

# Inspection report for St Matthews Sure Start Children's Centre

---

<b>Local authority</b>	Leicester City
<b>Inspection number</b>	384109
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 February 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mary Dudley

<b>Centre leader</b>	Shabina Suhail
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
<b>Centre address</b>	34 Vancouver Road Leicester LE1 2GA
<b>Telephone number</b>	0116 2426370
<b>Fax number</b>	0116 2626771
<b>Email address</b>	shabina.suhail@actionforchildren.org.uk

<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	First Steps Pre-school EY289609

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.

---

**Report published:** February 2012



The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100080](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100080).

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

No.100080

© Crown copyright 2011



## 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 centre leader and the senior leadership team, members of staff and professionals from other partner agencies. Discussions were held with parents, carers and representatives from the local authority. The inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

This phase one Sure Start children's centre is located on the St Matthew's estate close to the centre of Leicester city. The centre provides a range of services that include health, family support and outreach services, 'Stay and Play' sessions, crèche facilities, adult training, and advice and guidance. The local authority has delegated responsibility for the governance and management of the centre to the charitable organisation Action for Children. In 2010 there were significant staffing changes in the centre following a re-tendering process. The centre is networked with Belgrave and Woodbridge Children's Centres where staff from all three locations work as part of the North Leicester neighbourhood team. A neighbourhood advisory board provides advice and assistance to the three centres. It is made up of representatives from the local authority, private and voluntary sectors, other statutory agencies and parents. The centre is linked to First Steps Pre-school.

The centre serves a diverse community living in one of the 30% most disadvantaged areas in the country. Accommodation in the area is predominantly social housing, mainly maisonettes. Most of the families are from minority ethnic backgrounds, the highest proportion being of Asian origin. There are 629 children under the age of five in the area, the majority of whom are living in households dependent on workless benefits. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities are below those expected for their age on entry to early years provision.

## 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**

**2**

## Main findings

St Matthew's Sure Start Children's Centre provides satisfactorily for families and children. Some aspects of the centre's work are good, families are kept safe by the work of the centre and most aspects of their health are good or improving. Relationships with families are positive and the centre rightly prides itself on the warm welcome it extends to all. Users speak highly about the services provided by the centre and their experience of the support offered. Many parents feel that the centre is, 'Home from home'. Parents who use the centre are encouraged to let the staff know what they would like. For example, parents say what activities they would be interested in, and they are confident that their wishes will be considered. However, parents do not have enough opportunities to contribute to the decision-making and governance of the centre.

Staff are diligent in planning and evaluating activities for individual families. However, information about target and groups whose circumstances make them more vulnerable in the reach area is not robust. As a result, the picture of the profile of families held by the centre lacks precision. A data system introduced six months ago to address this issue is not yet fully embedded. Staff regularly monitor the impact of services they provide to families who attend the centre but this is insufficiently rigorous for some activities. This means that the knowledge of the impact of the centre's work on those from vulnerable groups is often general. Evaluation, such as value for money of different activities, is satisfactory but lacks precision.

Central to the work of the centre is the provision of good-quality care and guidance for children and their families. The centre meets the emotional needs of users well because staff regularly give them highly individualised support. Diversity is celebrated effectively and cohesion within the centre's community is good. The wide range of languages spoken by the staff team ensures that families with little or no English are able to access activities and benefit from good quality information and advice. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make rapid progress from their starting points as a result of early support work provided by the centre.

Good quality work with health professionals has led to improvements in the health of children and families. Breastfeeding and immunisation rates are well above the national average. Families whose circumstances have made them vulnerable are increasingly safe and protected. Risk assessments of all areas ensure good levels of safety in the centre. All centre staff and key agencies have a shared understanding of how to keep children and adults safe, and children learn how to behave in ways that are safe for themselves and others.

There are some examples of adults being supported to develop their confidence and skills to engage in education and training. However, children and adults engaged in some activities, such as 'Stay and Play' are not yet being assessed and monitored to adequately demonstrate their progress. A small minority of families' economic stability and independence have improved through gaining employment and being supported to gain the appropriate benefits, thereby reducing inequality and making a real difference to their economic stability.

