

# Inspection report for Fenham Children's Centre at Sacred Heart

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Local authority	Newcastle Upon Tyne
Inspection number	383675
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY 286130 Chill Out Time Childcare EY335738 Little Angels at Fenham

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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 Section 3 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an 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 Area Partnership and a number of partners including Early Years Foundation Stage and childcare partners, health, education and children's social care professionals and representatives from Action for Children, Barnardos, the Family Learning Service, Newcastle libraries and Job Centre Plus. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Fenham Children's Centre is located entirely in the Fenham ward to the West of Newcastle upon Tyne. Its reach area covers eight super output areas, one of which falls within the top 10% of deprived wards in the country. The reach population of the centre is just over 796. Recent figures show that just over 19% of households are occupied by lone parents with dependent children. Estimated weekly income is significantly lower than the Newcastle average and the percentage of children aged under four living in households dependent on workless benefits is 27%. The area has a mixed minority ethnic community. This comprises a mix of established second and third generation families as well as more recently arrived economic migrant families. There has been an annual increase in the number of children from minority ethnic families entering reception. School census data for 2011 shows that 36.7% of the cohort are from minority ethnic backgrounds, compared to a Newcastle average of 27.9%. The proportion of children attending schools in the area, known to be eligible for free school meals, is well above the national average, as is the proportion of children aged under four who are living in households where no one is working. Most

children enter childcare and early education with a much narrower range of experiences and skills than that expected for their age. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is above average.

Integrated early childhood services are delivered through five Sure Start areas. Fenham Children’s Centre is part of the central area along with three other centres. The centre is situated in the grounds of Sacred Heart Primary School. It is a purpose built phase one centre which was designated in 2006. There is a further satellite centre at Stocksfield Avenue Primary School which opened in August 2008. The day-to-day management of service delivery at Fenham Children’s Centre is the responsibility of the centre manager employed by Newcastle City Council. The centre hosts a full time day care provision for children from birth to school age, an after school club and a crèche. There is also a dedicated area lead commissioned by Action for Children. Governance arrangements transferred to an Area Partnership in 2010.

## 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

‘The support has been exceptional; I plan my life around the children’s centre activities.’ This is how one parent described the impact Fenham Children’s Centre has had on her life. The unfaltering dedication and commitment of all centre staff has ensured that outcomes for the large majority of families living within this locality have improved greatly, often in the face of the most challenging of circumstances. Multi-agency partnerships are outstanding and provide the foundation stone from which to deliver individualised, integrated support, which is responsive to the diverse needs of the local community.

Provision is outstanding both in relation to the high quality activities delivered within the centre and the outreach work carried out by health professionals and family support staff. The importance the centre gives to reaching out into the community and developing positive relationships with all users has been key to its success. The expertise, knowledge and effective communication demonstrated by all staff within the centre is notable and has

ensured the provision of very effective support and guidance to all families whom they meet. This is reflected in the fact that parents often have the confidence to ask for help and support, increasingly before they reach a point of crisis.

All staff, partners and volunteers are united in their vision to secure improved outcomes for families and this is a strength of the centre. A rigorous cycle of monitoring and evaluation means that the management team remain focussed on improving the quality and impact of the services and activities provided, demonstrating good capacity for improvement. The added value, brought to the service as a whole, by the shared management arrangements with Action for Children is clearly evident. Access to a wealth of information available through the e-start database, combined with the support of the senior information officer, enhances considerably the depth of the centre's self analysis. The senior management team recognises there is scope to utilise this resource even further to enhance the delivery of targeted services particularly in relation to increasing breastfeeding rates in the most deprived wards.

The centre has a genuine inclusive ethos and clear targets have been set to support the most vulnerable families. The positive impact of some of this work is illustrated by the increasing number of young parents who attend the centre's activities as well as the number of families from minority ethnic backgrounds who access adult learning opportunities. Detailed delivery plans highlight good strategies to overcome barriers to participation faced by some families in the locality, particularly those from the most deprived wards, young parents and fathers. Whilst registrations for some of these targeted groups have increased steadily over the past twelve months, the centre is aware it needs to improve further the participation of fathers in centre activities.

