

Inspection report for Walton Lane Nursery School & Children's Centre

Local authority	Lancashire
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Linked school if applicable	119079 Walton Lane Nursery
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	310266 Rocking Horse Club

The inspection of this Sure Start Children's Centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

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

The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and her deputy, senior managers, staff and volunteers. They met governors, parents and children, the local authority's senior officer for children's centres and representatives from a wide range of partner agencies including health, education and social care. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Walton Lane Nursery School and Children's Centre is based on the site of Walton Lane Nursery School, in an independent building integrated with the school. It is led and managed by the headteacher under the overarching governance of the Nursery School. The Rocking Horse Club, a not for profit organisation, provides before and after-school care, full and sessional childcare as well as crèches to support parental attendance at courses. This provision is run as a separate business, under the management of the headteacher, with governance through the Nursery School's governing body. The centre provides Early Years Foundation Stage provision across the campus under the registration of Walton Lane Nursery School. The main centre is located on the edge of a large housing estate which together with most of the reach area is in the top 30% most disadvantaged areas in the country. The centre serves a densely populated area of increasingly contrasting households in terms of culture, ethnicity and socio-economic status. It serves two large local authority housing estates, interspersed with streets of private owner-occupied properties and privately rented housing, much of which is in a state of poor repair. It is a phase one centre, and provides services to meet all elements of the core purpose of children's centres. Many services are delivered from two satellite centres based at Williams Hall All Age Centre and Marsden Community Centre.

There are 655 children in the reach area, all of whom are registered at the centre. Of these children, 80% are from White British backgrounds and some 16.4% are of Asian Heritage. An increasing proportion of children are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds, including Polish and Lithuanian. Many of these are transient and move in or out of the area with very little notice. There are a high number of workless families dependent on state benefits. The rate of unemployment is rising and is just above the national rate. Children in the centre's reach area demonstrate skills below those normally expected for their age on entry to Early Years Foundation Stage provision.

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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

Visionary leadership and management and stubbornly persistent determination have taken this centre on an inspirational journey since it opened in 2003. Colourful displays of ever changing balloons and a warm smile from reception staff provide a wonderful welcome to everyone entering this outstanding centre. 'This centre has its finger on the pulse of the community', a view expressed by one partner, summarises why this is an outstanding centre. An embedded culture of continuous improvement that is firmly grounded in a wealth of data is at the heart of the centre's work. All centre staff, volunteers and governors have a comprehensive understanding of the challenges that families in the community face. Consequently, they are able to plan and deliver services that meet these needs exceptionally well. All of this very effectively sums up why this children's centre has outstanding capacity to improve.

The centre, through the excellent leadership of the headteacher, has exceptionally well-established partnership working arrangements with a wide range of professionals and voluntary organisations. This ensures services are very well integrated and cohesive. Information is shared securely, appropriately and swiftly across partners. This ensures extremely high quality, prompt support and intervention are provided to very effectively safeguard and meet the needs of the very large majority of families. The services, activities and care, guidance and support provided by the centre to improve the outcomes for children

and their families are exceptional. As one parent, whose views are representative of many, states, 'I would not be where I am today if it wasn't for the centre. I am able to hold my head up high'. Excellent partnerships have been established with a range of professionals, particularly those in the local area, who provide services to meet the needs of families. For example, the excellent communication between the local pharmacist and the centre is supporting a reduction in the number of carers smoking and is providing a highly effective signposting service to the centre for the local community.

Inclusion is central to the work of the centre and staff do their utmost to provide a fully inclusive environment where everyone is valued and has a voice. This is particularly well reflected in the support and progress that is provided for children with the most profound needs. However, the centre recognises it has more work to do to ensure that speakers of other languages have access to a wider range of provision to support the further development of their language skills.

Children make exceptional progress from their starting points and thoroughly enjoy their time at the centre. They are very well prepared for school and settle in quickly. Disabled children and those with special educational needs are exceptionally well cared for. Assessments are prompt, thorough and accurate ensuring that these children and their families have access to exceptionally high quality care and support. Provision is very well matched to the needs of families and enables and empowers many of them to achieve excellent outcomes. As a result, participation rates for most groups, including those identified by the centre as most in need of intervention and support, are excellent. Staff know their families exceptionally well and, consequently, are able to identify immediately when there may be a problem, from dental through to behaviour management. All of this ensures the centre provides outstanding value for money.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work with partners to develop a wider range of learning opportunities to improve the language skills of those whose first language is not English to enable them to live more independent lives and become more active citizens in the local community.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

