

# Inspection report for Windmill Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Telford and Wrekin
<b>Inspection number</b>	367877
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 January 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Graham Sims

<b>Centre leader</b>	Christine Murray (Early Intervention Group Manager)
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Windmill Primary School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Chipmunks Nursery EY417939

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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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the early intervention group manager, the centre's team leader, staff, parents and representatives from the local authority, the advisory board and partner organisations.

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

## Information about the centre

Brookside Children's Centre was designated as a phase two children's centre in May 2007 and started to provide the full core offer in 2009. When a new purpose-built facility opened on the site of Windmill Primary School in May 2011, the centre was renamed Windmill Children's Centre. It serves just over 600 children and their families living in the Brookside area in the Lakeside South Hub of Telford and Wrekin. The centre's facility has an outdoor play area, a large meeting room, a smaller meeting room and a consultation room which is used by midwives and health visitors. There is no office accommodation and the staff team is based at Sutton Hill Children's Centre which is some four miles away.

Following a reorganisation of all of the children's centres within Telford and Wrekin, the centre is currently being managed, along with two other children's centres, by the early intervention group manager for Lakeside South, hereinafter referred to as the centre manager. She is answerable to the local authority for the running of the centre. An advisory board provides advice and guidance and also oversees the work of the centre. The day-to-day management of the centre is temporarily in the hands of a team leader. The local authority is reorganising its staffing of children's centres and it is their intention to appoint a permanent centre manager in the not too distant future.

The centre provides outreach services for families in need, and a variety of group activities for parents and children. Midwives offer maternity services in the centre's new facility. A few activities take place in neighbouring locations, such as Hollinswood Community Centre. The centre works with a wide range of partners. Nursery education is provided at Windmill Primary School and the privately run Chipmunks Nursery, both of which were inspected in July 2011. The centre also refers parents who are seeking childcare to a number of accredited childminders.

Much of the centre's reach area encompasses localities which are in the 20% most deprived areas in the country, where unemployment and the proportion of families that are dependent on workless benefits are well above the national average. Just over 90% of the families in the area are White British. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities are generally below those expected for their age when they enter the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## 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

Although the overall effectiveness of this recently reorganised centre is currently satisfactory, there are a number of key strengths which justify the positive view parents have of the centre's staff and the activities they provide. The procedures for safeguarding and identifying families whose circumstances make them vulnerable are particularly good. The Common Assessment Framework is used rigorously and effectively to identify their needs. Good partnership arrangements with a wide range of professionals then ensure that the Team Around the Child process identifies and provides appropriate support to meet these needs. Families who are supported in this way make good progress in developing healthier lifestyles, ensuring greater safety in the home, improving their parenting skills and developing better family relationships. The staff provide good care, guidance and support through their home visits. Numerous case studies show that these visits, and the support from other professionals which is facilitated through the centre, have a major impact on families' lives. Midwives and other professional partners are good at referring parents to the centre. Those who choose to attend activities such as 'Bumps and Babies' or 'Playing Together' benefit from good-quality sessions which develop their self-confidence and

social skills, and help them to develop a better understanding of how to interact with their children and provide good learning opportunities for them in the home.

Overall, however, outcomes for families and the centre's provision are satisfactory. Provision for adults' learning and some health-related aspects are not yet effective enough. The centre is not yet fully engaged in helping adults who are out of work to access training, gain further qualifications or seek volunteering opportunities in order to help them along the road to future employment. The percentages of mothers maintaining breastfeeding and of five-year-olds who are a healthy weight are below the national averages. Although a number of initiatives have been started, they have yet to have a major impact on improving health outcomes in these areas. There is not enough opportunity for parents to engage with the centre or to be involved in decision-making. One of the reasons for this is that the centre is only open when activities are scheduled. Staff and parents miss out, therefore, on informal day-to-day opportunities to build relationships. Currently, there is very little parental participation on the advisory board and, although about to restart, the parents' forum has not been active for almost a year.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The local authority's reorganisation has been highly successful in bringing professionals together and providing a more joined-up service for families than before. However, the centre and the authority have recognised that not enough is being done to support adults back into employment; their interesting plans to tackle this have yet to be implemented. A team has also been working on the way information is gathered from various sources however, currently, data are not yet gathered efficiently or effectively. As a result, the centre is not able to demonstrate clearly what impact it is having on outcomes for families or to what extent any improving outcomes within the local authority apply to the Brookside area. The centre's delivery plan identifies pertinent priorities, but the centre does not have sufficiently reliable data to provide precise evaluation of its effectiveness.

