

# Inspection report for Claremont Children's Centre

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Local authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	407185
Inspection dates	19 - 20 September 2012
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Centre leader	Mrs Kirsty Sutton
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Claremont Community Primary School URN 119240
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Tiny Tots Childcare EY310948

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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.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, centre manager and staff, representatives from the local authority, representatives from the advisory group, health professionals, frontline workers and centre partners, parents and other users of the centre's facilities.

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

## Information about the centre

Claremont Children's Centre is a phase one centre located in the North Shore area of Blackpool. The children's centre is an integral part of Claremont Community Primary School and they share the same site. The delivery of children's centre services has been delegated by the local authority to the headteacher of the school. A children's centre manager, who is part of the senior leadership team, manages the day-to-day running of the centre. The work of the centre is monitored by the school governing body, a children's centre advisory group and the local authority.

Blackpool is the sixth most deprived local authority in the 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation. The town experiences one of the highest levels of population mobility of children and families in the country. The centre serves families who experience significant issues relating to poor health, substance misuse and complex needs associated with social and economic deprivation. Accommodation within the reach area is often overcrowded with families living in multi-occupancy dwellings. All five super output areas within the reach are ranked in the top 10% most socially deprived and disadvantaged areas in the country. Over

half (53%) of all 0-16-year-olds are living in poverty. The area is synonymous with long-term unemployment, with 52.2% of children aged 0-5 living in households dependent on worklessness benefits.

Most children enter early years provision below age-related expectations, particularly in their communication and social and personal development. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for a free school meal is double the national average. The centre serves a community which is predominantly White British with a small percentage of black and minority ethnic groups. However, the demographics frequently change.

The centre received designation in 2005 and it provides the appropriate range of services, including childcare provided by Tiny Tots Childcare. As with Claremont Community Primary School, separate arrangements are in place to inspect this provision and reports can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

## 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
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### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2
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## Main findings

Claremont Children's Centre is a good centre. The strong sense of unity between the children's centre and Claremont Community Primary School provides a seamless and integrated approach to supporting the needs of children and families as a whole. A joint reception arrangement promotes the centre's firm connection with school provision and enables a smooth transition into school life when the time comes. The leadership of the centre is steadfast and intent on improving life chances for its community and this ethos is echoed by users of the centre, partners, governors and the local authority.

The leadership and management of the centre are good. The children's centre has experienced much change since its designation but in the last few years it has gone from strength to strength. The centre is well-known within the community and highly valued.

From the initial welcome to the lengthy engagement which many families sustain, parents are clear that a journey of positive change is the path that they follow.

The leaders of the centre know their community well and they are becoming increasingly innovative in the use of data and local intelligence to ensure provision is built upon a secure analysis of need, particularly as the area is so transient. Provision is good overall due to careful mapping of services on site and those now being developed in the wider community. As a result, outcomes are consistently good and there is evidence of increasing engagement across all target groups.

Leaders know they cannot be complacent if they are to build on their success and extend services further. Subsequently, they have begun to interrogate local data with greater rigour, enabling a clearer picture of the social and economic factors, alongside potential barriers to engagement, across each super output area. However, the depth of the analysis is currently hindered by the lack of precise local data about some target groups provided by the local authority. In addition, the quality and consistency of evaluations undertaken by partner agencies often varies, which prevents the centre from being able to measure outcomes more accurately.

The care, guidance and support for families are exemplary. Outreach and family support interventions alongside well-established inter-agency work ensure families most in need of support or who are at risk make positive changes in their lives and sustain them. Parents experiencing mental health issues and substance addictions describe how they are able to make tentative steps to recovery because of the persistence and encouragement from centre staff. Safeguarding protocols are good overall. Procedures for child protection are robust and staff, partners and parents are well informed about these procedures. Parents report they feel safe when visiting centre services but they voiced concern about their personal safety within the wider community and they are eager to appropriately address these matters.

The secure links with families accessing services in the reach area, good outcomes, and the value given to its services within the community, confirm that the centre's overall effectiveness and capacity to sustain improvement are good.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Work with the local authority and children's centre partners to further refine the consistency, quality and accuracy of localised data to:
  - better evidence the impact of the centre's work on outcomes for all families
  - build upon local intelligence and data information management systems to aid the extension of outreach support and increase the centre's reach.

- Further enhance the strategic work with parents by developing strategies for them to discuss, identify and tackle safety concerns within their wider community.

## How good are outcomes for families?

2

'This place has moved mountains for me' and 'I can be a proper parent now I'm better' are typical comments from parents. Powerful testimonies from parents, particularly fathers, confirm that tailored support has helped them to tackle immense difficulties associated with mental illness. Strategies such as the 'Team Around the Family' (TAF) and the 'Common Assessment Framework' (CAF) have provided targeted multi-agency support for the whole family. As a result, home life is stable once again, parents have improved their parenting skills, addressed substance misuse, and their lives are back on track. Furthermore, good outcomes for children subject to child protection plans, and for others returning home to their parents after a period in foster care, are sustained.

