

# Inspection report for Hob Green Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Dudley
<b>Inspection number</b>	383454
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 January 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mary Dudley

<b>Centre leader</b>	Karen Worton
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Hob Green Primary School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	

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 co-located primary school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, members of staff and professionals from other partner agencies. Discussions were held with members of the management committee, the headteacher, parents and representatives from the local authority.

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

## Information about the centre

Hob Green Children's Centre is located in the Pedmore and Stourbridge East ward within the borough of Dudley. It is a phase two children's centre, which was designated in March 2008, and began delivering services in January 2009 following completion of building works. It serves a diverse community. Areas of social housing immediately adjacent to the centre are in the 20% and 30% most disadvantaged areas in the country, and there are also a number of affluent areas within the locality. The children's centre operates on a school site shared with Hob Green Primary School. The centre's core purpose is provided through a range of integrated services that include health, stay and play sessions and crèche facilities, adult training, family support and outreach work.

The local authority has delegated responsibility for the day-to-day running of the centre to the governing body of the school. The centre has a management committee which meets on a regular basis to discuss and evaluate the effectiveness of provision and report to the governing body. The children's centre manager has

responsibility for a small staff team and the day-to-day running of the centre. She is line managed by the headteacher.

A small minority of children under five in the area live in workless households. Children start nursery with skills and knowledge that are below the expected levels. There are 970 children under five in the centre's reach area, 717 of whom are registered with the centre, of which 296 are from the most disadvantaged areas.

## 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**

**1**

## Main findings

Hob Green Children's Centre is a good centre. It is improving rapidly and has many outstanding features. This popular, well-led centre is an integral part of provision for children and families in the area. The centre has a highly cohesive, enthusiastic and dedicated staff team who work well together to improve the lives of families within the reach area. Health outcomes are improving for most. New and prospective mothers benefit from a full range of services which effectively promote their health and well-being. Promotion of healthy lifestyles for children is an integral part of all provision, although there is currently insufficient evidence of this having an impact on reducing obesity rates of children starting school. The centre's inclusive approach ensures that families from different backgrounds feel welcome and able to enjoy the wide range of provision on offer. Many centre users went out of their way to tell the inspectors how much they enjoy activities and about the excellent practical and emotional support they have received.

Safety is of paramount importance for the staff in all their dealings with children and families using the centre. Children and users report that they feel very safe in the centre, and that staff are always prepared to listen to their concerns. Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding. Families using the centre have an excellent understanding of how to ensure their children's safety. The site is safe, very secure and attractively furnished. Risk assessments are of good quality, and informed by the views of users and all staff and volunteers are subject to appropriate checks. Children are well behaved and confidently explore their environment and interact with one another. Children and families grow in confidence because their

contributions are valued and encouraged by staff.

Most adults accessing learning provision have shown real improvement, with a few achieving accredited qualifications and all having a good time in the process. Children participate in a range of age-appropriate activities, where they learn how to play together, make choices, learn new skills and have fun. However, children's individual learning needs are not assessed and their progress cannot be clearly demonstrated.

Users actively engage in the decision making and governance of the centre and feel that their views are listened to. The centre has a proactive group of volunteers whose work supporting sessions and as 'breast feeding buddies' is making a significant contribution to improving outcomes for parents. The centre makes a good contribution to the economic stability and independence of families. Citizens Advice Bureau workers and centre staff have supported a number of families to claim the appropriate benefits, thereby reducing inequality and making a real difference to their economic stability.

Assessment of need and appropriate target setting ensure most families, particularly those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, benefit from a range of good-quality services that are carefully tailored to meet their particular needs. Data are not always available at a sufficiently local level to ensure highly accurate assessment of needs for all. The centre promotes purposeful learning well, and activities are of a good quality. The care, guidance and support provided by the centre are excellent. Families say that staff are always there for them, are prepared to listen and offer support. The centre is highly responsive in times of crisis and the emotional needs of users are met well as staff provide one-to-one and group support.