The centre manager and team leader have worked hard and successfully to develop an excellent team spirit in times of uncertainty and change, and to ensure staff are well trained and well supported. They have done their best to mitigate the difficulties of having staff based four miles away from the centre. They have ensured that the services offered are of good quality. However, plans to tackle some important priority areas have yet to be implemented, governance arrangements are still relatively new, and the staffing arrangements are undergoing further reorganisation. The centre's capacity for further improvement at this time remains, therefore, satisfactory.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Work with the local authority to establish a permanent staff presence at the centre to provide more opportunities for informal day-to-day contact with families and to encourage greater engagement of parents in the work of the centre.
- Work with the local authority and professional partners to:
  - establish more effective ways of gathering information and data which are relevant to the centre’s reach area
  - analyse available data more rigorously to evaluate the centre’s effectiveness and identify areas for further development.
- Contribute more to the drive to encourage workless adults back into employment by providing and/or facilitating:
  - further training to help adults improve their skills and/or gain further qualifications
  - opportunities for adults to engage in volunteer work to broaden their experience and increase their prospects of employability.
- Continue with and develop further initiatives to increase the proportion of mothers initiating and sustaining breastfeeding.
- Engage more parents in decision making and shaping the direction of the centre through involvement in the parents’ forum and advisory board.

### **How good are outcomes for families?**

<b>3</b>
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The centre’s input is helping to improve healthy outcomes for those families who attend the centre’s activities, as staff are well trained and take opportunities to discuss health issues with parents. The extent of this improvement, however, is unclear as the centre lacks sufficiently up-to-date, reliable, localised data to show its impact. Immunisation rates within the authority are above average, but the centre does not have specific figures for the Brookside area. The proportion of mothers initiating breastfeeding has improved markedly over the last year, but is still below the national average, and the proportion maintaining breastfeeding is the lowest within the local authority. Evidence suggests that the proportion of five-year-olds who have a healthy weight is increasing, but is still below the national average.

Because the centre’s many partners are good at referring vulnerable families to the centre, staff are quick to identify issues and help families improve all aspects of safety within the home. Many parents say how the centre has helped them to show improvement in their parenting skills, leading to improved behaviour and greater safety in the home. Case studies show that the centre is effective in improving outcomes for the majority of children on child protection plans. The ‘Freedom Programme’ has also been successful in helping victims of domestic abuse and securing a safer home environment for mothers and their children.

Although levels of skills and abilities are below average at the end of the Early Years

Foundation Stage, they have improved over the last two years, and the gap between the lowest-achieving children and others is narrowing. Children attending the centre's 'Playing Together' sessions show curiosity, and parents express appreciation for the improvement in their children's social skills. One parent, for example, talking about the impact of the centre on her child's development said, 'My son's social skills and speech have improved.' Children behave well and develop positive relationships with others. Parents who attend the centre's activities make good progress in developing their parenting skills. However, there is relatively little uptake of opportunities for parents to gain further skills or qualifications through engagement in training, adult learning or other relevant activities. Job vacancies are received from Jobcentre Plus and are advertised in the centre, but there is not enough active support to help parents back into employment, and the number of parents out of work remains high.

Informally, parents make a good contribution to the centre's decision-making processes. Staff ask parents to evaluate the centre's activities. They regularly canvass their views and use them to shape the centre's activities. However, leaders are aware that there are few formal opportunities for parents to contribute to decision making and governance. The centre is about to re-establish the parents' forum, and one of the advisory board's key priorities is to increase the representation of parents on the board. There are currently no opportunities for parents to act as volunteers at the centre.

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>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>3</b>

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

<b>3</b>
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The centre engages with around two-thirds of the families who live in the most deprived areas and a third of those who live in other parts of the reach area. Sessions such as 'Bumps and Babes' and 'Playing Together' are generally well attended, and numbers have increased since the centre's new facility opened. These sessions help to develop parents' confidence, as one parent said, 'The group has helped me rebuild my confidence and gives me time to play with my daughter.'

Provision to meet the immediate needs of families who are referred to the centre is good. Some initiatives, such as a targeted course to help families whose children are obese, have not yet been running for long enough to have had a significant impact on improving outcomes. Although a few men attend some sessions, there are currently no activities specifically geared towards fathers.

Nursery education provided through the neighbouring school and private nursery, childcare provided by most of the childminders with whom the centre works, and the centre's own sessions which are run for children and their parents are all of good quality. Although a few adults have benefited from courses to improve their literacy and numeracy skills, provision to meet longer-term needs of adults through training, particularly for those who are unemployed, is limited.

Families feel they are supported well by the centre's outreach workers, particularly in times of crisis. One parent said, 'I felt hopeless before I met the outreach worker, it made the world of difference to know someone could hear me and cared about my children.' Great care is taken in assessing families' needs and negotiating the right level of support with a wide range of professionals. The availability of a representative from the Citizens' Advice Bureau at some of the centre's activities has been instrumental in helping some parents learn how to manage their finances and access benefits.

