

# Inspection report for Brownhills Sure Start Children's Centre

---

<b>Local authority</b>	Walsall
<b>Inspection number</b>	383371
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 January 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Christine Field

<b>Centre leader</b>	Pauline Bird
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	No previous inspection
<b>Centre address</b>	Great Charles Street, Brownhills, Walsall, WS8 6AE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01543 370734
<b>Fax number</b>	01543 360751
<b>Email address</b>	brownhills@childrenscentres.walsall.org.uk

<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	St James Primary School and Ogle Hay Nursery School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Brownhills Children's Centre EY385357 and EY376991

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.

---

**Report published:** January 2012



The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100080](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100080).

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

No.100080

© Crown copyright 2012



## 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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with: the centre manager; advisory board members; a local authority representative; outreach workers; health, early years, domestic violence, employment and training professionals; and front-line staff. They also met with parents and carers, talked by telephone at the request of a primary head-teacher of a school in the reach area, observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Brownhills Sure Start Children's Centre is a phase two centre. It serves a disadvantaged community, including 11 lower super output areas, with approximately 1,080 children under the age of five within its reach area. Since December 2009, the centre has delivered a range of services based to meet its core purpose, including integrated early learning, information and advice to parents and carers, outreach, Jobcentre Plus, employment, training and health advice. Data show that 15% of households in the reach area are workless or in receipt of work-related benefits and 20% of children live with a lone parent. The great majority of families living within the reach area are of White British heritage with a very small proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds, predominantly Eastern European. Children's skills and knowledge on entry to early years education are typically below the level expected for their age.

The centre is managed jointly by the governing bodies of a co-located primary school and nearby nursery school. A staffing and finance committee appointed by the two governing bodies is chaired by a parent and oversees financial matters while an advisory board comprising of key partners and parents has oversight of the daily life

and strategic development of the centre. The local authority is the accountable body for the centre.

The centre operates from two sites located near to one another. They are open to families from 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday; the hub site also opens on Saturdays from 10am to midday. Additionally, family support for 5–11-year-olds in the area is organised through a service level agreement with local schools.

## 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**

**3**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**2**

## Main findings

The centre’s effectiveness is satisfactory with good features. The centre manager provides effective leadership and over the last two years has focused efforts on comprehensively assessing complex local needs and building good partnerships with a wide range of providers. The centre is very much seen to be at the heart of its community with 73% of children benefiting directly from its services in the last 12 months. Target families’ engagement with the centre has been increasing year-on-year and their feedback about the impact of services on their daily lives is very positive. However, not all of the centre’s key performance targets have been met, which is why the centre’s effectiveness cannot be judged as good.

The centre has undertaken a robust and accurate evaluation of its effectiveness and is aware of the need to refine action planning and monitoring arrangements so that progress towards meeting targets can be tracked more rigorously during the year. Work has begun on sharpening systems and there is clear commitment from all stakeholders to build on its positive track record of interventions, for example as reflected in the significantly reducing instances of domestic violence and non-accidental emergency admissions to hospitals, so that all health targets are met. Resources are allocated sensibly and a business costing model has been introduced to seek greater efficiencies. The advisory board includes six parents and has a clear remit to plan, review, support and challenge. Service representation on the board usefully includes key partners. The capacity for improvement is good.

Provision is good overall. There is positive impact from well-integrated service delivery and the care and guidance provided which results in users' good well-being and positive contributions. The opportunities being provided to promote adults' learning require further development. The centre is particularly successful in its outreach work with vulnerable children and families, including those with special educational needs, and those at risk.

Outcomes for families are satisfactory overall but their awareness of how to keep safe and to make a positive contribution is good. The centre is sensitive to the needs of families and works effectively to keep them protected. The caring ethos is identified as the key factor in encouraging an increasing number of families to engage in centre activities. 'I always feel welcome', 'The centre has helped me believe in myself' and 'It's great meeting other dads at Saturday sessions' are typical comments of the many that were shared with inspectors.

