

# Inspection report for St Martin's Children's Centre

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| Local authority     | Wolverhampton      |
| Inspection number   | 366430             |
| Inspection dates    | 18–19 January 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | Mary Dudley        |

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| Centre governance           | St Martin's CE Primary school (Governing body) |
| Centre leader               | Lynne Law (Executive headteacher)              |
| Date of previous inspection | N/A  |
| Centre address              | Wallace Road<br>Bradley, Bilston<br>WV14 8BS   |
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| Linked school if applicable                     | The Federation of St Martin's Church of England Primary School and Field View Primary School |
| Linked early years and childcare, if applicable | N/A  |

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.

## 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 maintained nursery 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 two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, members of staff and partner professionals from other agencies. Discussions were held with children's centre committee members, parents, carers and a representative from the local authority. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

St Martin's Children's Centre is a Phase 1 centre which opened in 2006 in refurbished classrooms within St Martin's Church of England Primary school. The children's centre is situated in the Bilston East ward of Wolverhampton and serves a community that experiences high levels of social and economic disadvantage being located in an area in the top 20% most deprived wards in the country. The majority of local families are of White British heritage although there are a small number of Indian families (4%) in the catchment area. Teenage conception rates in the area are high and childhood obesity is of particular concern. The catchment area has a high percentage of adults who are out of work and benefit dependant. Most children enter early education with knowledge and skills that are below expectations for their age.

The centre provides the full core offer, including childcare and early learning, family support and health services. The majority of services are provided on-site with some provision being delivered at the community centre on the other side of the road. The children's centre works closely with Bilston Nursery School Children's Centre with whom it has a service-level agreement for the delivery of family support services. St Martin's Church of England Primary school, Field View Primary school and St Martin's Children's Centre form a federation, which is led by the executive

headteacher, the centre is managed by the centre manager who is also the head of school. Governance and accountability of the federation is through the governing body. There is a children’s centre committee with representatives from partner agencies, parents and the voluntary sector. The centre manager is also head of school.

## 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 users and the wider community**

**2**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**2**

## Main findings

St Martin’s Children’s Centre provides good-quality services for children and families. The centre staff are friendly and welcoming to all users, and the good-quality care and support offered is a strong aspect of the centre’s work. Users appreciate the welcome they receive; one parent typically commenting, ‘The staff are very friendly and easy to talk to’. Children are eager to attend and adults value the positive impact the centre’s support has had on their lives.

A key strength of the centre is the good leadership provided by the centre manager and leadership team. All appropriate policies and procedures are in place and up-to-date. Safeguarding procedures are good and the centre has a good record of improving the safety of children. The centre manager and all the staff ensure the building is a safe and secure environment for all users. Wall displays reflect positive role models and celebrate users’ achievements. Staff receive regular support and supervision and are clear on their roles and responsibilities. User’s views are sought informally through conversations and evaluations of provision. There is, however, a lack of structured opportunities for users to be involved in making decisions about the activities and programmes the centre provides.

The care, guidance and support offered to families is a strength. Good partnership working with health services ensures all new families are visited at home and offered support where appropriate or signposted to other provision. The centre has challenging plans to increase the proportion of centre users, particularly those from hard to reach groups who do not access the centre’s provision. Staff work effectively with partner organisations, but engagement with some partners, such as Jobcentre Plus, is proving to be challenging.

Children who attend the day-care provision and the play-development sessions make good progress in all areas of learning. A good range of activities helps parents to support and improve their children’s personal, social and emotional development and build good relationships with them. However, opportunities for adults to undertake training in order to promote their economic well-being are limited.

Given the improved quality and use of data, the ambition and drive of the leadership team and effective action planning, the centre has good capacity to build on its good provision and further improve outcomes. It is monitored, supported and challenged well by the local authority through an annual review and through monthly managers’ meetings.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Extend the range of opportunities available for adults to access training and learning opportunities that will lead to employment.
- Increase the opportunities for adult users to be more involved in the governance and decision making processes of the centre.
- Engage with families in the wider community not currently accessing provision to ensure participation is widened and draws in hard to reach groups.

## How good are outcomes for users?

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Outcomes for centre users are good with strongly improving outcomes in families’ health and children’s educational achievement. The centre effectively addresses users feelings of isolation and insecurity with parents saying, ‘Staff are friendly and approachable and want to listen’.

Improving health outcomes are the result of good support from specialist health professionals and family support workers, together with the persistent promotion of healthy lifestyles in all children and family sessions. Families with young children benefit from services that range from baby massage and breast feeding support to the use of the mobile dental unit. Parents comment very positively about the baby massage sessions and say that these activities have made a difference to their children, ‘My son was hard to settle when he went to bed; now I massage him before bed and he settles much easier’. Targeting of obesity through Bradley Mums in Control weight management courses, ‘Cook and Eat’ sessions, health-trainer support at a one-to-one level and ‘Dads and Dots’ swimming is beginning to have an impact.

Relationships between staff and families are very trusting and staff know the children very well. Consequently early identification and prevention of potential risks play a

key role in reducing harm to children. Robust systems for security ensure that parents and children feel safe when attending sessions: 'There is a very inviting atmosphere. I hand the children over and never worry about them'. Good multi-agency working supports improved outcomes for children with child protection plans and staff engage fully in the Common Assessment Framework process.

Parents report that the centre's organised activities and drop-in sessions have helped them feel better about themselves, reduce their isolation and enabled them to make friends.

