

# Inspection report for Measham Sure Start Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Leicestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	382108
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	27-28 January 2011
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Measham Primary School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Not applicable

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 an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, users and representatives from the local authority, the local advisory board, and services that use the centre.

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

Ofsted inspected the centre concurrently with Coalville children's centre. Inspectors shared the evidence of some of the common aspects of leadership and management and the delivery of joint provision.

## Information about the centre

Measham is a small phase two centre which works within a cluster of seven other centres in the North West Leicestershire locality and has been fully operating since January 2009. A children's centre coordinator is responsible for the management of the eight centres. A Locality Partnership Coordinator provides the strategic oversight to the locality. The local authority has made significant changes to the staffing structure at the centre following the previous inspection where the centre was judged inadequate. The body responsible for locality governance is the locality partnership group. The group provides programmes and activities in response to the identified need through the commissioning of services. Families travel to various centres to join a range of integrated services that include health, family support, adult training, early years provision, advice and guidance. Measham reach area is made up of both rural and urban areas; it is the largest geographical area in the locality. There are few activities which are within walking distance.

The centre is open five days a week for 48 weeks of the year and operates from a purpose built centre on the school site of Measham Church of England Primary School. The centre’s work is also supported by a play bus that takes services out in to the community. There is no linked commissioned childcare. Children’s skill, knowledge and abilities on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are broadly in line with those expected for their age however there is a wide variation in the reach area. The families who live around the centre are mainly White British. A significant number of Polish families have moved into the area, many of whom speak English as an additional language. Levels of unemployment are in line with the rest of Leicestershire. There are currently 804 children 0-4 years in its reach. Some 10.8% of the under-5 years population living in the Measham area are living in income deprived households. There are pockets of deprivation in an otherwise affluent area.

## 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**

**3**

## Main findings

This satisfactory centre is making positive strides to improve outcomes for users within the Measham locality. The centre users are unanimous in their appreciation and praise for the improvements to their lives. However, the take-up of services remains relatively low and the centre has not yet fully engaged with the wider community including lone parents and disabled children, and children of a disabled parent. The centre is well aware of this and is taking some positive steps to improve this situation, such as commissioning a provider to focus on improving the take up of services. Consequently, the equality of opportunity for users in the reach area is satisfactory. Those who take advantage of the services and activities provided report that the centre is making a positive difference to them and their families. There are good opportunities for adults to undertake courses that promote their economic well-being. There are a good range of learning activities provided by services that are commissioned to provide them.

Provision is good. This is because of good quality and wide range of programmes that are in place to support the needs of users in the reach area. Due to the relatively short period of time that this good quality provision has been on offer it has

not yet had time to have an impact on users' outcomes. There are sound procedures to safeguard children and other users. Safeguarding is threaded through everything that the centre does. All the parents who made their comments known said they were very happy and secure about the welcome and care that they receive in the centre. Partner arrangements are effectively commissioned and managed to ensure services are delivered which support users of target groups. For example, benefit advice is provided by Citizens Advice Bureau which is of good quality and is helping families suffering from poverty. A significant strength is the good-quality care and guidance that staff give children and adult users. As a result, users respect each other and say that they can discuss their worries with staff whenever they need to. One carer said, 'There is always someone available to talk to at the centre or on the end of the phone.' One particularly strong feature of the centre is the work of the family outreach workers. They provide invaluable support to the more vulnerable families. For example, they support some Polish families who were particularly nervous about their children going to school. The family outreach worker contacted the school and arranged an 'introduction morning'. The family outreach workers are particularly effective in signposting parents and carers to additional services to promote the safety and well-being of users. There are appropriate procedures for assessing the needs of the users and matching these to the appropriate services.

Governance and leadership are satisfactory and improving strongly. The local authority's procedures to hold the centre to account through its local priorities are strengthening. The centre's improvement plan demonstrates an understanding of the target groups within the reach area and what needs to be achieved. However, the use of data to assist them in planning for specific needs, for example those who may have a disability or are on a child protection plan, is at the early stages of development. A locality partnership group is well established and holds the centre to account. Its membership includes representatives from key partner agencies. There are limited opportunities for parents' and carers' views to be heard or to inform the shaping of the centre's services. Leaders and managers at all levels and all other staff demonstrate a passion and determination to improve the lives of users. Regular supervision of centre workers, such as the family outreach workers, has resulted in improvements in the quality of services. There are some appropriate and regular systems in place to evaluate users' satisfaction. However, the centre has fewer consistent methods in place to evaluate the improvement it has made to their lives. The centre demonstrates a satisfactory capacity for improvement.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Continue to work with the local authority to ensure that it provides accurate, relevant up-to-date data from partner organisations which is specific to the immediate reach area and which will help the centre to determine priorities for action within the reach area.
  
- Increase the membership of the centre by reaching out to and engaging with

members of the community who are not accessing services, including lone parents and disabled children, and children of a disabled parents taking steps to identify and meet their needs.

- Further develop the governance of the centre by improving the extent to which parents and carers contribute to decision making.
- Improve the effectiveness of the centre by working with partners to gather accurate information about outcomes for children and users, using this information to inform future planning.