Parents have access to a range of opportunities to influence and give feedback on the future development of the centre. However, many have only recently taken an active role in the area partnership. This limits the extent to which they can effectively contribute to the ongoing developments of the centre they represent. The centre is aware of this and has taken steps to address this.

Safeguarding is given the utmost priority, with effective policies and procedures in place to ensure the safety and protection of both families and staff. All staff are confident in their understanding of child protection policies and procedures and are adept at identifying vital signs, referring any concerns quickly and appropriately when necessary. Parents are also very clear about the children's centre's responsibilities in relation to child protection. This, together with exemplary partnership working ensures a seamless and coordinated approach to safeguarding children.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Continue to use available data to enhance further the delivery of targeted services in order to improve outcomes for families, particularly in relation to increasing breastfeeding prevalence rates and the participation of fathers in the reach area.
- Continue action to improve participation to ensure parents are empowered and able to contribute meaningfully to the governance of the centre, including through representation on the Area Partnership

## How good are outcomes for families?

2
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Fenham Children's Centre has effected some genuine changes, improving outcomes for many of its local parents and children. 'It has made me really think about my lifestyle and how I can improve this' stated one parent, whilst others commented on how very differently their life would have turned out if it had not been for the help and support of centre staff.

The conspicuous impact of partnership working on the promotion of children's and families' emotional well-being and their physical health is evident across the work of the centre. This includes the work of centre staff, as well as services commissioned by the centre, for example, through Barnardos, Healthworks and Action for Children. The promotion of breastfeeding has had a positive impact on the number of mothers initiating breastfeeding in the reach area. The coordination of antenatal classes to run alongside breast feeding support groups has provided excellent opportunities for mums-to-be to observe the benefits of breast feeding and to chat to new mums about their experience. However, the centre recognises that more work needs to be done in order to ensure an improvement in the number of mums sustaining breastfeeding beyond six to eight weeks, particularly in the most deprived wards. Young parents are also particularly well supported, both through the family support team and the effective partnership with Barnardo's teenage pregnancy team. The vast majority of young parents have received support through the young parents group, including home visiting which offers a range of preventative and support activities. One young parent told us that 'without the centre I would have had no future. Now I feel I have opportunities ahead of me.' The promotion of healthy lifestyles threads through every activity within the centre, from weaning classes to 'Happy Hippo' stay and play sessions. This is demonstrated by a reduction this year in the percentage of children entering reception who are obese.

The centre's continued focus on the promotion of child safety issues, combined with productive working partnerships with health professionals, the local social housing service and the police and fire services has contributed to a sustained decrease in the numbers of children under five attending the local accident and emergency department. Centre staff and health partners use new birth and development visits to offer practical advice about potential dangers in the home and inform parents on how to minimise these. Parents

receive advice on low cost safety equipment schemes and good use is made of centre activities such as 'baby social' and 'baby massage' to reinforce a good range of safety messages. The centre has been proactive in ensuring that children subject to a child protection plan or the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes are well supported. The area and centre leaders are proactive in ensuring that appropriate information is shared between professionals. This enables family support workers to actively target the most vulnerable families in their community, securing improved outcomes, particularly for those children on child protection plans.

The Sure Start qualified teacher has spent time with all local early years' settings to promote the application of best practice. This has accelerated progress for many young children across all key areas, but particularly in communication, language and literacy and personal and social development. The enthusiasm and dedication of the early years team contribute to the provision of excellent education and learning experiences for all children. Through a detailed analysis of local foundation stage profile data, the qualified teacher has identified areas for development in current practice, particularly in relation to the performance of boys. The success of this is reflected in a 13% improvement in the number of children achieving 78+ points on the foundation stage profile this year, combined with a significant improvement in outcomes for boys. Local head teachers testify to the positive impact of this close working relationship particularly in raising the aspirations of parents locally.

Many parents, including young mums, comment on how their confidence has improved through their participation in the activities offered by the centre. A visit to a baby social session provided compelling evidence of babies and their parents bonding well, whilst mums at the 'Happy Hippos' group enjoyed the opportunity to chat and share concerns and tips about dealing with issues such as feeding or sleep routines. The voice of parents is genuinely heard and respected in this children's centre, a sentiment echoed in the comments of parents we spoke to, all of whom felt they were valued and respected by all centre staff and their partners. However, some local parents have only recently joined the area partnership and the centre recognises there is still work to be done to empower parents to play a full and meaningful role in the governance of the centre.

