

# Inspection report for Fulbridge Children's Centre

Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	367845
Inspection dates	9–10 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Michael Miller

Centre governance	Family Care
Centre leader	Sue Carroll
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Fulbridge Primary School URN 134461
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	The 'Little Gems Nursery' at Fulbridge Primary School EY321587

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.

## 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 held meetings with parents, carers and other users, staff, outreach and family support workers, health professionals, and representatives of the local authority, the Family Care trust, the centre's Advisory Board and the primary school.

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

## Information about the centre

Fulbridge Children's Centre is a phase two centre which shares a single site with Fulbridge Primary School. It was opened in January 2008, is based in the main school building and shares a common reception area. It comprises two main activity rooms, each with their own outside play area, a consultation room and an office/interview room. Governance is through Family Care, a charitable trust which has worked with local children and their families for approximately 150 years. The trust also runs two other children's centres in the area, one of which was inspected in October 2010. All three centres share a common management and policy structure. There is a joint advisory board for Fulbridge and its partner First Steps children's centres. The Fulbridge centre is open from Monday to Friday throughout the year and is funded through an agreement with the city council. Local childcare is provided by childminders. Private childcare is offered by the primary school's governing body in classrooms in Fulbridge Primary School.

The centre's boundaries extend across two city wards, the North and Park Wards, between which there are some differences in population. Data show the centre serves a reach area where most households fall within the most deprived 30% nationally. North Ward has the highest deprivation levels with households falling within the most deprived 10% to 25%. The proportion of households with dependent children who have no adults working varies from 11% in Park Ward to nearly a

quarter in the North Ward. The percentage of families claiming benefits is above average overall. Data show the starting point for many children in the reach area is lower than the national average. The local population reflects a rich cultural and ethnic mix. This includes sizeable White British, Pakistani, and European heritage groups, as well as families from a mix of other Asian backgrounds. An increasing number of families are European Union (EU) migrants, mainly from Eastern Europe, settled asylum seekers and refugees.

In conjunction with other agencies, the centre provides the full core offer, including targeted services such as early years activities and family play, family support, health and midwife clinics, Jobcentre Plus surgeries and speech and language support. There is access to, and signposting for, adult learning. Activities are organised both at the centre itself and through one of its partner centres, the First Steps Children’s Centre at The Acorn Centre. Due to lack of space at Fulbridge, most staff and workers, including the group’s multi-disciplinary team, are based at The Acorn Centre and shared between the partner children’s centres.

## 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**

**2**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**2**

## Main findings

Fulbridge is a good children’s centre. Its key strength is the way it works with its partners to provide a holistic approach to the services it provides for the children and families in its area. A particular strength is the cooperation between the health professionals and the centre’s family support team. This has led to increasing registrations month by month. Currently, some 70% of the over 1400 children in its area aged 0-5 are registered and have contact with the centre and its workers. The centre has a good reputation for well-directed services which meet the needs of the children and families it serves.

Evidence from case studies shows that families receive well integrated and sensitive support in times of crisis. The centre’s reputation for this in the community helps its workers to gain the confidence of hard to reach families. The proportions of children and families seen reflect closely the percentage of each ethnic group in the area. The centre also works cohesively with the primary school in order to provide a continuity

of well-directed services which help improve the lives not only of those who attend the centre, but also their siblings and entire families. Consequently, the outcomes for users are good. Inclusion is promoted actively and diversity is celebrated well. Centre users commented with appreciation on the ways events are often organised around key festivals or cultural events which are significant to members of the local community. This aids good community cohesion and promotes multicultural understanding effectively in the local area.

Safeguarding is a priority. The centre provides a welcoming environment in which safeguarding procedures are good. Safe recruitment and child protection procedures are thorough and meet statutory requirements. Work with key agencies ensures that children are safeguarded and protected, and their welfare concerns are identified and supported well. Home visits help users to understand the link between safety and risk management; for example the risks for new babies with family pets.