Families have an excellent understanding of what actions they can take to improve their health. This is the result of the outstanding continuous focus on healthy eating from conception through to adulthood by the centre. Meals provided at the centre are highly nutritious and provide children with an excellent variety of food. As a result, obesity levels in the reach area have decreased and are very low. The centre staff have worked hard to improve the mental and emotional health of families through highly effective targeted interventions. Parents really value the counselling opportunities set up by centre staff that

have helped many of them to successfully deal with emotional problems and implement effective coping strategies in their lives. Exceptionally close relationships with midwives, complemented by a robust partnership with health visitors, are enabling the centre to have early contact with families. The impact of this is clearly demonstrated by the increased number of parents accessing 'From Bump, Birth and Beyond', the increasing uptake of Healthy Start vouchers, and the exceptionally high numbers of parents reporting they know how to keep their child healthy. In the last three years breastfeeding rates have increased by some 10% to above the north west average. Infant mortality and accidents requiring hospital visits are particularly low, with no deaths or accidents in the last three years.

Families feel extremely safe at the centre and thorough risk assessments ensure that adults and children work and play in very safe environments. The centre's head of safeguarding has been central to developing processes that smooth transitions from outreach to in-centre support, and between services, to best support those most at risk of being unsafe. Of significant benefit to the most vulnerable families is the excellent use of the Common Assessment Framework and the multi-agency collaboration through the 'Team Around the Child'. As a result, the needs of those subject to a child protection plan are exceptionally well met.

On joining the Reception Year at school, children who have attended the centre demonstrate extremely high levels of confidence and independence. Headteachers report that children who have attended the centre settle in more quickly than those who have not. The centre is effectively narrowing the achievement gap between children with different start points. Data confirm that in 2010/11, 86% of children made at least the progress expected of them, and 69% made good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. Exceptionally well-planned individual and targeted support is helping disabled children and those with special educational needs to achieve very well.

Exemplary role modelling by staff and volunteers make the centre a place where families want to return to time and again. The increasing range of courses and the possibilities for volunteering offered by the centre, support the large majority of families in target groups to improve their confidence and develop employability skills. For example, of the 58 adults who accessed the centre's jobs fair in 2011, over 90% have progressed into education, employment or volunteering. The impact of all of this can best be captured in the words of one parent. 'My children are proud of me and what I have achieved...they have benefited from me gaining an education'.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	1

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	1
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.	1

How good is the provision?

1

Assessment of need is excellent. Data are used extremely well to record the progress that children are making, and to provide staff with highly challenging targets to further improve outcomes for families. Most parents and their children achieve highly, gaining significantly in confidence as a result of the outstanding range of provision that the centre offers. A broad range of learning opportunities combined with excellent guidance and support are significantly increasing the numbers of parents who are progressing from user, to volunteer, to further learning and/or employment. The centre has an extremely high level of contact with targeted groups in the area. In the last year, over 80% of families attending the centre were from the 30% most deprived areas.

The centre has achieved an excellent balance between targeted and universal provision, through thoughtful deployment of resources across the area, underpinned by an excellent and careful analysis of need. By doing this the centre is able to meet the needs of the whole community while ensuring that those in most need of services receive all that they need. As one parent said, 'The group has a range of toys for children to play with that I can't afford...I would miss this group if it was not here, it is the one reason I started coming out of the house'. Participation rates in the centre's activities are extremely high, with registrations at between 95% and 100% across the year. This is due to the wide and varied provision, which continually changes to reflect the changing needs and feedback from families and partners.

Staff make excellent use of children's' and families feedback through participatory appraisal events, drawings and informal conversations, to plan future services. Excellent multi-agency cooperation and the increasing use of volunteers are sustaining and enhancing the range and quality of the services offered by the centre. One such example is the well-established Judo Club that is exceptionally well attended and is run by the caretaker and his colleague. Provision for disabled children and their families is highly inclusive yet exceptionally well differentiated to ensure all feel able to participate.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	1

The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.

1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

Centre leaders and governors are highly aspirational. Their extremely clear vision for the centre is focused on inclusion and the desire for cradle to grave provision for the whole community. 'They are so responsive... inspirational.....they will do anything for the community', are comments made by partners during the inspection which summarise their desire and willingness to do the very best for families. Monitoring and evaluation are excellent and the centre has built on recommendations from inspections of its other provision and other centres in the local authority. A strong and consistent approach is understood and implemented exceptionally well by all staff and partners. As a result, there is full involvement in the planning and evaluation cycle, complemented by very good local authority support and challenge. The centre provides excellent value for money that has been consistently achieved through collaborative use of staff expertise and space across the centres, the district and through the Rocking Horse Club.