### How good are outcomes for families?

<b>3</b>
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The emotional well-being of users is improved by their engagement with the centre, particularly those who have suffered from postnatal depression who are supported through groups such as 'Mums in Mind'. The centre is proactive in supporting young mothers, and targeted services such as baby massage are proving popular. One parent at risk of isolation reported, 'The children's centre had been invaluable in offering advice and support.' There is an adequate range of healthy activities such as 'Cook & Eat' sessions. Parents and carers who attend these sessions report that they have improved their understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet and are able to budget more effectively. Activities are generally well attended. Membership of the centre is gradually increasing although it is not fully reflective of the wider community. A specialist outreach service provides a designated family outreach worker who has responsibility to help and support a small number of parents whose children have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The worker helps them with referrals, telephone calls and will take them along to an appointment; this ensures those children receive the assistance that they require.

Vulnerable children, particularly those on child protection plans, and their families, are supported effectively through procedures such as Common Assessment Framework (CAF) by the centre and through their partnerships with health, social services, housing and the police. Case studies show that the lives of these families are improved. For instance, one parent had benefited greatly from the one-to-one support at the centre and has improved how she deals with family matters and her relationships with her children.

Services and activities at the centre are provided in a happy and secure environment. Those parents who made their comments known report that they and their children feel safe within the centre. The improvement team has accurately analysed data that show that children need additional support in personal, social and emotional development and communication language and literacy. It has focused its efforts in these areas and has provided additional training to the local nurseries, childminders and schools. The quality of early years provision within the area is mainly good.

Effective partnerships between local schools and early years provision are good and are instrumental in ensuring that the transition arrangements support children as they move on to the next stage in their education. A commissioned service provides appropriate training for volunteers. It also checks that volunteers are suitable to work in the centre and in families' homes. The volunteers support activities within the centre such as breastfeeding, maintaining the garden and leading the active tots group. They also provide direct support to more vulnerable families by providing services in their home.

Parents contribute their views through valuable feedback and evaluations of the services provided. However, not all partners are gathering information about the impact they have had on users' lives and what difference they have made. There are also limited opportunities for parents to participate in decisions and the management of the centre. There is currently no mechanism in place to systematically gather their views for example, there is no parents' forum.

There are good opportunities for adults to undertake courses that promote their economic well-being. Parents report how much they enjoy the courses they have completed and are very proud of their achievements. They benefit from an increased range of courses. For instance, positive parenting programmes help parents manage their children's behaviour, and members of the teenage parents' group have gained qualifications in basic skills in English and maths. Courses for young parents offering programmes and qualifications that explicitly grow skills for learning, skills for employment and skills for life regularly take place in the locality with a large number gaining a qualification. Well-recorded case studies show how centre staff have assisted parents to maximise their incomes by ensuring they claim appropriate welfare entitlements.

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>3</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>3</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?

Family support workers are using assessments increasingly skilfully to engage with families, particularly those who are made vulnerable by their circumstances. This is resulting in an improved understanding of the needs of parents and carers. Services on offer are having an improving impact on users' safety and well-being and are tailored to meet considered needs. The centre is also successful at assessing and meeting the needs of users who come to the centre looking for support and guidance to help them raise their children. The centre very successfully nurtures and fosters confidence in parents and carers so that they are well prepared to develop their skills and learning. The centre is instrumental in helping parents access good quality information and advice which enables them to make informed choices and, if they wish, access further education. Parents also receive the advice and support required to gain welfare benefits.

Breastfeeding support is well established and is having a positive impact on the emotional health of children. Parent and child bonding is also encouraged through groups such as baby massage. The family outreach workers offer highly regarded support to families where there is additional stress, such as issues of mental health and domestic violence, to ensure that parents are still meeting the children's emotional needs. The work of the centre is invaluable to those users who access their services.

The centre, in partnership with other agencies, has accurately identified services which are targeted at parents who are potentially at risk of social isolation and exclusion. Teenage parents and parents who may be experiencing domestic violence are particularly well supported, through sessions such as 'Living without abuse'. However, services for these targeted groups are relatively new developments within the centre and it is too early to gauge their full impact on users. In addition, the centre's work to engage with the wider community and those families who are considered 'hard to reach' is at an early stage of development. The current centre membership is relatively low and there are many families living in the community who are not accessing the centre's services.

All staff provide a warm, welcoming and secure environment in the centre. Strong and trusting relationships are being developed between parents and the centre staff and partners. Several parents commented that the centre provides a place of information, care, guidance and support and is where they come for help on a wide range of issues. As one parent reported, 'The centre staff are always there to support when needed. They are very knowledgeable about all aspects of family troubles with children.'