Leadership and management are good. The centre's self-evaluation is accurate and based on secure monitoring, evaluation and accountability procedures. The views of users are sought actively on a day-to-day basis through a multilingual touch-screen survey in the reception area. This encourages interactive feedback by adult and child users. The centre's management makes good use of this survey. Therefore, senior leaders and the advisory board have a clear view of the centre's strengths and areas for development. These are reflected well in its development planning. Active management, a responsive staff and good working relationships with users contribute significantly to the centre's good capacity for sustained improvement.

Recommendations from the Family Care centre concerning the use of data and analysis of trends to adjust its services are being put in place across the group. Fulbridge families have been consulted and given information about the introduction of a new assessment system to classify a family's needs which the centre has been piloting. This is due to be implemented fully in April once the new software has been released to Family Care. The centre's management is clear as to how this is to be used to help target its services, particularly to improve the way the centre meets the needs of children and their families with additional needs and/or disabilities. The pilot work with the new assessment system is also starting to provide the centre with improved background information which is not only helping to improve outcomes but also sharpening the ways the centre can evaluate its impact. However, improving further the effectiveness of the centre in monitoring the full impact of its services and activities is limited by the fact that this assessment system is not yet fully operational. There are good systems of communication between the centre and its users across the local community. The centre is outward looking and this is much appreciated by users.

The centre is not responsible for providing childcare; it is currently working with the local authority to improve the information provided about local childminding services. The centre runs its own 'Project Aurora'; this is effective in helping adults to prepare for their return to the world of work. There are regular monthly visits by representatives from Jobcentre Plus. However, there is currently very limited display

information for this service; the centre is working with Jobcentre Plus to remedy this. Although good information is provided on registration about health services, information about the centre's broader services, provided in its quarterly 'Diary Dates' booklet, is more limited. Complaints and compliments may be passed on, anonymously if necessary, through the touch-screen service. However, signposting for this and the childminding and Jobcentre Plus services are not flagged up sufficiently in the centre's own information booklet.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the monitoring of services and activities across all user groups by implementing fully the new family assessment system which the centre and Family Care have been piloting in order to:
  - establish clearer starting points and background information from which to evaluate more effectively the centre's successes and outcomes
  - enable the centre to meet fully the needs of children and their families with additional needs and/or disabilities
  - underpin the centre's holistic approach to its support for families.
  
- Improve the communication with centre users by:
  - working with the local authority to ensure more prominent signposting of local childminding services, and with Jobcentre Plus to ensure the reinstatement of the signposting display for its services
  - ensuring the inclusion of this information into the centre's quarterly 'Diary Dates' booklet for families, along with information about Family Care's 'Complaints and Compliments' procedures.

## How good are outcomes for users?

<b>2</b>
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In all the sessions observed, participants of all ages were thoroughly enjoying their learning and improving their skills and understanding. During 'Messy Play', children and their mothers were exploring different sensory experiences while making owl shapes and pictures. They settled quickly and soon became engrossed in the activity. Children, their parents, carers and grandparents became fascinated when a visitor brought in some live owls which, under supervision, they were able to stroke and observe first hand. The 'Jabadao' activities are also popular because children enjoy building their strength, coordination and motor skills through movement and play. Such activities contribute well to promoting healthy lifestyles and reducing obesity rates. Parents and carers comment on how the children's centre has made a difference to their lives and their children's development.

Data from the local authority show that overall attainment by children aged five is below average in the reach area. However, since the centre opened, outcomes for five-year-olds have improved, particularly in their social and emotional development. Importantly for the health services the centre provides, children's physical development has also improved. The centre's work with children to promote their use of language has resulted in improvements in their literacy skills overall. Children

behave well and the measure of their disposition and attitudes to learning shows they are now better prepared for full-time education than they were three years ago before the centre opened. The links between the centre and the school are mutually supportive.

Initiatives to promote healthy lifestyles are good. The good work of the family support team and health workers in the local community is reaching adults and children who are made vulnerable by their circumstances. This has led to staff identifying the need for an increased focus on children in the area with additional needs and/or disabilities. Children on a child protection plan, and those supported under the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) are served well. The centre ensures an approach through which the family is at the heart of decisions made about their children. Policies and procedures ensure children’s welfare and safety are at the heart of the centre’s work and thinking. Families have good access to the range of services needed to promote their children’s health and well-being.