Parents eagerly convey how safe and secure they feel within the centre: 'It's a really safe building; staff always have time for you'. Home safety guidance and equipment have minimised risks in the home; parents have learnt basic first aid and they ensure their children are aware of road safety. However, some parents state they don't always feel safe in the area at night because of poor lighting and they voice concerns about youth and drug crime in the wider community.

Consistent messages about how to lead healthier lifestyles are beginning to increase the take-up and successes of smoking cessation schemes, to promote good sexual health for teenagers and healthy cooking for the family. The prevalence of breastfeeding remains a key priority as outcomes are lower than national averages; however, the centre is sustaining an improvement due to good levels of support and advice. Obesity levels are in line with the national figure, although the local concern relates more to malnutrition. Consequently, the delivery of weaning support has improved parents' understanding of how to ensure their children maintain good diets and healthy weights.

Good-quality play and learning activities, well-resourced environments and the skilful direction of key staff ensure children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress in their learning and development. Steady improvements in the quality of planning and assessment within activities such as 'Messy Play' and 'Tiny Tots Childcare' are ensuring stronger developmental outcomes for children and evidence of a narrowing of the achievement gap. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities accessing services make equally good progress, given their particular needs and starting points and the individualised approach to their learning.

Parents are developing a firm understanding of their role as educators and the impact this has on their children's readiness and transition to school. 'Story books and help with speech and language have really helped to get my child ready for nursery', states one proud parent.

The 'Baby Sign' and 'All Aboard' language sessions have enlightened parents about the benefits of early language development and improved children's particularly low starting points in their communication and language development.

Parents are taking steps to make significant changes in their lives and are adamant that they are 'on the right track to employment and a better future for their children'. Some parents are playing a routine role in governance, influencing the development of services, helping to organise the annual 'Claremont Gala' and undertaking volunteering roles. Others have completed a variety of training and work-ready schemes, improving their application skills and levels of literacy and numeracy. In some cases this has led to national vocational studies and employment within retail, childcare and administration. However, data to show the breadth of training and associated outcomes are limited by the lack of systematic evaluations over time.

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>	<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 children and parents, including those from target groups, 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 parents, including those from target groups, 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, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment.</b>	<b>2</b>

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

<b>2</b>
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Claremont Children's Centre is placed firmly at the heart of the community and provides outstanding care, guidance and support. The exceptionally warm welcome and busy community café creates a comfortable place to meet friends, seek a listening ear at times of crisis and spend quality time as a family. 'This place means the world to me' and 'We wouldn't have been able to stay in Blackpool if it wasn't for the help of the children's centre' confirm the strength of feeling towards the centre and its staff. Parents talk openly of their personal battles with mental health and the persistent and non-judgemental role of family support and outreach staff.

Well-established inter-agency working with health professionals, in particular, ensures TAF and CAF processes lead to tailored family support. The centre is beginning to see a consistent increase in registration and attendance figures due to well-matched provision and

the role partners play in promoting membership to the centre. The centre has been particularly successful in engaging fathers, both within a designated 'Dad's Group' and more informally within all other services. The role fathers play in educating their children and supporting the family unit in times of crisis is respected and nurtured within the centre; their presence is evident in all activities, including governance arrangements.

The range of services is good with activities now being extended into the wider community in order to engage harder-to-reach families with some success. For example, the centre responds to the needs of Polish families as this occurs and links with a local teen and young parent shelter have led to the 'Cupcakes Group'. Case studies and discussions confirm that these young parents benefit from the positive modelling which family support and outreach workers provide, stating they often stop to think about how to handle difficulties in their lives by asking themselves, 'What would my family support worker do or say to me?'

Close monitoring and analysis ensure the centre can confirm growing engagement across all target groups and identify gaps in areas where they are not. However, data management systems are not refined enough to show more precise localised information to enable the centre to undertake a really sharp analysis of needs and therefore provision. For example, local authority data lack clarity about the relatively large number of children in the community with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; as a result, the centre is not sure if more outreach provision is required for these children.

The provision to help children learn, develop and gain skills for the future is good and improving. Guidance and training for staff are beginning to have an impact on the quality of play and learning activities across services. Furthermore, parents are beginning to observe their children's progress during activities and are encouraged to contribute to the assessment process. From very low starting points parents' confidence and willingness to improve their life chances and learning opportunities are embraced by many. The newly established 'Journey to Change' programme builds on aspects such as motivation, managing money and effective use of time. Early outcomes show participants are more confident and able to identify further skills they require to become job ready.