The centre has helped many parents take the first steps into learning, training and employment. Effective partnership working with family and adult learning has enabled almost 200 parents to progress to formal training programmes. The effective work of the Information and Resources officer, in partnership with Jobcentre Plus and Newcastle Futures, has enabled a majority of parents to access a range of opportunities including work clubs and training. Many parents we spoke to had increased aspirations both for themselves and their children as a result of the support received from the centre and many felt better able to support their children with school work.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	2
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<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	2
<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	2
<b>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</b>	2
<b>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.</b>	2

## How good is the provision?

1
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Everyone involved in the centre is passionate about securing the very best outcomes for families locally. Their in-depth understanding of the issues and challenges facing the community ensures the provision of extremely well targeted support, enabling families to make the best of those opportunities available. The expertise and breadth of knowledge demonstrated by every staff member within the centre is impressive. This is reflected in the high quality support and guidance received by families. One parent described how proactive the family support team had been. 'If they hadn't come to my house I would still be sitting there on my own.' Another explained how the coordination of support she experienced enabled her to take steps to return to employment.

Participation rates in activities are high and continue to improve. This is because the centre makes sure it meets effectively the range of needs and interests of the wider community. A significant amount of work in the past year, targeted at specific groups including teenage parents, fathers and those families from minority ethnic groups, has resulted in a significant improvement in their engagement. However, there is more work required to improve further the engagement of fathers.

The provision of high quality learning experiences is raising both the achievements and aspirations of local parents and children. The nursery has exemplary systems in place to track the progress and achievements of children providing an excellent picture of each child's individual learning journey. This aids their smooth transition into school. By tracking a number of children through to the end of their Reception year the centre has been able to demonstrate the very real impact of its work. Results showed that a significant number of children who had accessed provision at the centre achieved better than expected outcomes in their Foundation Stage Profile results. Training to improve parents' basic literacy and numeracy skills has enabled many to better support their child's learning at home. Head teachers commented positively on the impact of this on parent's confidence and aspirations.

Collaborative actions to improve outcomes for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are excellent. These enable individualised support packages to be put in place at the earliest opportunity. Practitioners engage sensitively with parents to empower them to



make informed decisions, with professionals, about the best care packages for their children.

The centre has taken the initiative in developing highly effective partnerships with Children’s Social Care and receives up to date information about any families known to be ‘at risk’ within the locality. This collaboration has helped to streamline processes. The weekly ‘Supporting Families Pathway’ meetings help ensure the efficient and timely identification and assessment of those children and families who need immediate support. As a result, sensitive, highly individualised and tailored support can be gathered quickly to support children and families identified as being in need.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	2
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	1
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.</b>	1

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

2
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The senior management team, area partnership and partners have a clear focus on improvement with roles and responsibilities clearly set out and understood. The vast majority of partnership members have the capacity to challenge the impact and progress made by the centre against its targets, although the centre recognises the need to empower more parents to play a meaningful role in this respect. There is a coherent link between city-wide strategic priorities and the centre’s action plan. As a result the centre’s priorities link effectively to those of the wider area and to those of their partners. The interface between the centre’s targets and the priorities of Action for Children clearly adds value to the overall effectiveness of the centre. The establishment of specific multi agency steering groups for each of the key outcome areas facilitates an in-depth knowledge and understanding of priorities not just for the locality as a whole, but for the specific work to be undertaken by individual centres. The local authority, through regular meetings and the annual conversation with the area lead and children’s centre manager, effectively and robustly challenges the work of the centre.

The centre is adept at drawing upon its knowledge and understanding of the local community to identify future priorities. This combined with robust data and excellent local intelligence has ensured the provision of high quality and coherent delivery and improvement plans. Key to the centre’s success has been its ethos of ‘working with’ rather than ‘doing to’ its community. This is reflected in the good and improving participation rates in the activities it provides. The views of parents and users are routinely collected through evaluations of individual activities and interventions and ensure the establishment of

outstanding provision. These rigorous procedures ensure that all staff and partners continually seek to improve their practice.