Parental involvement is fostered well, including through the advisory board. A number of the early users of the centre have gone on to become volunteers or now undertake part-time work with the centre’s projects. A number of testimonials from users show high levels of appreciation for the support received from the centre during times of family crisis or difficulty. If the centre does not provide a particular service itself, the staff signpost families to the most appropriate channels to support their needs effectively, including access to training and further education.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for users*

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</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>2</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>2</b>

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

<b>2</b>
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The partnership work of the family support team and health visitors is successful in enabling the centre to assess users’ needs well. Consequently, users have confidence that the staff will help them to find the right advice and support. This is because staff are sensitive to individual users’ needs. Outreach teams play a key role in this as a result of the centre’s multi-disciplinary approach. In the last year, there has been a significant increase in the numbers of lone parents, carers and teenage mothers the

centre has been able to reach and support. Families and children at risk are supported particularly well. Migrants, mainly from Asia and Eastern Europe, are helped significantly through English language programmes. There is good access to translation services, including help from users who have benefited themselves from the centre's support. Users point to the effectiveness of the centre's basic English classes, which has helped them in their daily lives. A preventative approach is fostered well through the additional speech and language 'drop-in' sessions where the needs of those who may require additional support may be assessed. Early education programmes for children aged 24 to 36 months enables their development of listening, talking, playing and singing skills, as well as sharing books. Other activities promote children's learning, development and enjoyment well. These include creative sessions, movement and the development of language through books in activities such as 'Messy Play', 'Jabadao' and 'Story Sacks'.

Outreach services meet the needs of the wider community well. Staff have developed a good knowledge of the centre's hard to reach groups. As a result, management has identified that an area to develop further is the centre's services for children and their families with additional needs and/or disabilities. The centre uses its knowledge of its community well to provide a good range of opportunities for improving parenting skills and life chances. 'Parents United' provides a range of popular courses from basic first aid to 'survival' to help new migrants, refugees and asylum seekers to adjust to life in Britain. For example, in a relaxed atmosphere, several mothers and their children attending a parenting session were developing their healthy cooking skills. Healthy eating is also promoted well through 'Love Local', a scheme to promote locally grown food.

Evidence from users shows they thoroughly enjoy the learning provision managed and organised by the centre. 'Project Aurora' has proved successful in helping parents and carers of both genders to prepare for their return to work. All who took part in the first of these courses have now either gained employment, gone into further training or are intending to do so once their babies are old enough. Case studies and testimonials point to the good help users have received from centre staff when dealing with official agencies such as those for taxation or benefits. Simply being able to talk things through with a member of staff has often proved invaluable.

Guidance and support offered to families and individual users on health issues, such as breastfeeding, are good. The 'Healthy Start' programme, for example, is promoted well. The centre supports teenage mothers and their children well. Parents and carers are given good guidance as to how they can contribute to the centre's assessments of their children's development. Where the centre does not have direct responsibility for provision, a variety of leaflets and signposting to services are available, and staff are good at pointing these out or making them available to users.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users</b>	<b>2</b>
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<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

<b>2</b>
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Good leadership and management are reflected in well-established governance and accountability arrangements. Overall strategic planning is good. Staff at all levels operate effectively as a team. An integrated approach ensures effective work across professional boundaries in order to meet users' needs. An ethos of self-evaluation and reflective practice is embedded well at the centre. Day-to-day organisation is good and supported by an efficient and helpful reception staff. The limited accommodation at the centre is used well and resources are used and managed well. Family Care has worked hard to develop a broad range of community representatives on the advisory board. The board members who have professional expertise in education and children's services play a positive role in advice and planning. Non-professionals, including those users on the parents' forum, contribute well with ideas and in decision making, but are still developing a role in planning and evaluation.