Families are fully involved in the governance of the centre through the excellent Parents' Forum and through very good representation on the governing body. Particularly excellent is the way in which the governing body and the headteacher identified many years ago the need for the centre to develop sustainable provision. For example, they established the highly flexible Rocking Horse Club which had been pivotal in sustaining and increasing the range of provision offered by the centre during times of budgetary cuts. Tireless in their pursuit of further resources and activities to improve the lives of the whole community, senior staff are currently involved in the development of a Forest School using the grounds and buildings of a currently unused building in the reach area.

The inclusion of children and their families is central to the centre's work and sensitive assessment and activities to support the most vulnerable children to settle well into school are testament to this. The centre has made significant progress in narrowing the achievement gap and is constantly looking for ways to overcome any barriers to achievement. Equality and diversity are addressed extremely well in terms of inclusion and the tackling of discrimination so that all groups are valued. Community languages are valued and promoted and the centre is aware that communication skills in some households hinder future life chances, in particular employment opportunities. Work has already started to develop further provision to meet this need.

The arrangements for safeguarding are outstanding. All legislative requirements are met or exceeded. The highly effective implementation of policies and procedures ensure that staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children and vulnerable adults. Staff are extremely well trained and have access to high levels of support and training. Excellent partnership working is promoting the swift exchange of information for the most vulnerable children, including those involved in Common Assessment Framework processes and those subject to

a child protection plan. The recording of this information is very robust. The procedure for home visits and lone working is exemplary. Reception staff at the centre are extremely vigilant and monitor visitors to the centre.

These are the grades for leadership and management:

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	1
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
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	1
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.	1

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

Information made available from the recent inspection of Kidz@williams and Walton Lane Nursery School were taken into consideration.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Walton Lane Nursery School and Children's Centre on 25 – 26 April 2012. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

Thank you for your help and involvement in the inspection. We very much enjoyed meeting you and it was really good to hear from you how important the centre is to you and how it has helped you and your families. You made us feel very welcome and we appreciated the amount of time you spent talking to us. We particularly want to thank those of you who welcomed us into your home. Both of us feel very lucky to have inspected such an amazing centre.

You all told us how welcoming the centre is and the difference it has made to your lives. Certainly, we felt welcomed both by the reception staff and the wonderful display of balloons in the reception area, particularly the very large display on the desk. We heard how much you enjoyed attending activities such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Bump, Birth and Beyond'. You also told us how important the centre is to the community, particularly as it provides so many activities for you and your children, whatever their age. Of particular importance, as well as the wide range of activities that the centre provides for younger children, is the fact that the centre provides activities for your older children giving them many meaningful things to do in the evening.

We know you fully appreciate how the centre has planned its provision across the area to make it as easy as possible to get to and that in times of greatest need the centre staff will come to you. Those of you with disabled children and those with special educational needs told us what a great support the centre had been to you and the difference this has made to you and your child. We were delighted to see and hear how the support your child was given with speech, language, and behaviour helped them to settle in at nursery school.

My colleague and I really enjoyed visiting many of the activities on offer. I was particularly impressed with those of you who were dancing, including the mums and dads that were helping out. My colleague had a wonderful time at 'Little Tigers', here, she thought your children were involved in a wide range of exciting activities. Everyone we spoke to said that

staff always listen to what you have to say, particularly when you would like to try a new activity. You said that they go out of their way to put on activities that you want and also to improve those that you feel are not so good. Throughout the inspection we were constantly told by children and parents of the difference that the centre was making to them. One of the very good activities that we heard about was 'Baby Massage' and the help it gives you to bond with your child while providing opportunities to meet other new mums. You really appreciated the fact that you could access this course across the area so that you did not have to wait to start.

Throughout the time we were visiting the centre we noticed how careful all the staff were to ensure that you are safe both at the centre and at home, through the information it provides you with on home safety and the way it helps you to keep safe. The centre works exceptionally well with partners and organisations across the area to make sure that the centre can provide as many opportunities for you as possible. It provides excellent information for new parents about how to manage children's weaning and healthy eating and is very good at making sure you know about free vitamins and fruit and vegetable vouchers. The centre supports those of you who want to move into employment through its excellent job fairs, increasing range of courses and work with local education providers.

The team that leads the centre is passionate about providing you with the very best provision possible. It knows exactly what it wants to do to make sure the centre continues to improve. We have asked the centre to develop even more activities and opportunities to support those of you whose first language is not English to make it easier for you to get a job and to fully understand everything that your child is doing at school and at other activities out of the home. It had already started working on this before we visited the centre and has some excellent ideas about how to achieve this.

The massive effect that the centre has had on your lives and the ways in which it has helped you to turn your lives around is stunning. It is very obvious that the centre is hugely important to all of you who use the centre and to the wider communities of Southfield and Marsden. Thank you all, once again for your time and enthusiasm in talking to us. We would like to wish you all the very best in the future.

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