

# Inspection report for All Saints Children's Centre

Local authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	367733
Inspection dates	6-7 April 2011
Reporting inspector	Jayne Utting HMI

Centre governance	The Governing Body of Stanhope Primary School
Centre leader	Mr John Vasey
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Whitehall Street, South Shields, Tyne and Wear, NE33 4SU
Telephone number	0191 420 7657
Fax number	0191 422 7878
Email address	<a href="mailto:Marian.wells@southtyneside.gov.uk">Marian.wells@southtyneside.gov.uk</a>

Linked school if applicable	Stanhope Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY272351 – Sure Start – All Saints

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.

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early year's inspector. The inspectors visited a range of provision across the centre. They also held meetings with senior managers from the centre, parents, members of the advisory board and a number of partners including Early Years Foundation Stage and childcare partners; health, education and children's social care professionals and representatives from community and volunteers services. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

All Saints Children's Centre is located in the All Saints Ward in South Shields. The number of children aged from birth to four in the reach area of the centre is just over 725. Around 42% of households are lone parents with dependent children. Estimated weekly income is significantly lower than the South Tyneside average and the percentage of children aged from birth to four living in households dependent on workless benefits is around 46%. The majority of local families are of White British heritage. However, there is a large Sikh population living within the All Saints ward.

Most children enter childcare and early education with a much narrower range of experiences and skills than expected for their age. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is above average.

All Saints is a Phase 1 children's centre delivering the full core offer. It is situated in the grounds of Stanhope Primary School. This school is currently being rebuilt. In September 2011 the opening of the new school build will physically connect these two buildings, further cementing relationships. Governance is through the governing body of Stanhope Primary School and the head of the centre is the headteacher. There is also an advisory board for the cluster of All Saints, Riverside, Marine Park

and Biddick Hall Children’s Centres. The centre hosts full-time day care provision for children from birth to school age.

## 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
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### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2
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## Main findings

All Saints Children’s Centre meets the needs of users well and provides good support to children and families. It is very well led and managed and provides high-quality activities. Centre staff have been pro-active in establishing many effective multi-agency partnerships. This ensures they remain responsive to the needs of local families. However, the centre recognises that there is work to do in order to strengthen some partnerships further, most notably with the local teenage pregnancy and midwifery services.

Support to encourage families to lead healthier lifestyles is good. This is facilitated through the centre’s close working relationships with health trainers and their local maternity and well-being coordinator. This combined with a range of programmes including healthy eating classes and ‘Buggy Pump’ sessions, has resulted in a significant reduction in the incidence of obesity amongst reception-aged children. Fathers are also well supported and motivated through a newly established ‘Family Guys’ group. The positive impact of this work is reflected in the increasing number of men who attend activities, many of whom commented on how included they now feel. Increasing numbers of parents are encouraged to participate in adult learning through a range of courses offered by the centre. Many have gained qualifications that have enabled them to move into work.

The centre is an inclusive setting and by providing for a wide range of users, promotes equality well. Particularly strong actions are taken to support vulnerable families and children. Those who need support in times of acute need or crisis, are well supported through close multi-agency working and the highly effective outreach support team. The way in which the centre assesses the individual needs of children and their parents is effective. This makes a significant contribution to ensuring outcomes for children and families are good. Parents and carers particularly value

the wide range of provision that the centre offers and speak highly of the rapid response to requests for additional activities. Staff are particularly effective in listening to what parents and carers say. This information is used well to plan future activities. The positive action taken as a result of feedback has promoted trust with users of the services.

The centre has a strong and dynamic leadership, and the local authority provides a strong quality assurance role. All have a clear and focused vision to make a real, lasting difference to this community. This ensures that the centre has good capacity to build on these successes in the future and further improve outcomes for families and children locally.

Members of the advisory board are fully supportive of the work of the centre and meet regularly to monitor what the centre is providing. However, their ability to fully evaluate the impact of the centre's work is limited. This is because the centre has yet to develop effective management systems which clearly illustrate and record its progress against the targets set in the delivery plan. The centre has developed methods to evaluate the impact of each activity and individual service provided. This information, combined with a range of evaluations from parents affords the board some understanding of the progress the centre is making towards achieving their priorities. However, self-evaluation, whilst accurate, is not consistently supported by evidence of impact on users.

Safeguarding is appropriately prioritised, with robust policies and procedures in place to ensure the safety and protection of both families and staff. All who work in the centre have a good understanding of child protection procedures. This is consolidated through regular training. Clear and very effective procedures are in place to ensure good communication of any concerns. This is effective in preventing family situations developing into crisis. Senior leaders and managers have mechanisms in place to verify effectiveness, efficiency and quality of recording concerns by completing random checks.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve the Advisory Board's ability to effectively evaluate the impact of the centre's work by:
  - further developing management information systems to more clearly reflect progress against those targets set out in the centre's delivery plan
  - ensuring self-evaluation is supported more consistently by evidence of impact for users.
  