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



## How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Governance and accountability arrangements are secure, with experienced day-to-day leadership and a well-established advisory group linking securely to the governing body of the school. Representation on the advisory group includes parents and this is beginning to have an impact on the role they play in shaping services for the future and decision making. The advisory group are well informed in relation to the performance of the centre, which ensures they are able to offer challenge as well as support. Development plans are well informed from the previous planning cycle and contain some challenging targets in relation to engagement levels and local authority 'Payment by Results' measures which the centre is on target to meet. Staff are well supported through robust supervision arrangements and continuous professional development to ensure all staff are well equipped for their particular role and develop new skills.

Safeguarding policies and procedures are good. Comprehensive records are maintained and these include evidence to confirm the suitability of partner agencies alongside the required Criminal Record Bureau checks for centre staff. Building security is robust as visitors are familiarised with the health and safety arrangements, and the busy reception area is well managed by competent staff who implement their duties with due care and concern for centre users. Staff working with the most vulnerable families are well trained and work cohesively with specialist agencies to ensure the ongoing safety and protection of families. This is particularly so for families at risk of domestic violence.

The centre provides good value for money. The building is constantly being improved and adapted to make the best use of space and to increase the range of services which can be offered. For example, the health room now provides clinical space for the health visitors and the community café has been pivotal to developing a real hub for the community. The promotion of equality and diversity is central to the work of the centre and this is seen in the growing analysis of data to identify those in the wider community and engage them.

Partnerships with health professionals are particularly strong, resulting in the delivery of well-attended health services and strategic input via the advisory group. Work with local specialist provision, 'The Parenting Team' and 'Connexions', and the police ensures the centre is reaching out to some of the most vulnerable in the community. Some commissioned services provide useful outcome evaluations of their service; however, some partner agencies, such as the Job Centre, provide limited evaluations of their work with local families, preventing the centre demonstrating the full extent of its signposting and engagement with this team. Partners are very complimentary about the leadership team, stating, 'This centre has a clear agenda for improvement and real clarity about what they have to do to get there'.

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 effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>2</b>
<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>	<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 partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose</b>	<b>2</b>
<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>	<b>2</b>

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

The inspection reports for Claremont Community Primary School and Tiny Tots Childcare were considered as part of this inspection.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Claremont Children's Centre on 19 September 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

As part of our inspection we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's plans and documents and talked with a number of you, staff and centre partners who work with you. We found that the centre provides a safe and welcoming place for you and your children and those of you we spoke with said that the centre had helped you to make some significant changes in your lives by stopping smoking, eating more healthily and by seeking help with issues associated with alcohol and mental health. Many parents told us that the support they receive from outreach and family support workers has encouraged them to find solutions to their problems and help themselves. As a result, lots of parents told us that they feel more confident; they have completed parenting courses to help make home life much calmer; some have gone back to college and others are now volunteers or have found jobs.

We were impressed by the outstanding care, guidance and support you receive from the centre and you are too. You told us how 'the centre has moved mountains' for you and how it 'picks you back up when you are struggling to recover from depression or to give up alcohol and drugs'. More importantly, many parents confirmed that the centre has changed the way they live for the better and this has had a positive impact on their own aspirations and those of their children. However, some parents are still concerned about dangers in the wider community because night lighting is poor in the area and they are worried about youth and drug crimes. Therefore, we have asked the centre to work with you to find practical and safe solutions to these problems.

We found that the centre works hard to provide you with a good range of services that meet your needs, and the number of people using the services and activities is good and continuing to increase. We also found that, because it provides a place where everybody is welcomed and catered for, people from different nationalities and backgrounds feel welcome too. Where people have difficulty coming to the centre they have benefited from visits by outreach and family support workers at home. As a result, everybody who needs a service is

able to access one. However, centre leaders know they must continue the good work and encourage other families to engage, and they are looking closely at the information they have in order to understand who these people are, what they may need and where in the community to place a new service. But, sometimes, the information they have is not enough, so we have asked the local authority to help the centre by providing more precise information about the people in the area so that leaders can be sure they are providing for them, for example children with disabilities.

The centre has already done some really good work engaging so many fathers and young parents. We were particularly pleased to see that some of you have joined the advisory group and are sharing your ideas about how to improve and develop services. The centre also works with lots of partner agencies who also play a role in helping you to improve your health, education and opportunities to seek work. However, some do not always provide the centre with information to show the positive changes in your lives and this prevents the centre showing how it makes a difference. Therefore, we have asked the centre to request more information from them.

The leadership and management of the centre are good. We found that the children's centre and the primary school work really well together, making sure both older and younger children in your family get all the help they need with their learning, behaviour and health. More importantly, you told us that too!

The advisory group, the senior leadership team and the local authority all work hard to improve your centre so that they can improve your lives, and they have the right plans in place to do this.

Thank you for talking with us and we wish you all the very best for the future.

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