Leadership and management of the centre are good. Governance and accountability arrangements are clear and understood. Good performance management arrangements are in place through the local authority and Action for Children. Where measuring of outcomes need to be improved, leaders have plans to more accurately monitor the impact of provision. Staff are becoming more skilled and confident in their use and analysis of data. The centre manager provides energetic leadership that puts high expectations for the community at the heart of the centre's work. Self-evaluation and planning at a neighbourhood level is informed by key partners. The centre's capacity for sustained improvement is good.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the assessment of children and adults' learning needs to ensure provision is tailored to meet individual need.
- More accurately measure the impact of the centre's provision on the progress of families and use the information to inform planning.
- Improve the use of existing data systems, to enable more accurate identification of families in most need of support.
- Increase the level of parental involvement in the decision-making and governance of the centre.

## How good are outcomes for families?

3
---

Users of the centre are highly enthusiastic about it, saying it has given them confidence and provided a good support network for them. They appreciate the friendly approach of the staff. They say they always feel comfortable and welcomed. Parents and children enjoy opportunities to play together, particularly at the monthly Saturday activity days. Several choose the centre specifically for what they see as the

relaxed and non-judgemental approach of the staff.

The majority of families in the area have contact with the centre. For these families, outcomes are satisfactory and in some areas good. Good and improving health outcomes are the result of support from specialist health professionals, midwifery services, and children's centre staff, together with the promotion of healthy lifestyles in all sessions for children and families. New mothers feel well supported, immunisation rates are high and the number of infants being breastfed beyond six to eight weeks is consistently above average. Prompt referrals from midwives and health visitors enable the centre to provide outreach, early support and family support for vulnerable families which has led to a real improvement in their health and emotional well-being. One parent spoke of the outstanding support she had received which had enabled her to quit smoking, better manage her child's behaviour and develop the emotional strength to move out of an abusive relationship. There has been a small reduction in the number of babies with low birth weight but obesity levels of children in reception year remain above average.

Parents and children enjoy and achieve satisfactorily. Starting points for many children are low, particularly where English is not their first language. The centre has worked hard to ensure parents have access to the nursery education grant, the majority of children who have accessed provision as a result of this, achieve well and are now approaching ability levels expected for their age. In other provision such as the activities forming part of 'Preventative Pathways', 'Discovering babies', 'Peekaboo', 'Talking Toddlers' and 'Small Bodies Big Voices', assessment and planning of individualised learning is insufficiently developed. There is improved educational and personal development for parents accessing training in literacy and numeracy classes. Parents speak highly of the toy library and how accessing it has given them confidence to support children's learning at home. Most children are well prepared for their transition to school and parents are supported and informed about their progress.

Families say that they feel safe at the centre. Safety and safeguarding of children and families are good. The centre has clear and relevant policies which are implemented well. It provides a safe and welcoming place for children and adults alike. Feedback from families who have received support for their individual needs say how they have more confidence to deal with issues facing them. Effective parenting programmes have a marked impact on outcomes for users experiencing difficulties with children's behaviour. Families whose circumstances make them vulnerable have their needs assessed through the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). Regular case meetings, held by centre staff and partners to review all open cases ensure support for children with a child protection plan and for those with a child in need plan, is effective.

Children and families who have accessed services engage in positive behaviour and show high levels of respect, care and concern for others. Parents know that their comments are listened to and several improvements have come about as a result of their suggestions. However, the involvement of parents in the governance and

strategic decision-making of the centre is limited. Families seeking to improve their economic stability are well supported by Jobcentre Plus, welfare rights and Supporting Tenants and Residents (STAR) workers. Families receive advice on benefits, housing, curriculum vitae writing and training opportunities which has resulted in an increase in benefit uptake and a small minority of people going on to further training and a few obtaining 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>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?

**3**

Staff have a broad picture of the needs of families in the area and can demonstrate some improvement in outcomes. Some information is provided from the local authority and health services, and from outreach work. The centre does not yet have a clear overview of data, and it does not fully meet the needs of all families in most need of support. Supporting families workers ensure that families facing complex difficulties are assessed, and supported effectively, through good inter-agency working and communication. Outcomes for all users are not collated and managers do not have a clear overview of the difference the centre is making. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and their parents are given practical help, for example, in meetings with specialist health services.

