

Inspection report for Smethwick Cape Hill & Windmill Sure Start Children's Centre

Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	384094
Inspection dates	1–2 February 2012
Reporting inspector	Susan Crawford HMI

Centre leader	Bhavna Solanki
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	n/a
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Pop-ins Playgroup (EY 306609) Victoria House Nursery (EY 276595)

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.

An inspection of the registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre manager and deputies, the data processing manager, early years support services, the Chair of the Partnership Board and Parents' Forum and the Local Authority Lead for children's centres in Sandwell. They met with a number of representatives of services who work through the children's centre and at outreach locations, including local schools, health visitors, family and maternity support workers and a representative of social services. Inspectors spoke to groups of parents and carers.

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

Information about the centre

Cape Hill and Windmill Children's Centre is a phase one on the site of Victoria Park Primary School. It was designated in October 2005. The children's centre provides a full core offer of provision. This includes: early education integrated with childcare, family and maternity support and outreach to parents, child and family health services. The majority of sessions are held at the centre, some services are located in neighbouring schools and at a local parish centre. The centre is funded by the local authority. The long-established centre manager also manages Bearwood Children's Centre. A parent chairs the partnership board and parents' forum. The centre opens 52 weeks each year on weekdays from 9am until 5.30pm. There is a 20-place playgroup for children aged two to five years and a 72-place full-day care nursery for children aged from birth to five years located in the building. The playgroup is managed by the children's centre and the nursery is managed by a private company: both have separate early years inspection arrangements. The

playgroup was inspected at the same time as the children's centre and the nursery was last inspected in February 2011; both inspection reports can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

A majority of the families who use the centre are from a Pakistani background. A smaller minority are Indian, White British and Black African/Caribbean. Data for the reach area place the user base in the bottom 10% nationally for deprivation. The centre serves one of the most deprived areas in Sandwell. There are 1086 children under five in the children's centre's reach area. Around 43% of children and adults who use the centre come from homes which are dependent on benefits and where no-one is in work and an average of 32.5% of children live in low income families. The levels of skill shown by children when they start the nursery are below those expected for their age.

The range of activities offered by the centre includes baby clinics, two-year-old development checks, breast-feeding support and special needs support groups. The centre has links with health visitors and speech therapists. It provides a wide range of adult education courses and activities designed to support parents and carers back into employment.

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

Cape Hill and Windmill Children's Centre provides an outstanding level of support for children and their families. This is because the welfare of the whole community, whatever individual or group needs are, is at the heart of the centre's work.

Children's centre staff demonstrate an exceptional understanding of individual users' needs. These are initially assessed extremely well, with high levels of sensitivity, giving all families high levels of confidence in what the centre is doing. 'Here they don't just talk about things, they actually do something. That's what makes the difference to us', said one father. Centre staff believe that by improving the lives of parents and carers, helping them to be better parents, children's life chances will automatically improve. The good-quality play group, nursery and crèche provision supports parents in being able to access work, respite and undertake courses.

Children who attend the centre's playgroup, 'Stay and Play' sessions and crèche facilities benefit particularly from focused support and an excellent range of play opportunities that help develop their communication and social skills. Development checks for all two-year-olds are carried out by health visitors who pass on information about the children's centre and will refer any vulnerable children who need the support of the centre. Through excellent identification and support for disabled children and those with special educational needs, centre staff are helping parents to overcome discrimination towards disability based within some cultures.

The work of the centre is fully focused on equality of opportunity. The multilingual skills of some staff and parents are used very effectively to support those who speak very little or no English. This approach gives new users confidence that they will be understood and gives them a wide knowledge of what the centre can provide them to enhance their lives in this country. Skills such as the ability to speak a range of languages and positive attitudes like those towards disability are very useful to promote the work of the centre within its community. Makaton (a language using signs and symbols) is used widely throughout the centre to ensure excellent communication.

Safeguarding of children and other users takes a high priority. The centre exemplifies high-quality practice. Practitioners have a strong knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities with regard to safeguarding children. All staff have received appropriate professional training to enable them to provide exceptionally high levels of care and protection. Policies, procedures and practice are very strong and consistent, and they enhance the safety of children and vulnerable adults. Robust procedures and referral mechanisms ensure that concerns are followed up and support, where needed, is offered.