The centre plans a range of activities to help families live healthier lives and is meeting with success in some areas. However, there has been limited impact on reducing childhood obesity, which at 11.4% is far higher than the centre's target of 4.95%. The percentage of mothers sustaining breastfeeding is just above the local average, but falls short of the expected target of 32%. Early learning experiences provided are making a valuable contribution to young children's development and school readiness. Data suggest that the gap in achievement between the lowest 20% and the rest is reducing and that children who have attended the centre are now making good progress in Reception. The centre facilitates a range of training to assist those seeking training to update their employability skills. For example, 11 adults completed National Vocational Qualifications last year and, during the week of inspection, 30 very vulnerable 18–24-year-olds began a 12-week course to help them prepare for work. However, the centre has no secure data to demonstrate the impact of its work on strengthening the economic stability of families, including the 15% who live in workless households.

The senior leadership team very much sees inclusion at the heart of the centre's vision and everyday life. Staff show a strong commitment to promoting equality and diversity. They have a clear grasp on the needs of the area and recognise that evidencing the impact of the centre's work on all key groups is a core priority.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Make more effective use of data to:
  - inform action planning
  - set precise measures of progress towards meeting core targets
  - assist the advisory board in looking critically at the centre's performance.
- Devise a strategy to ensure that interventions to improve the health of users result in targets being met or exceeded in respect of reducing obesity and

- increasing sustained breastfeeding.
- Target the access of adults in the community, including those from workless homes, to further learning programmes and ensure that monitoring identifies those who meet their goals, attain as planned and make progress towards employment or promotion at work.

## How good are outcomes for families?

3
---

The positive impact of the centre's interventions to help families keep healthy is reflected in the number of adults giving up smoking and the reducing rate of teenage pregnancies. The centre is working hard to help families eat healthily and reduce obesity. For example, cookery classes take place, and health checks are offered free of charge, with those meeting the set criteria receiving free vouchers to a slimming group. Fresh fruit is provided daily at playgroup with a newly built children's kitchen available for them to select and prepare their own fruit to eat. However, despite these positive endeavours, there has been limited impact on reducing obesity. The centre is proactive in assisting new mothers who want to breastfeed their babies but the impact is limited. At 21.72%, the level of sustained breastfeeding for more than eight weeks is slightly above the local authority average but not at the target level.

The centre's work has good impact on keeping children safe and protected. The number of children subject to protection plans is high but reducing over time due to well-coordinated support. Effective use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) helps to prioritise services and ensure a secure safety net of support. Instances of domestic violence have fallen significantly over the last two years with initiatives such as the 'Freedom Programme' raising awareness and helping keep families safe. Work with agencies, such as The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) is making families more alert to safety in their homes. Some 32 centre users have undertaken a first aid course. The rate of non-accidental emergency admissions to hospitals is falling.

Highly effective parenting courses, such as 'Parenting Puzzle', help parents to build confidence and develop positive behaviour management strategies. 'Stay and Play' and 'Play Group' sessions encourage children to be active, inquisitive and independent learners. Those who are most vulnerable are helped to build positive family relationships through a range of well-planned experiences. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and parents strongly identify that they feel free from any form of discrimination. All observations of activities during the inspection showed relationships to be positive with experiences valued. Parents and carers have plenty of opportunities to make their views known and some are members of the advisory board.

In 2011, 71% of children attained 78+ scale points by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The centre is working in partnership with local schools to track the progress of children who attend the centre. The indications are that children now in Reception have benefited from early education, particularly those who received

speech and language interventions. Improving reading skills is a shared priority for the area. Three quarters of adults using the centre participate in parenting and family learning activities. A minority are involved in employment-related training with a few going on to open their own businesses, find paid work or undertake further training.

*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>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>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>3</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>3</b>

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

<b>2</b>
----------

The quality and range of services are cohesive and meet the personal, social and safety needs of the majority of families very well. Accurately documented case studies provide useful evidence about the positive difference the centre's provision is making to those in most need, including children and adults with disabilities, lone parents, teenage parents and families with children under four-years-old who are experiencing problems. The centre is currently working with a newly arrived Polish family to assess their English language needs. The services on offer to help raise parents' confidence and self-esteem are having a good impact, as reflected in their good involvement in the centre's life and development. However, the provision of services for adults to increase employability skills, though positive for those who undertake activities, is not as well developed.