Outreach work is good, and vulnerable families feel extremely well supported. The monitoring of children's progress in linked early years provision has been supported by the children's centre teacher. Children record individual learning journeys, which monitor their progress. As a result, they support children's learning effectively. Assessment and monitoring in other activities is not as well developed. Some of the centre activities for children, and adults, are planned for the whole group but do not take sufficient account of their individual learning needs. In the sessions observed, children and babies were relaxed, happy and engaged. Care is taken to ensure that the environment is bright and attractive.

The quality of care and support for families provided by the centre is good, both in times of crisis and on a daily basis. Supporting families workers are readily accessible and work effectively with partners to meet the needs of vulnerable families. The centre's role in the life of the community is well established. Staff are tenacious in following up issues, and parents turn to staff when they experience difficulties at home. All parents who spoke to inspectors were clear about the positive impact different services have had on their families.

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?**

**2**

The leadership and management of the centre are good. Provision is integrated and the centre delivers services which have a positive impact on the lives of some of the families in the area. There are strong partnerships with a range of agencies such as Jobcentre Plus, health and midwifery services, welfare rights, the Supporting Tenants and Residents agency, and the police. These partnerships make an identifiable contribution to meeting a wide range of needs in the local area. Governance and accountability are good. Supervision and performance management arrangements are rigorous and effective, and staff are full of enthusiasm for their work and the centre. The services provided can be linked back to strategic planning so that provision clearly contributes to key priorities. The neighbourhood advisory board is supportive and is actively engaged in planning for improvement, but the system used does not easily allow for parents to have a full input.

The centre leader and senior management team recognise that not enough is done to evaluate the impact of the centre's work on target groups. Information about individual support for vulnerable families and its outcomes for families and children are collated carefully. As a result, all those involved in this work know how effective this work is. However, the centre does not yet measure the impact it has on outcomes for all users. Provision is planned across the cluster of centres; it avoids duplication and ensures the sustainability of resources. Centre leaders ensure sound use is made of skills of staff and resources of the centre. Outcomes for families are satisfactory and in some cases good. The centre is offering satisfactory value for money.

The inclusion of all children and their families is central to the work of the centre. Staff ensure that children and adults, regardless of background, aptitudes or other differences, have access to the full range of experiences on offer. A varied range of



resources reflects equality and diversity of the reach area. Parents are eager to explain that the centre itself is a real community where positive relationships flourish.

Good safeguarding arrangements, with clear lines of communication and collaboration between agencies, ensure that children are effectively protected. The staff have a strong commitment to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Staff receive regular training on how to keep children safe, particularly for child protection. Checks are made with the Criminal Records Bureau to make sure that all staff are suitable to work with children, and qualifications are maintained effectively. The centre has clear and appropriate policies for health and safety, child protection, risk assessment and safe recruitment, which are all up to date and reviewed regularly. Risk assessments are undertaken for all activities and visits. Parents are well informed of the centre's policy on protecting children and sharing information with other relevant agencies.

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 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>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>3</b>

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

The inspection of First Steps Pre-school took place in February 2011. Its provision for children was judged to be good.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaining about inspections*, which is available

from our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## Summary for centre users

We inspected the St Matthews Sure Start Children's Centre on 2–3 February 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory 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.

We agree with you that the activities the centre plans for you and your children are enjoyable and valuable for those who attend. You also told us that all of the staff involved in the centre work hard to help you and your children, especially when you have a problem, and we could see that that is the case. You told us how friendly and approachable everyone is and that your children are happy coming to the centre.

We judge that the extent to which the centre keeps you and your children safe is good. It is effective in its support of you, especially at times of crisis. We know that you are asked for your views on the activities and that some of you have already made suggestions about what you would like. We would like the centre to involve more of you in making decisions on how it is run.

You 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 to measure the effect of its work, particularly with regard to the vulnerable families in the area. This is so that the centre managers know which of the services are most effective. The centre has a satisfactory knowledge about the families who live in the area but we have asked them to find out even more so that they know they are providing support to all of those who need it most.

Some of you who spoke to us were able to tell us what you had learnt at the centre. Several people told us that they 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 we have asked them to keep data to measure what your children know when they first come to the centre, decide how to help them learn more and then tell you how much they have learnt.

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).