Leaders and managers are exceptionally well supported by all staff and the partnership board. They consistently review and evaluate the impact of their work so that, now, all outcomes are outstanding and provision is excellent. All activities are evaluated very well and various different methods are used to evaluate them, but there is no common system in place to enhance this process. The relationship between the staff, partnership board and partners is exceptionally strong, and they all work very effectively together. Staff morale is very high and all show exceptional levels of commitment to the community and pride in their work. There is a far higher level of engagement with the community than in the past and now 77% of children under five years in the centre's catchment area have been reached. The centre has good success in engagement with fathers who attend sessions including representation on the parents' forum. Demand to attend the centre's activities is such that extra sessions, including 'Stay and Play' have been put on. The improvement in the centre's impact on the community and the exceptionally high-quality provision means that the centre has an outstanding capacity to sustain further improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop a consistent system for evaluating the effectiveness of the centre's activities in improving outcomes for users.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

Parents are developing an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves and their families healthy including those who may be identified as in most need. There is a very strong focus on the promotion of healthy living. Consequently, parents have developed a very positive attitude towards healthy lifestyles, and are improving their knowledge and understanding. There are extensive opportunities for adults and children to play, have fun and learn together in sessions such as 'FABtots', 'Eatwell' and 'Cookwell'. An excellent range of learning activities for adults and children of all ages enables them to achieve high levels of knowledge and understanding in relation to their starting points. An extensive range of activities is provided, such as baby massage, breastfeeding support and 'Pit stop' which encourage children and their parents to be more physically active. These activities enable parents to keep their children healthy and have a positive impact upon their health. Emotional well-being is an important aspect of the centre's work. Maternity support workers make referrals to smoking cessation and are trained in using the 'Baby Clear' testing kits which test carbon monoxide levels of a person. They are then able to highlight the dangerous levels and the impact that this has on their unborn baby. Outcomes are maintained at a high level.

Children are active learners. This is evident through observing different groups where they confidently lead their own learning and happily pursue their own interests. Children and adults develop excellent skills for their future lives and self-development. Parents develop confidence, stability and independence through training and volunteering opportunities which encourages progression into employment. The early years monitoring 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 support and training to the local nurseries, childminders and schools. Effective partnerships between local schools and early years provision are excellent and are instrumental in ensuring that the transition arrangements support children as they move on to the next stage in their education.

Parents feel comfortable and confident to approach practitioners to discuss issues, and their own awareness of children's safety is promoted very well. Additionally, invaluable home safety checks are offered to raise their awareness of safety within the home environment. The centre successfully prioritises the more vulnerable families and provides the necessary equipment to enable them to safeguard their children. Case studies show significant impact and improved outcomes for children on child protection plans. Robust systems are in place to support vulnerable children and any adult in need. One parent said that if she had not had the centre in her life she would have lost her children. This is excellent testimony to the invaluable work that the centre has in keeping families together and improving their outcomes. Early

identification of families with additional or special needs is undertaken by family support workers, in partnership with health professionals. Those who are disabled or who have special educational needs are exceptionally well supported and mix freely with others within the setting.

Adults using the centre are instrumental in making choices and in providing valuable feedback on their experiences. Through the parents' forum, and the partnership board, users have opportunities to express their views and are engaged in the governance of the centre. They are actively involved in decision-making and proactively communicate their views. The centre's role in the life of the community is well established; it is described as 'an oasis within a hectic, built-up area: it's a one-stop shop where you can get whatever help you need'. Community cohesion is very well enhanced. Professional partners say they value working with this centre because it is so highly thought of within the community: it enables them to reach far more families than might be the case otherwise.

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

Families' needs are assessed extremely well, and are reviewed sensitively and consistently in order to ensure their suitability and effectiveness. Assessments such as those carried out under the common assessment framework (CAF) are very clear and effective, and ensure appropriate and highly effective care is provided. Methods such as use of screening tools are used to assess all children's speech and language skills. This enables the centre to accurately provide the right level of support to the family. Facilitators demonstrate an exceptional understanding of individual's needs and, through effective partnership assessment, services fully meet families' needs. Practitioners are dedicated to supporting families based on feedback provided through the centre by those using the services. The parents' forum, mystery user, satisfaction surveys and customer feedback are used to assess need and design

change.

Cohesive teamwork in planning learning activities for young children is evident and highly successful. Early Years Foundation Stage planning is completed on a staff group basis and exceptionally high quality learning and development provision takes place on site in the playgroup. The children's centre teacher and staff are extremely knowledgeable, fully aware of children's starting points and consistently consider these when planning the learning intentions for each session. Effort and achievement are celebrated consistently; for example, graduation days for pre-school children are enjoyed immensely.

For adults, the quality and range of services are excellent. The centre promotes individualised, purposeful learning of a high quality. Providers demonstrate excellent subject knowledge and sessions are expertly tailored to support individual users' needs. External organisations have regular slots at the centre to provide specific advice and guidance, such as the sessions provided through partnership working with the local supermarket that provides a monthly job club and 'Next Step' which offers an appointment system to users to gain help and advice on how to apply for a job, interview techniques plus much more. Ongoing evaluations are routinely completed to ensure that all sessions and resources continue to promote purposeful learning. Specialist staff are often used to deliver services, ensuring accurate learning takes place such as 'Brushstrokes' which provides an 'English for speakers of other languages' who are pregnant. This helps expectant mothers communicate more effectively through the stages of pregnancy. Statistics indicate that there is a very good take-up of services by those living in the centre's reach area.