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>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?**

**3**

The centre manager and team leader have managed the centre well through a period of change and uncertainty, maintaining high staff morale and a clear sense of purpose and mission. They have ensured that there is good day-to-day supervision of staff and good opportunities for professional development and training. However, governance arrangements, while understood, have not yet had time to become embedded. The centre's delivery plan sets out clear and relevant priorities for future development and focuses its efforts on key target groups. However, the centre's ability to provide a comprehensive and accurate evaluation of its effectiveness is impeded by lack of up-to-date data and information. The progress of individual families is monitored closely, but the available information is not collated sufficiently clearly to enable the centre to evaluate the effectiveness of specific initiatives.

Staff manage their time as effectively as possible, but travelling between the staff



base and the centre's building is a significant drain on their time. The fact that the building is only open when activities are running leads to missed opportunities to engage with families who live in the area, especially those who send their children to the neighbouring primary school or nursery. Good partnership working, however, which combines expertise to cover the age range from nought to 19, avoids duplication of effort and leads to more effective and efficient use of human resources than was the case before reorganisation. The centre offers satisfactory value for money.

The centre meets its duties to promote equality and tackle discrimination. Resources are targeted well to meet the needs of the most vulnerable families, but the longer-term needs of the unemployed are not prioritised as well as they should be. The gap between the lowest-achieving children and others is narrowing. Crèche facilities are provided for parents when they attend courses.

Protocols and practice for making referrals and sharing information about vulnerable families between the agencies who work with the centre are very effective. Staff are well trained in safeguarding procedures, and the work to support families where children are on the child protection register is of high quality. The centre undertakes the necessary checks to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children.

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>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>3</b>

## **Any other information used to inform the judgements made**

## during this inspection

The findings of the inspections of Windmill Primary School and Chipmunks Nursery in July 2011 were used to guide the inspection team's findings with regard to educational provision and outcomes for nursery-aged children. Provision and outcomes in both settings were judged to be good.

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Windmill Children's Centre on 24 and 25 January 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We very much enjoyed our visit to your children's centre and would like to thank all of you who gave your time to speak to us and tell us your experiences of using the centre. Your views have helped inform us of how well the centre is doing.

A number of you told us that you really like the centre's new building and that the number of people attending activities has grown because of the new location. We feel it is a great shame that the centre is not open throughout the day and that staff are based at another children's centre. Although you can always contact staff by phone and they are very responsive to any requests for help, we know that many of you would rather talk to someone face to face at the centre. We have asked the leaders to work with the local authority to investigate the possibility of having a permanent staff presence at the centre.

Although we have judged the centre's provision and the outcomes for families to be satisfactory, the centre has many good features. Safeguarding, partnership working with other professionals and organisations, and the care, guidance and support provided by the staff are particularly good features. Good nursery and childcare provision is available at Windmill Primary School, Chipmunks Nursery and through childminders. The activities which the centre runs, such as 'Bumps and Babes' and 'Playing Together' are of good quality. You told us how they help you and your children to socialise with others. They also give you good ideas of how to play with your children and help you to understand your children's development. Keeping you and your families safe is a high priority for the centre. Those of you who find yourselves in difficult circumstances receive particularly good support from the children's centre. Because the various organisations who have a duty of care for families work well together, any particular needs are identified and appropriate support is put in place quickly. Those of you who have had help from the centre's outreach workers are particularly appreciative of the support and guidance they have given. They have helped many of you to lead healthier lifestyles, feel safer at home and cope with family situations more effectively.

There are also some areas which need to be developed. Although there is good antenatal and postnatal support for mothers, the proportion of mothers sustaining breastfeeding is well below the national average. We have asked the centre to do more to encourage mothers to breastfeed their babies. The proportion of adults in the Brookside area who are out of work is high. Although some of you have attended training which has helped you to improve your literacy and numeracy skills, there are few opportunities for you to take part in education or training. There are also no opportunities at present for you to undertake voluntary work at the centre. We have asked the centre to be more active in supporting those of you who are out of work by providing or facilitating further training and volunteering opportunities to increase your prospects of employability.

The centre manager and team leader have worked hard to establish a positive ethos within the centre and have ensured that staff are fully trained and well equipped to carry out their responsibilities. They have identified appropriate priorities for the future development of the centre. However, they do not always receive sufficient information or data which would enable them to evaluate how effective the centre is in meeting your needs or to ensure that they are identifying the most pressing needs within your area. We have asked the centre to work closely with the local authority to improve this situation. Staff regularly ask your views of the centre, and they take note of these when deciding what activities they will provide. There are, however, few opportunities for you to be involved more formally in decision making and shaping what the centre provides. We have asked the centre's leaders to explore with you ways in which you might become more involved in having a say about how the centre is run, either through the parents' forum, which is about to be re-established, or as members of the advisory board.

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