The range of activities and services meets the needs of most users appropriately. For instance, the 'Money counts group' is proving to be increasingly popular and is ensuring users gain the benefits they are entitled to. Case studies show where parents' income has increased significantly. A range of courses and activities are taken out into the community to targeted areas to support the more vulnerable. The



vast majority of children live in rural areas of the reach. The play bus makes services more accessible and helps to promote children’s skills and development through sessions such as ‘Stay and Play’. The centre also delivers a range of courses to support adult learning as well as guidance and support in all aspects of childcare. The quality of the learning and development in early years settings is improved through the support of the improvement advisory team who also aid transition arrangements by providing courses such as ‘Mind the gap’.

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>3</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>2</b>

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

**3**

The centre’s work in providing services is making a difference to the lives of those users who access the centre’s services, and bringing about satisfactory outcomes. In this respect, the centre provides satisfactory value for money. Leaders, managers and staff are motivated to seek further improvements and are increasing their effectiveness in focusing the centre’s efforts on its priorities. The leaders have faced significant challenges over the last 12 months and are steadily increasing the number of vulnerable users accessing services. The number of targeted people using the centre has increased since June 2011 when the centre changed their focus from providing universal services to providing services for those who really need them. However, there is still a large proportion of the community who are not accessing services. All staff have a ‘can do’ attitude and are focused on improving outcomes for all children and families, they are a highly-motivated team and good working relationships exist between partners. There are appropriate performance monitoring systems in place to assure the work of the centre and commissioned services.

The arrangements for safeguarding children and users are appropriate. Staff are suitably trained to support their role in ensuring users’ safety, including child protection. Staff are alert to the needs of individual families who are encountering challenges and difficulties, and respond promptly and sensitively when referrals are made. Young mums and families experiencing crises, including domestic violence, are particularly well supported within the centre through procedures such as CAF.

Health visitors work effectively with families who encounter severe difficulties and deprivation, they regularly share information with the centre to ensure targeted services are prioritised. The new birth data are provided by health partners but are not yet disseminated down to centre level by the local authority. These data will

enable the centre to act swiftly by successfully identifying families who are most in need. The data provided are not always in the most useful format which has resulted in them not always being interpreted accurately. The centre was not able to provide data easily which showed what the take up rates were of users, particularly those most in need of their help. The inclusion of children and families is helping the centre to begin to engage with those from the wider community, including teenage parents. It is not clear how many children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those identified at risk of developmental delay receive appropriately targeted support. The centre is not clear about the number of these children within the reach area. The centre's policies and procedures are used to promote an understanding of the importance of inclusion for staff and volunteers

The centre is not fully aware of the impact its services are making because of the lack of detailed and informative evaluation across all services. The improvement plan has clear links to the self-evaluation and it sets out targets and priorities. Users' views are sought from sessions and activities in a variety of ways, users share their satisfaction of the centre's work. They feel well supported and welcomed. However, there is no systematic approach to ensure families using the centre are able to express their views and contribute to decision-making to help to shape future services. The LA has successfully established robust procedures for supervising staff and holding them and commissioned services to account for the quality of their work.

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

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

Coalville children's centre was also inspected at the same time as Measham and some of the evidence was shared amongst the two teams.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Measham Children's Centre on 18-19 January 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We would like to thank those of you who spoke to us. Your views were very helpful to the inspection team. We agree with you when you told us how welcoming and helpful the staff are at the centre. We think that the range of services and activities on offer is helping you to improve your parenting skills and enabling some of you to train and gain confidence. We think that those of you who are experiencing difficulty in your lives are well supported to make your families and children safe and healthy. We also know that the centre has helped some of you who have experienced real difficulties in the past to be much more confident and able to look forward to a brighter future.

We watched you thoroughly enjoying the activities, such as 'Active Tots', where you talked to each other and got active with your children. Some of you have volunteered to help in the centre by providing practical help and by helping other families who may be experiencing challenges in their lives. This in turn has been invaluable in developing your own self-esteem and skills. Those of you who made your comments known spoke of the centre and its staff with high regard. However, we think it is a pity that not enough people in the area are taking advantage of the activities on offer.

You told us that one reason why you like coming to the centre is because of the well trained, helpful and friendly staff who work there or come out to you on the play bus. They try their best to help you to make improvements to your lives. The family outreach workers expertly help you to decide on the services and activities that you need in order to make improvements to family life. They then work well with other agencies like the health service and social services to make sure that the help is just right for you and your families. Some of you were keen to tell us that, if you had not received help from the centre, you would not have been able to train or attend a group. Some of you said how grateful you were that the staff had helped you to gain the benefits to which you are entitled. The centre has introduced a number of activities to

improve your health, such as the young mums' antenatal group where you learn how to prepare for the birth of your baby.

The centre leaders have been successful in safeguarding the families who use the centre. Leaders do not yet check well enough how the activities on offer are leading to improvements, both for you, your families and also for the community overall.

We have therefore asked the centre to make some improvements. We have asked staff to make sure they are supporting the whole of the community and developing the membership of the centre particularly those that most need their help. We would like more of you involved in decision making and the management of the centre. We have asked them to look at ways to improve their evaluation of the centre's work and how they record how they are making a difference to your lives. We have also asked them to work with the local authority to make sure that get all of the data that they need to make sure they are targeting everyone who needs help and support

The full report is available from your centre or on our website:  
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