The dedication of all staff and partners within the centre is clearly evident and this is driven by the leadership team’s high expectations. Staff recognise there is no quick fix solution and have been resolute in their determination to build solid foundations, ensuring all change is lasting. The performance management of staff is robust and arrangements for appraisal and supervision are thorough with outcomes used to plan training and support staff development. A commitment to the inclusion of all children and families is at the heart of the centre’s vision. Clear action plans have been drawn up which reflect specific targets for particular groups of users including fathers, young parents and those from minority ethnic groups. As a result there has been an improvement in the engagement of most of these groups, which in turn has secured improved outcomes.

Early intervention and prevention is at the heart of the centre’s work. Well skilled and knowledgeable, all staff and partners have the confidence to identify needs and issues facing families at the earliest opportunity. All have an in-depth knowledge of policies and procedures in relation to safeguarding children, and are confident to follow these as required. Excellent partnership working ensures that the centre is able to offer a cohesive, timely package of integrated services, intervening at the earliest opportunity to prevent situations escalating into crisis. Robust arrangements are in place to ensure that all staff and other professionals who deliver services through the centre are suitably qualified for this role.

Resources are used and managed effectively to meet the needs of families and children in the community. By adopting an area wide approach, the management team are able to ensure that budget allocations remain aligned to ongoing priorities and are responsive to the changing needs within the local community. Staff are extremely well deployed and utilised ensuring good value for money, the area lead and centre coordinator remaining acutely aware of the need to ensure the long term sustainability of the centre.

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>	2
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	1
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	2
<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>	2

<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	2
<b>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</b>	1
<b>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.</b>	2

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

Fenham Children's Centre hosts a full time day care provision (Little Angels) for children aged birth to school age. In addition Chillout Time childcare are located within the centre and its satellite building. The centre also has close links with two further preschool provisions, West End pre-school playgroup and Denton Burn community association playgroup. Two local primary schools Sacred Heart and Stocksfield Avenue, with Early Years Foundation Stage provision for children over three years, are also part of the centre's remit. Information from their most recent Ofsted inspections has been taken into account when writing about early years provision and outcomes for children in this report.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Fenham Children's Centre at Sacred Heart centre on 12-13 October 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

The children's centre provides a wealth of high-quality activities which are aimed at helping families improve their lives. Your views strongly support this as you tell us that you are happy with the activities you use because they have helped you in lots of different ways. For example, some of you have received excellent support as young parents, whilst others have found the opportunities to undertake training or to learn about healthy eating to be 'confidence building' and 'life changing.' In particular, activities and provision for children before they start school has improved greatly and some of your children are making outstanding progress as a result, especially in regard to making friends and developing speaking, listening and reading skills.

Parents who spoke to us all said that your children's centre is a warm and welcoming place, full of staff who they feel they can trust to help and support them. Parents told us that staff listen to them and so make sure that they get the right advice. We found that the centre

was effective at helping people at times in their lives when they most need it. Action was taken quickly and different people and organisations worked exceptionally well as a team to support both children and families. In particular, you said that you really appreciated the personal attention that you received from all staff.

Activities around messy play, parent craft, baby massage and baby social were well attended. Parents we spoke to said they had thoroughly enjoyed those activities that they attended and that they felt happy on the days when they had an activity to go to. You also told us that the 'Little Explorers' and 'Happy Hippos' groups provided a much needed opportunity to meet up with friends and that these were very much at the heart of the community.

People in charge of running the centre are doing a really good job. The children's centre leadership team have worked hard to make sure that everything the children's centre does for you will make a difference to the area in which you live. We have seen that everyone who works with Fenham Children's Centre shares this commitment and we heard lots of examples from you about how they are making a real difference to your lives. The whole family is at the heart of what everyone is doing and this is seen in the wide variety of activities on offer as well as the number of you who attend them. Managers know there is still more to do if they are to fully meet the needs of your community, and we have asked them to make this a priority. For example, the manager knows there is still more work to do to ensure more people continue to breastfeed their babies, and the centre is working hard to encourage more dads to try out the different activities on offer.

We know the centre is good at asking for your opinion on the activities and services you use. However, the centre needs to increase the involvement and influence you have as parents in their work particularly through the work of the Area partnership. We hope that this is something you might be interested in becoming a part of.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to come and speak to us, we are very grateful and we wish you every success for the future.

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