Listening to, and taking account of, the views of all users is effective at all levels of leadership and management. This not only ensures good partnerships enabling the centre to engage effectively with its users, but also helps promote community cohesion effectively. There is a shared ambition between the staff and users to continue to build on the successes achieved during the first two full years the centre has been open. This has been an important element in enabling the centre to increase its reach steadily and involve a wide cross-section of its local community. The centre's case-load history shows good levels of success because case workers are asked to account for the difference they make to people's lives. This applies equally to simple actions such as ensuring a family has a table upon which they can share their meals to the impact of their work to support victims of domestic violence (whether male or female). Staff also help new mothers through periods of post-natal depression. Staff have secured the local community's trust. Management is committed to ensuring this good level of service and improve it even further. For example, the new assessment system is aimed at helping the centre to become even more effective in its provision and the promotion of its services, particularly to support children with disabilities and their families. Such approaches have led to the increasing registration rates as the centre not only gives good value for money, but is perceived by its users as doing so.

Good safeguarding arrangements are coordinated well by a nominated officer, who is also Family Care's 'Children's Champion'. This ensures staff receive regular updates to their training, especially in respect of child protection and risk assessments. Good



systems ensure the safety of the staff and users, especially when undertaking home visits. A notable feature of the centre's safeguarding procedures is the good attention paid by reception staff in undertaking and recording the required risk assessments and health and safety checks of both the building and equipment.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</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>2</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>2</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>2</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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>2</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>2</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>2</b>

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

The inspectors looked at the inspection report for 'Little Gems Nursery' in March 2007; the effectiveness of the setting was good. They looked at the October 2008 report for Fulbridge Primary School and its monitoring report of 11 November 2009; while the school's overall effectiveness was satisfactory, the effectiveness of its Early Years Foundation Stage provision was good. They also took account of the inspection reports of one of Fulbridge children's centre's two other partner centres, the Westwood and Ravensthorpe Children's Centre; its effectiveness was also found to be good. All the centres run by Family Care share a common management structure.

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Fulbridge Children's Centre on 9–10 March 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank those of you who took the time to talk with us during our recent visit to your centre. The information you gave us about your experiences, and those of your children and families, was very helpful. All of you, from those who have been using the centre since it first opened, to those who have only just started to use its services, were full of praise for the help and support the staff give you. The centre clearly makes a difference to your lives and has led to important improvements for your families and aided your children's development. We saw that staff work together well to help keep your children and families safe and healthy. We also saw how much your children enjoy coming to the various activities. It was good to see so many of you, from babies to grandparents, male and female, so fascinated by the live owls brought in during 'Tots and Tiny Time' while you were waiting for the child health clinic or midwife appointments.

Your centre is relatively small in size, but the staff help to make good use of the facilities available. We agree with you when you say the centre is a welcoming and safe place. The close links between the centre and the school help your children when they transfer to full-time education as they are already familiar with the surroundings. You told us that the centre has a very good reputation within your local communities because the staff are not only outgoing but approachable, and you feel you can trust them. A good number of you have gone on to become volunteers and become involved in partner community groups such as 'Parents' United'. Many of you benefit from the centre's promotion of healthy lifestyles. Some of you have become cookery leaders: we saw for ourselves how local produce can be cooked in ways to provide a healthy lunch of fish and chips.

You told us how holiday and other events enable you to get together, talk and share experiences about your different lives and cultural backgrounds. You explained how this helps those of different faiths and ethnicities to get to know each other better and promotes community cohesion. The centre's work and courses to enable the learning of English by speakers of other languages is much valued. A number of you have already benefited both from this and 'Project Aurora' which helps those of you seeking employment to get back into the world of work.

You will know from the centre's latest edition of 'Diary Dates' that staff will soon be asking you to help them shape the services they offer by completing a confidential assessment of your needs. We have asked the centre's manager to complete this exercise as soon as possible in order to give staff the information which will help all of them to provide the best service for you and your families. It will also help the centre to improve its support for children who have any additional needs and/or disabilities. We have asked staff to add some additional information in the 'Diary Dates' booklet. This is to give you more information about local childminding services, Jobcentre Plus facilities and Family Care's 'Complaints and Compliments' policy and procedures. Please continue to give your feedback to the centre through

the touch-screen in the reception area. We know the centre manager takes your comments and suggestions very seriously.

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