

# Inspection report for Stourbridge Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Dudley
<b>Inspection number</b>	386943
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 February 2012
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Greenfields Primary School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Greenfields Primary School (URN 103799) Greenfields Partnerships Pre-School (EY416295) Greenfields Pre-School (EY380014)

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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**Report published:** February 2012



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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 senior managers and leaders, members of the advisory board, health and social care professionals, headteachers, representatives of the local authority, school and community partners, family support workers, early years professionals, and parents. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

The Stourbridge Centre was designated as a phase two centre in 2008. It serves an extensive urban population but families attend from across the whole of the borough. Some of the families in this area live in one of the 30% most deprived areas in the country.

Action for Children manages services at Stourbridge Children's Centre and reports directly to the local authority. The centre has an advisory board. Membership is drawn from the local authority, health services and other partner agencies. The centre's staff team consists of a service manager, leadership team, family support workers, business manager, early years practitioners, and volunteers.

The centre is located in premises formerly used by a primary school, and accommodates a privately registered pre-school for children up to the age of five. Much of the centre's provision is planned in partnership with community partners to maximise services for families. The local area is socially very mixed. The proportion of families who claim benefits and worklessness amongst the adult population is at around 15%. Some families in the local area experience significant levels of poverty, unemployment, high levels of drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence and low levels of literacy and numeracy. Most families (95%) are of White British heritage. The remainder represent a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds but few are new to speaking English.

Within the reach area, there are 1210 children who are under five years of age. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills, knowledge and abilities that are below those expected for their age.

The centre offers a range of health, social care and family support services. Crèche facilities are arranged to support activities on site.

## 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**

**2**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**2**

## Main findings

This is a good and improving centre. Firmly established in the lives of a large majority of families living in the area, the centre provides a welcoming, inclusive and safe place where children and families are thriving. One parent said, 'It's like the building wraps its arms around you'. The timely and sensitive contributions of caring staff are helping to secure good and rapidly improving outcomes for children and families. One parent explained, 'The support you get (from staff) is unbelievable'. Another parent said that families' involvement with the centre 'changes your life'. Comments such as these were heard from parents throughout the inspection. User satisfaction rates are extremely high and families regularly and routinely contribute to the centre's evaluations of its effectiveness. Accurate self-evaluation is used to inform improvement planning, and targets are set to actively challenge the centre's involvement with target groups and improve outcomes. For instance, actions to increase centre membership and participation rates have reaped dividends. The centre has increased its membership by 14% in the last five months and of the 133 babies born in the reach area last year, 100% were breastfed. Outstanding care, guidance and support play a significant role in the good provision of services.

Leaders and managers at all levels and all other staff are determined to improve the lives of families. They have a shared vision and ambition to raise the performance of the centre so that it becomes a centre with outstanding overall effectiveness. They recognise that they can achieve this by increasing the effectiveness of the good working relationships with partner agencies and strengthening the role of the

advisory board. They know the needs of the community and target groups well because partnership working with health professionals and those from the voluntary and private sectors is strong. Families made vulnerable by their circumstances and target groups are well represented in the membership of the centre. Leaders carry out regular monitoring of the centre's performance and they have a clear understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. This supports the centre's good capacity to improve.

Parents make an invaluable contribution to the success of the centre through their regular feedback, comments and suggestions. However, there is no parent representation on the advisory board and the newly formed parent forum has yet to make an impact. The centre's volunteer programme is impressive and several parents have improved their confidence, skills and employment opportunities through highly effective support, induction and training.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Accelerate the centre's progress:
  - increasing parents' and carers' involvement on the advisory board and in the strategic decision-making processes
  - increasing the effectiveness of the advisory board in ensuring that all partners take an active role in promoting high quality integrated provision.

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

<b>2</b>
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Families' good health is promoted through the varied range of health services. Healthy eating, the use of outdoor play and exercise, and the provision of healthy snacks all form part of the centre's healthy lifestyles strategy. Breastfeeding rates are very good – take-up rates in the community are excellent, and childhood obesity is reducing at a steady pace. Those families most in need of support are clearly identified and access specific interventions which are improving outcomes for all. Those parents who made their views known say they and their families feel '100% safe' at the centre. Children who are subject to child protection plans receive sensitive and highly effective support because of the skilful use of the Common Assessment Framework processes. Parental evaluations show that most parents feel their capacity to support their child's emotional and physical well-being has improved following targeted support. Vital, high quality support is provided to families in crisis. Staff and volunteers are well-versed in current child protection practice and expectations because they attend regular safeguarding courses. Parents also access relevant training and workshops, including first aid, which are proving beneficial and supporting improved outcomes for children.