The centre provides ample opportunity for children to make a positive contribution, and adult users show their respect for one another and staff. They are pleased to contribute their ideas to improve the quality of provision, but there are limited opportunities for them and members of the wider community to be actively involved in making decisions.

Information, advice and guidance to users on issues such as health and well-being and housing are good. There is some effective practical support given to families to enable them to access training, such as respite childcare places, and the Citizen's Advice Bureau provides a monthly advice and information session. Even so, access to further learning opportunities and advice that may increase adults' chances to progress into employment or training are limited.

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| <b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable 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 users 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 users 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 are developing economic stability and independence including access to training</b>     | <b>3</b> |

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

**2**

The centre provides good quality services and care, guidance and support through its centre-based activities and family support. Constructive relationships help parents feel confident to seek advice and support. Staff have a good level of expertise and professional knowledge to successfully help families improve their health, well-being and achievement.

The assessment of need for families is supported well through the notification of new births which is followed up with home visits from family support workers. Initial assessment and discussions with families are followed with offers of support or signposting to appropriate activities. For families with complex difficulties, the assessment of need and follow-up multi-agency support are very good. Case files are well ordered, indicating the impact of support and where further work is needed.

The centre very effectively promotes the learning and development of children. Sessions and courses are of good quality and informative. Children are well prepared for school through the effective provision for the early years. Achievement is celebrated through positive displays and individual encouragement. Parents are able to identify the positive impact of sessions on their own learning and enjoyment.

The centre provides a wide range of services and activities. Activities such as 'Dads and Dots' swimming sessions reflect how well the centre works to engage hard to reach groups. A significant number of users attend various childcare and parenting courses, and engage in activities that help them support their children's learning and development. While take-up is satisfactory, attendance is sometimes too infrequent to ensure that good habits are sustained. The centre recognises the need to attract more regular users.

The quality of care for users and their children is good. All parents who spoke to the inspectors were positive about the impact different services have had on their families. They were particularly complimentary about the care and support they received from all staff, 'I do not know what I would have done without them'.

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| <b>The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users</b>                                   | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>                    | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b> | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community</b>                    | <b>2</b> |

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

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Governance arrangements are secure and there are clear lines of accountability in place. Members of the children's centre committee, the governing body and the senior management team are fully committed to improving outcomes for hard to reach and vulnerable children and families in the area. Dedicated and energetic leadership is provided by the centre manager. Staff are supervised well and effectively supported to improve their practice performance management procedures and professional supervision. An effective agreement is in place for the provision of the family support service. The senior management team have recently been able to set more ambitious targets based on much improved information and data, resulting

in a good quality and challenging action plan.

The centre provides a good quality, welcoming and safe environment. The accommodation for the Early Years Foundation Stage is generous in size and includes a secure outdoor area. Staff are well trained and appropriately deployed. Outreach services for vulnerable groups in the community are good and beginning to have an impact.

Equality and diversity are promoted successfully. Services are designed to engage users in the area from a range of backgrounds. Staff are sensitive to the needs of those who use its services and respond accordingly. Examples of this are the family support worker who walked with a blind carer from their home to the centre so that they would feel able to bring their child to day care provision. Another member of staff changed the route taken by the Bradley strollers (a parent and toddlers' walking group) to meet the needs of a parent who has specific medical needs.

Good safeguarding arrangements are in place, with clear lines of communication and collaboration between agencies to ensure children are safeguarded. The centre's staff have been trained at the appropriate level in child protection procedures and all checks, vetting and recruitment processes are in place and rigorously monitored. Protocols and practices for referrals are well known and a high priority across the work of the centre.

The centre knows itself well and regularly evaluates the outcomes of provision. There is evidence that some evaluation has resulted in changes to provision. However, a system to evaluate the longer-term impact of the provision on outcomes for children and adults using the centre is not yet in place. There are good partnerships with other agencies which ensure integrated delivery of services.

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| <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 extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</b>           | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community</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 evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>  | <b>3</b> |

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| <b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community 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**

Information from the concurrent Ofsted inspection of St Martin's Church of England Primary school has been taken into account when writing about early years provision and outcomes for children. The inspection of Bilston Nursery School Children's Centre was noted in writing this report.

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 St Martin's Children's Centre on 18-19 January 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your children's centre recently. During our visit we looked at the centre's plans and documents and talked with a number of you as well as the professionals who work with you. Many of you went out of your way to tell us how much you enjoy the activities provided through the centre. You told us that staff are friendly, hardworking and give you excellent support. We agree with you. We found the centre to be welcoming and filled with happy children. The staff have a high level of expertise and offer good practical and emotional support to families who need it.

The centre does some things well, the centre manager and the staff team work hard to make sure that the centre offers a safe environment that you enjoy and feel happy to leave your children. The centre staff take every opportunity to encourage you to stay healthy and lead healthy lifestyles. We saw that the staff were keen to listen to your views, although only a few of you are involved in planning and evaluating services.

Staff at the centre work well with staff from other organisations such as health



visitors so that they can provide you with any support you may need. Those of you who have received a range of support from the centre recognise the positive difference it has made in your lives. A number of families in your area do not use the services of the centre, or may not know about them, so the centre will be trying to involve more people in its activities in the future.

Children who attend the day-care provision and the play-development sessions make good progress in all areas of learning. Those of you who attend activities to help you to support and improve your children's development have told us how they have helped you develop more positive relationships with them. However, there are too few opportunities for you to undertake training to develop skills for work.

Thank you very much for your welcome and willingness to speak to 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).