The outstanding leadership and management of the centre have led to significant improvements in outcomes in the three years that the centre has been operating. Where outcomes are still improving, leaders have plans in place to further enhance provision and to monitor the impact of the work already undertaken with babies and very young children which is only just beginning to have an impact on children starting school. The centre manager provides highly effective leadership that puts high expectations for the community at the heart of the centre's work. Wall displays reflect positive role models and celebrate users' achievements. Staff have a high level of expertise supported by good-quality professional development. Parents and volunteers have a key role in the success of the centre and are involved in planning, evaluating and decision-making processes. Evaluation is supported by good-quality data systems provided by the local authority, such as the system to evaluate unit costings. Plans are clear and well supported by parents, partners and staff. Regular monitoring ensures that staff understand the challenges faced by families living in the area, are aware of the centre's strengths and identify key areas where outcomes could be improved still further. Self-evaluation is accurate and informed by families and key partners. Parental satisfaction surveys show that the vast majority of parents are very satisfied with provision. The centre's capacity for sustained improvement is excellent.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure processes to assess and monitor children's learning and development are in place in order to measure their individual progress.
- Build on current health initiatives of healthy eating and exercise in order to support even better outcomes for children and families.
- The local authority and the centre should work together to ensure the centre has even more detailed local data to help it better evaluate performance.

## How good are outcomes for families?

<b>2</b>
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The centre works well to improve outcomes for its families. The large majority of families in the area regularly attend the centre. For these families, outcomes are good and in some areas outstanding. Improving health outcomes are the result of good support from specialist health professionals, midwifery services, children's centre staff and 'breast feeding buddy' volunteers, together with the promotion of healthy lifestyles in all sessions for children and families. There is good support for new mothers suffering from anxiety and postnatal depression, and the number of infants being breastfed beyond six to eight weeks is above average. The centre actively promotes healthy lifestyles, including healthy eating and exercise, but this has not yet had an impact on children's obesity levels on entry to school, which are above the national average.

Parents feel safe and consider their children to be safe when using the centre. For many families the centre provides a safe haven. Excellent procedures ensure that children are safeguarded very well. Relationships between staff, children and families are very trusting and staff know them very well. Consequently, early identification and prevention of potential risks play a key role in reducing harm to children. There is significant and sustained improvement in outcomes for children on child protection plans, and use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is an integral part of the centre's work with families. As one parent said, 'They helped set up CAFs for both my sons, they have been great.' Highly effective parenting programmes have a marked impact on outcomes for users experiencing difficulties with children's behaviour. Parents are able to demonstrate their improved parenting skills and the difference they have made to them and their families.

Parents and children enjoy opportunities to work and play together at the centre. Children learn new skills and gain confidence through the range of learning opportunities and experiences they are involved in. Adults show improvement in their educational and personal development, and the accredited family learning course and literacy and numeracy courses are much valued by parents. Children's learning and development needs are not routinely assessed when they join activities and it is, therefore, not possible to measure their progress accurately. Good links with the onsite nursery ensure children are well prepared for their transition to school.

Children who have accessed services engage in positive behaviour, they play well together and readily share toys. There is a highly effective group of volunteers who support the work of the centre by helping to run activities and supporting new mothers to take up and sustain breastfeeding. An active parents' forum is an integral part of the centre. Parents volunteer to organise holiday programmes, publicise the centre, and have organised a fashion show to raise funds for the community, learning new skills in the process.

As a result of their engagement with the centre, children and adults improve their economic and social well-being. Children develop excellent social and personal skills through participating in activities at the centre with other children and with their parents. A job vacancy noticeboard is maintained in the centre and updated regularly. There is good signposting of users to local training courses. Information on budgeting and benefits is provided through the Citizens Advice Bureau. Volunteers at the centre participate in an extensive training course and some have gone on to further training and employment.

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>1</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>1</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**

Centre staff use their own expertise and skills and those of their partners to make well-informed and accurate assessments of the individual needs of users. Users of the centre are highly enthusiastic about it, saying it has given them confidence and provided a support network for them. Family support workers ensure that families facing complex difficulties are assessed and supported very effectively through positive, high quality inter-agency working and communication. Outreach work is very good, and vulnerable families feel extremely well supported. Services are diverse, of a high quality, and are reviewed with users on a regular basis. The centre is highly successful in meeting the needs of the wider community. Good use of existing data means that the centre is able to target services against a wide range of

need. However, data for some target groups are not available at a sufficiently local level to enable highly accurate tailoring of services.

Activities are of a good quality. They are designed around planned outcomes and, in sessions such as 'Tums 2 Mums' and 'Toddler Stop', children are happy, relaxed, engaged and learning, while parents improve their skills in group activities by being actively engaged in the sessions. The quality of care guidance and support offered by the centre is outstanding. There is a strong emphasis on providing effective emotional support to boost users' confidence and raise their self-esteem. This has a significant impact on improving the lives of families, particularly those whose circumstances have made them vulnerable. Sensitive, individualised support is provided to help promote outcomes and, in times of crisis, families feel extremely well supported. One parent said, 'I was suffering from depression when I came here and it saved me.'