Children are making good or better progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The percentage of children achieving at least 78 points across the Foundation Stage profile as an average of the five schools within the reach area has increased from 74.9% in 2009 to 86.9% in 2011. This shows that children are achieving extremely

well in comparison with the national average.

Parenting and nurturing programmes are particularly popular with families and are leading to significant gains in parenting confidence and skills which is having a positive impact on children's behaviour. Data shows that 54% of adults using the centre are involved in learning activities. Volunteers access nationally accredited learning and training opportunities and are extremely well supported to develop the confidence, skills and attitudes to support them on pathways to employment. One ex-volunteer explained that before becoming involved in the centre, 'I was at rock bottom. Now I am a different person and I am being paid to do something I love'. The economic well-being of families is improving because of the quality learning activities and workshops such as one on fuel poverty. In addition, the work of the Citizens Advice Bureau, a much valued partner, is supporting families to maximise their incomes ensuring they claim benefits to which they are entitled.

Parents make highly prized contributions to the life of the centre as volunteers but also through their regular contribution to evaluations. However, they play little part in the governance of the centre and do not have a role on the advisory board.

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>2</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>2</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?

**2**

Services are matched well to users' needs. For instance, the family support workers provide vital support to families with children on child protection plans. Specialist services for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are highly valued and very well used. Outreach work with families is a strong aspect of the centre's work. This is further strengthened because of the positive steps taken by leaders and staff to improve the engagement with the wider community. As a result, services are well targeted to meet the needs of those families with the most complex needs. Young carers receive targeted and effective support within the centre. Through exciting and challenging activities, they are becoming empowered and developing positive self-esteem. In turn, they are developing the external play area

and courtyard for the benefit of all families. Families made vulnerable by their circumstances are prioritised for premium provision such as nursery funding for two-year-olds. Families using the centre say they feel their needs are met very well. The use of tried and tested assessments, such as the Common Assessment Framework, family reviews, and Early Years Foundation Stage assessments, are effective and ensure that services and interventions improve outcomes for all.

The majority of parents take part in a range of good quality adult learning activities such as paediatric first aid, breastfeeding peer support counselling, and volunteer induction and training. Parent volunteers spoke of the outstanding support they receive. One parent volunteer described the training for volunteers as 'astonishing'. She said, 'The training excelled all expectations.' Training and learning opportunities are diverse and interesting and take-up rates are good. The effective partnerships with local colleges and adult education organisations ensure that courses meet the needs of individuals so that individuals develop skills and are well supported on their journey into work.

Case studies and data show that high quality and timely services and support make a discernable difference to those families in need. There is a wealth of superb quality information, photographs, artwork and displays. Visually, the centre provides an extremely inclusive, diverse and welcoming environment. The strong links with health and social care services help families to access information and services quickly. Centre staff provide excellent quality one-to-one support to families, resulting in improved outcomes for children and parents.

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>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>1</b>

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

**2**

The success of the centre is as a result of the strong leadership shown at all levels of the organisation. Leaders are using their skills and expertise well to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the performance of staff and the centre overall. Performance management systems are robust and the effectiveness of individual staff is measured against specific targets and organisational expectations. Success is celebrated within team meetings and individual staff receive recognition from leaders for performance that exceeds expectations. Governance arrangements are well understood and are effective. The advisory board plays an important role in the governance of the centre and includes representatives from the wide range of professional partners. They support the work of the centre well but their skills and expertise are not being routinely used to elevate the overall effectiveness of the

centre. Centre leaders are aware that securing families' contributions to the governance of the centre is an important area for development. Professional supervision of staff and regular one-to-one meetings with managers promote the shared values of staff and their ability to meet organisational expectations. The concerted actions during the last six months to increase membership and user engagement have resulted in an impressive increase in the number of families who are routinely involved with the centre. For instance, parents are playing an increasingly important role in charting their child's progress in their individual learning journeys and in doing so are improving their awareness of how children learn. The 'Peppa Pig' family fun day was targeted at engaging families who were not routinely attending the centre. A total of 40 families attended and their comments and feedback were most encouraging. One family wrote; 'Excellent day, staff were exceptional'; and another wrote; 'Keep it up we love it'. The centre is providing good value for money and is actively engaging with a large majority of families living in the locality.

