children with additional needs, and 'Me and My Dad' play sessions promoting positive role models for fathers.

A sound action plan that identifies priorities for improvement in the centre is in place, but it lacks consistent clarity and precision in setting timescales for monitoring progress towards achieving targets. Therefore, taking factors such as the positive leadership and the sound provision and outcomes for users, the centre provides satisfactory value for money.

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</b>

<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>3</b>

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected Wayfield Children's Centre on 28 and 29 September 2010. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Your children's centre is a welcoming and friendly place where the staff are very accessible and professional in their approach. Those of you who use the centre confirmed the good relationships that staff have with each other and parents and their children. This gives you the confidence to seek advice or guidance or attend one of the many activities that the centre runs. However, despite regular efforts by the centre staff and those of you that willingly help, not all parents, who would benefit from the support and help provided, use the centre. So we have asked the centre to find more ways of making contact with them, especially teenage and lone parents.

The centre is good at providing activities that help you and your children know the importance of keeping healthy. For example, running activities such as 'Walk Fit' where parents either by themselves or with children or buggies have the opportunity to meet other people and take some exercise as well. There are also a wide range of health services that help and advise mums both before and after their babies are born.

All the parents who use the centre were very positive about the care and education that their children received. The centre is welcoming and works to include all groups of parents. 'Me and my Dad' is an example of an activity that encourages dads to use the centre. Links with families in France show that different cultures are valued and

celebrated. Most importantly, we found that all the staff are properly checked before they work at the centre and that other arrangements were in place to keep everyone safe. This means that parents and children feel free to enjoy their learning. You told us how much you enjoyed activities such as the 'Parent2Parent' project that allowed you to share advice and concerns about raising young children. It appears that the centre helps children make good progress in their development. However, there is not a systematic way that would help the centre know the difference they are making to children when they move on to school. We have asked all staff involved in the centre and pre-school setting to look at putting in place a system that would carefully track the progress of each child.

The centre manager very effectively runs the daily activities and work of the centre. She has developed a good sense of teamwork among the staff. They are all very committed to improving the services needed to support and help you and your children. The control of the centre is the responsibility of the local authority, who work closely with the governing body of Wayfield School and a local advisory board. The advisory board, made up of the different partners and users of the centre, provides advice and support and checks on the centre's work. We found that not everyone could always attend meetings and that there were not enough parents represented on the advisory board. Therefore, we judged that the advisory board should be doing more to support and hold the centre accountable for its work.

We are grateful for those of you who willingly gave up your time to speak to us. You spoke very positively about the support and guidance given by the centre and we hope that in the future more parents will take the opportunity to benefit from the services they provide.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).