The centre displays excellent quality and range of guidance and support. The level of support provided by family support workers for families who may be experiencing times of crisis is excellent. They offer quick interventions such as respite nursery places, food from the food bank, clothing and other donations. Through personalised support, parents feel safe, find staff readily accessible, obtain excellent quality information and engage with great enjoyment in the centre's activities. Some aspects of its provision are innovative, such as developing links with Citizens Advice Bureau to support families with debt problems or ensuring they receive benefits to which they are entitled. The centre is making a hugely positive, noticeable difference with the families they are reaching.

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

Governance arrangements are strong and accountability is very clear. The partnership board chair and other partners actively challenge the work of the centre at a strategic level. The chair also chairs the parents' forum and liaises very effectively between the two groups. Excellent monitoring, evaluation of performance and outcomes, through all of the various partners and the wide range of activities, are highly effective in ensuring the centre performs at a high level in all aspects of its work. There is no common system in place to gather all of the many types of effective evaluations that are undertaken. Very clear structures support the excellent day-to-day running of the provision. Finance is monitored very closely to ensure that all available funds are used to full effect. Management within the centre is so effective that, despite cutbacks in the level of funding, the centre has managed to maintain its level of services. This is helped through volunteers working in the centre. The centre provides outstanding value for money.

The centre's managers and all staff place a high priority on all aspects of safeguarding. All policies are in place and practice is of a high quality and ensures the safety and security of all users. All staff are trained in child protection to levels that are appropriate to their responsibilities. All are fully aware of a range of processes relating to child protection issues and have a strong knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities. This enables early intervention and the centre is able to draw on a wide range of expert services to support most needs, ranging from family relationships to issues supporting emotional health.

Similarly, the centre is fully committed to the promotion of equality and diversity and the activities provided are instrumental in narrowing the achievement gap for those in most need. Practitioners go to extraordinary lengths to ensure the full inclusion of all, regardless of gender, ethnicity, background or need, including those who are disabled or who have special educational needs. Practitioners have specific areas of expertise and are extremely well deployed to give users confidence in the work of the centre. For example, the role of the deputy manager as a MARAC (Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference) Champion has been hugely valuable in developing strategies to target families. One parent described her experience as 'life-saving.'

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 secure 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	1

statutory duties	
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

An inspection of the registered early years/childcare provision, carried out during the same week as the inspection of the centre under Section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006, contributed to the children’s centre report and judgements.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Smethwick Cape Hill Sure Start Children's Centre on 1–2 February 2012. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

We are very grateful to all of the parents, carers and representatives from the centre’s professional partners who took the trouble to come in to tell us about the work of the centre. You gave us an extremely positive picture of the centre, and what you had to say was very useful indeed in making our final judgements.

Cape Hill and Windmill Children's Centre has so many strengths that it is difficult to pick out any individual outstanding features. At the core of the centre’s success is the strong leadership of the centre’s manager and staff team, the exceptionally strong teamwork of the centre’s staff and its relationship with professional partners. This means that the workers at the centre communicate exceptionally well with each other and their feedback provides a deep knowledge and understanding of the community’s needs. These are met in full. Additionally, staff members continuously evaluate their own work and build on their practice to further improve performance. Centre workers are keen to improve their own skills and take up any training available so they are able to provide high quality. There has been a great deal of improvement in what the centre provides and how well your children and you are now doing. The number of families using the centre’s facilities has improved greatly

over the last few years. The centre is now 'a centre of excellence at the heart of the community'.

The centre's work on promoting health within the community is having a tremendous impact. Families are now thinking much more about their health through diet. Medical practitioners have established a high level of contact with families, and support young and expectant mothers very well. The emotional health of people within the community is of high importance and we agree with you that it is supported effectively through very good quality outreach work.

The safety of all families using the centre is high on the agenda. The centre's safeguarding procedures are exemplary, and adults and children alike feel safe and confident while there. Children are very well prepared for transferring into nursery or school. Similarly, adults who engage in courses and adult education opportunities are empowered to improve their own lives. Your views contribute to the centre's improvement through the parents' forum, partnership board and through feedback after attendance at sessions. So many families within the reach area are now accessing the centre's services that managers have had to put on extra sessions. This is true testimony to the centre's success.

There are very few areas that require significant improvement and the centre and managers are aware of these anyway. The centre has such a good level of provision and a strong relationship with its users that, between you all, you have built up a high level of expertise and positive attitudes. To develop further the work of the centre, we have asked the centre manager and local authority to devise ways to streamline the many evaluation processes that are in place.

We would like to thank everyone who came to speak to us. It was a privilege to be able to talk to you all. Your honest and open discussions with us helped us immensely during the inspection. We observed you value one another and show mutual respect. We thoroughly enjoyed spending time at your centre, and we wish you and your families the best for the future.

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