Safeguarding arrangements are thorough and effective. The suitability of all staff and volunteers is closely scrutinised in accordance with the centre's well-considered and thorough safer recruitment procedures and processes. All staff, leaders, governors and parent volunteers are trained in safeguarding matters. Many leaders have attended safer recruitment training. Most staff attend training on safeguarding and child protection related subjects several times a year. As a result, children and families receive prompt attention and support when concerns arise. Effective partnership working with social care and health partners, including agencies supporting survivors of domestic violence, helps to secure a place of safety during times of crisis. One partner said the centre 'is a safe place for families where survivors of abuse receive sensitive support'. As a result of the superb care, guidance and support provided at the centre, children and families are developing positive emotional well-being and are exhibiting improved confidence and self-esteem.

There is clear evidence that differences between the achievements of children is closing. The centre is very inclusive and there is strong provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The staff team reflects the community it serves and the bilingual support worker provides effective one-to-one support for families new to English. Target groups are well represented, including fathers, lone parents, families from minority ethnic backgrounds, and children in need. The setting is fully accessible and is easily navigated all on one level. Crèche & transport services are provided where appropriate to remove barriers to access. The centre is taking positive action to improve the engagement families in the reach area and targeted groups.

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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets</b>	<b>2</b>



<b>which secure improvement in outcomes</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>2</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**

Greenfields Primary School (URN 103799) was inspected in 2010 and was judged to be an outstanding school. Attendance is above average and the Early Years Foundation Stage provision was also judged to be outstanding.

Greenfields Partnerships Pre-School (EY416295) was inspected on 01/07/2011 and was judged outstanding in all aspects except for the effectiveness of evaluation which was judged to be good.

Greenfields Pre-School (EY380014) was inspected on 09/02/2009 and was judged to be good in all aspects.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Stourbridge Children's Centre on 14–15 February 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

The centre is providing a valuable lifeline for children and families who live in its area. The agencies supporting children and families work well together and are committed to making sure that your children get a good start in life, by providing you with good quality support and showing that they care what happens to you and your children. You told us that for many of you, contact with the centre has been life changing. We found that the care, guidance and support provided by staff at the

centre is excellent. Because of this, outcomes and life chances for the large majority of families are good and improving. The work that the centre is doing to involve families who are not routinely using the centre services is very impressive. The 'Peppa Pig' family fun day and other types of activities are proving very popular and are helping the centre to increase its membership and to include even more children and families in the good quality services and activities it provides.

Your children who attend the centre's provision are becoming increasingly well prepared for starting school. The centre and its partners are also providing good opportunities to help adults learn. We were particularly impressed with the very important and significant role many of you play in the life and development of the centre. For instance, the volunteer programme is an excellent way for many of you to develop your confidence, skills and expertise. The volunteers are doing a very good job supporting and delivering a range of activities such as 'Time for Twos'. Those of you who spoke to us told us how the centre has transformed your lives and has had an enormous impact on the well-being of your families. Those of you who access courses at the centre are able to use the crèche facilities, knowing your children will be very well cared for and will have fun!

The leaders and managers know what needs to improve to make the centre better for you, and they have the skills to carry out their plans effectively. The centre supports target groups very well, such as young carers, parents of children with additional needs and families in great difficulty and crisis. It is successfully reaching those who are most in need.

We have asked the centre to do two things to improve it even further for you. The first is to improve the extent to which families contribute to the governance of the centre and play a part in decision making as members of the centre's advisory board. The second thing we have asked the leaders to do is to use the wide range of skilled and expert partners who are members of the advisory board to help raise the overall effectiveness of the centre.

Thank you to those of you who met with us to tell us your views. Thank you for contributing to the inspection. Your comments proved invaluable to inspectors. Inspectors could see that, with the centre's encouragement, many of you now make a positive contribution to its services and to the life of the community.

We wish you and your families every success for the future.

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