Partnerships between local settings and all nine primary schools in the area assist the youngest children in becoming confident learners and ready for full-time education. Nevertheless, the proportion of children in the reach area who attain 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage scales has fallen short of local targets. The focus on early education and support for more vulnerable families, for example through the pilot two-year-old programme, is contributing to children's improving achievements alongside other good quality preschool experiences.

Good quality care, guidance and support help families from different backgrounds

that use the centre to feel free from harm and bullying. Relationships at all levels are respectful and trusting. One parent described the staff and centre as 'amazing'. The good focus on supporting parents and carers in building confidence and self-esteem reduces feelings of isolation and improves family relationships. Partners work closely with centre staff. Quarterly meetings between service partners and termly advisory board meetings usefully enable the sharing of information to inform service delivery. Good quality information is to hand in the centre and available for families to see on its easy to use and accessible web page. Surveys show that 100% of families using the centre are very appreciative of the support they receive and identify clearly the impact it has had on their lives.

*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>3</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>

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

<b>3</b>
----------

Leadership of the centre by the manger and senior team is well focused and purposeful. Self-evaluation is a thorough process and an annual review is well supported by the local authority as the accountable body. However, it is timely for the centre to take stock of the activities on offer to ensure that they are having the best impact on improving outcomes and helping the centre to meet its targets. The centre has already begun to forward plan with better precision and to tie in evaluations at more regular intervals. The advisory board is representative of the community it serves. It is usefully contributing to service development but has yet to inject the level of challenge required in decision making. When taking into account the satisfactory outcomes, the value for money given by the centre is satisfactory.

Safeguarding arrangements are very thorough and ensure that all who use the centre are well protected. Health and safety matters are closely supervised and supported by finely tuned risk assessments. Staff are very alert to child protection matters and all adults who work with children are up to date with training requirements. The systems for staff vetting and recruitment fully meet requirements.

Equality and inclusion are central strands of the centre's work. Its ethos is warm and inviting. The integration of multi-agency services enhances opportunities for children and their families. The centre's approach makes a positive contribution to community cohesion and the breaking down of barriers between families from different backgrounds. For example, families have identified how isolated they felt before becoming involved in centre activities.



*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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure 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>3</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>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**

Inspection reports for Brownhills Children Centre (EY385357) inspected in March 2009 and (EY376991) inspected in September 2009.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaining about inspections*, which is available from our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Brownhills Sure Start Children's Centre on 17 and 18 January 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We talked with some of you, your children, staff, and a wide range of partners and members of the local authority linked to the centre. We observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documents. It was great to see you and your children enjoying activities provided by the centre such as making music together and having fun creating Chinese New Year dragons at the family learning session.

We found that the centre knows its community well and makes good provision for the increasing number of young children and families who use its services despite not all outcomes being good. This is because there is a lot going on to help your children be healthy, and enjoy achieving to the full, but the targets set for the centre have not yet been met. For example, there are still too many young children who do not have a healthy weight and not many babies are being breastfed to help give them the best start in life. Good quality early learning experiences such as 'Play Group' are supporting your children's progress during Nursery and Reception. The centre's strong partnership with local schools means that, together, they can make a difference, for example to help build good reading skills. However, we would like to see more adults have wider opportunities to improve their economic well-being and support for finding work. We have asked the centre to look carefully at trying to make improvement to all these aspects. Please let staff know what further learning courses you would find valuable to your future success so that they can help.

Good quality care, guidance and support are strengths. You told us that staff are friendly and that the centre offers a warm welcome to everyone. The centre makes sure that you are well looked after when you visit. The close attention paid to safeguarding arrangements helps you feel safe and free from risks. We agree that these features are really important and make you want to continue joining in activities.

The centre manager and staff team are doing a good job in making sure that the centre responds to local needs and have built strong partnerships with a range of providers to deliver services together. They have a lot of information to help to plan actions for the next 12 months to help deliver the best results and set targets to assist improvements. However, the data are not being used well enough to see what impact services have on you and your family during the year. This also limits the potential for the advisory board to keep close checks on how well the centre is doing. We have asked managers to give close attention to these matters from now on. Please add to the information they gather by making sure your views are made known through your parent representatives and ask them to tell you how things are going.

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