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?**

<b>1</b>
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Leadership and management of the centre are exceptionally strong. The centre manager sets high expectations and demonstrates effective leadership. Staff at all levels share a common vision for improvement and success. There are excellent arrangements for supervision, and staff are full of enthusiasm for their work and praise for the centre. Clear structures for performance management and an emphasis on well-targeted professional development mean that staff feel confident about doing their jobs. Governance and accountability arrangements are clear and effective. There are strong links between strategic planning and operational planning. Financial oversight is excellent. Recent local authority led developments to identify 'unit costings' are providing the centre with an accurate measure of the value for money of its services. Provision offered by the centre is very well used, outcomes for families are good and in some cases outstanding. The centre is offering excellent value for money.

The centre's service improvement plan sets out clear targets for improvement based on self-evaluation. Evaluation of services is outstanding and runs throughout all the provision. A range of methods are adopted, which include activity evaluation forms, surveys, focus groups, and questionnaires. In addition, contact is made with parents three to six months after they have completed programmes, such as parenting and baby massage, to find out if they are still using the skills and techniques they learnt.



The views of children, parents and partners are gathered and used to shape services. Priorities for improvement are quantifiable, so that the centre's success in reaching them can be clearly measured and outcomes for the majority of families are good or outstanding.

The inclusion of all children and their families is central to the work of the centre. Staff are sensitive to the needs of those who use its services, and respond accordingly. Braille signage was put throughout the centre to support a partially sighted student, and partially sighted parents with a new baby were supported in undertaking literacy and numeracy sessions. Diversity is actively celebrated and provision is differentiated well to meet individual and group needs equally. The centre itself is a highly cohesive community where positive relationships flourish.

Partnership workers value the centre's facilities, the welcome they receive and the quality of communication they get from the centre. The centre is proactive in seeking partnerships, and relationships between key partners are clear and understood. Effective partnership working is having a positive impact on good and rapidly improving outcomes for families.

Users express very high levels of satisfaction and confidence in the centre. There are excellent opportunities for users to be involved in the work of the centre, through representation on the management committee and the parents' forum, and as volunteers. Users are regularly asked for their views and are engaged in the annual review and planning process.

Procedures for safeguarding are excellent. All staff and volunteers have undergone training on safeguarding, and have a very clear understanding of the steps they must take if they have a concern. Managers provide good supervision of staff. Children's safety and well-being are significantly enhanced by the rigorous and highly consistent implementation of policies, procedures and practice. Staff have a sensitive approach to the variety of needs the centre's users present, which ensures that families feel comfortable with staff and are very well protected. Security procedures and the attentiveness of staff mean that children are kept very safe on site.

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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>1</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>1</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>1</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>1</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>1</b>

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

The inspectors took into account the inspection findings for linked provision which took place at the same time as the children's centre inspection.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Hob Green Children's Centre on 24 and 25 January 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank those of you who met with us during the inspection, agreed to let us sit in on your groups, or spoke to us about the centre. We were very grateful for your help with the inspection and interested to hear your views.

Many of you went out of your way to tell us how important the centre is to you, what a difference it has made to you, and how much you enjoy the activities provided. The children's centre was described to us as 'a big part of the community'. We found it to be very welcoming and we were impressed by the high number of families who visit the centre and take part in a wide range of activities on a regular basis. You told us how friendly and approachable everyone is and how happy your children are, and we agree with you.

We judge that the extent to which the centre keeps you and your children safe is excellent. It is very effective in supporting you, especially at times of crisis. We know that you are asked frequently for your views on the activities and that many of you have already made suggestions about what you would like. We were very impressed by the large number of you who volunteer at the centre and with those parents involved with Parents' Voice and their representation of you on the governing body and the management committee.

The centre does some things especially well. The care, guidance and support provided by the centre are outstanding. A large majority of you who spoke to us were able to tell us about what you had learnt at the centre. Some of you have achieved qualifications. We want the centre to be able to tell you how much your children have learnt while they have been at the centre, so have asked them to introduce a process to do that. You also told us that you know about healthy lifestyles and have improved your self-confidence so that you feel more able to join in activities with your children. We have asked the centre staff to do even more to help you keep your children fit and healthy through doing even more activities that involve healthy eating and exercise.

The senior staff do an outstanding job in the way they run the centre. They have created a bright, clean, well-resourced environment where all are welcome. They are particularly skilled in monitoring the work of the centre to see how it can be improved further. We have asked the local authority to work with the centre to find out more information about the different groups in the community so that staff can plan to meet everyone's needs even more efficiently.

Thank you very much for your welcome and willingness to speak to the inspectors. We thoroughly enjoyed talking with you and sampling the centre's work. We wish you every success in the future.

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