- Further develop partnerships, particularly with the teenage pregnancy and midwifery services, to more effectively support the Children and Young People's Plan priorities of supporting teenage parents, reducing smoking and increasing breastfeeding rates.

## How good are outcomes for users?

2

Described by one parent as ‘...having completely changed turned my life around, for the better,’ ...this centre is making some real and lasting change; improving outcomes for many of the families and children within the locality it serves. Central to its success is the time taken by the dedicated staff to secure their trust and respect, ensuring the centre is well-established within the heart of the community it serves.

The impact of effective partnership work in relation to the promotion of children’s and families’ emotional well-being is evident across the work of the centre. The establishment of a number of ‘Stay and play’ activities such as Angels, Dolphins, Teeni-Tots and Penguins has alleviated the sense of isolation felt by a number of mums in the locality. It provides a much needed place to meet other parents and carers as well as the opportunity to share experiences. In the ‘Angels’ group babies and their parents and carers bond well, and children develop their play and communication skills as they explore the sound and feel of different objects. Mothers share stories and tips about dealing with increasingly mobile babies and several parents report that they feel better on days when they have an activity in which to participate. Outreach and family support workers use these well attended groups as an opportunity to catch up with parents in a relaxed, informal environment. This work, combined with the establishment of good working relationships with health visitors enables early intervention in cases including speech and language development, behaviour management and post natal depression.

A continued focus on the promotion of child safety, has resulted in a significant increase in the number of parents and carers requesting home safety equipment. During the ‘new birth’ visit, outreach staff take time to offer practical advice about potential dangers in the home and inform parents of how to minimise these, including signposting to low-cost safety equipment schemes. Efficient multi-agency support to families referred to the centre in times of acute crisis is helping to minimise the number of children moving onto the child-protection register and re-referral rates have decreased over the past years. The progress of these families is closely monitored, and continued engagement with the children’s centre often provides a continuing life line following more intensive intervention.

A very close working partnership exists between the local Primary school and the children’s centre. This combined with the centre’s ongoing involvement in the ‘Every Child a Talker’ project, has a significant impact on the achievement of children, particularly in relation to their developing communication, language and literacy skills. The gap between the lowest 20% of children achieving expected levels in key early learning goals, and that for all children in South Tyneside, has narrowed considerably over the past year. Work is also underway to track the individual achievements of those children who have attended the children’s centre, and early findings indicate children are making good progress. The qualified teacher has empowered staff with the knowledge of how to consistently apply good practice in the development of children’s communication skills, securing good improvements in

this key area. The headteacher of the primary school was able to testify to the positive impact of this close working in terms of raising aspirations and improving outcomes for young children.

Parents and carers comment on how their confidence has improved through their participation in the activities offered by the centre. The voice of parents is genuinely heard and respected and they feel valued and respected by all centre staff and their partners. For example, the use of the soft play area provided for families with toddlers attending the 'Weigh and play' sessions set up in response to user comments. The well-established parents and carers and volunteer network works successfully to raise additional funds for the centre, enabling the purchase of additional equipment.

The centre is good at helping parents into learning, training and employment, thereby providing economic stability and independence. Productive partnerships with Adult and Community Learning (ACL) enable a large majority of parents and carers to access a range of accredited training opportunities, including mathematics, English and Playwork. The completion of these courses has given individuals a real sense of achievement. Many parents say that they are supported and assisted in setting and achieving their own goals, their confidence and self-esteem improving as a direct result. One parent stated that without the support of the community development officer she '...would not now be doing a job that I love'. The very real impact of this support is clearly evident in the increased aspirations of parents.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for users*

<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>2</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>2</b>

**How good is the provision?**

**2**

All centre staff have an in depth understanding of the issues and challenges facing families within the local community. This ensures well-targeted and effective support for all children and families, helping them to make the best of the available

opportunities. Many very vulnerable families have been supported, helping them to re-engage in everyday life. A caring yet aspirational ethos permeates the centre. This flexible and personalised approach to identifying and assessing need is a key strength of the centre.

The shared actions taken to improve outcomes for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are good. The well-established, close working partnerships which exist ensure the provision of individualised packages of support. The sensory room provides space for children and their parents to relax and explore, doubling as an ideal chill out area for families in need of some space away from group activities. The centre has established a support group for parents of children with disabilities. Supported by portage workers, this group provides opportunities for parents to meet others in a similar situation, reducing their sense of isolation.

A comprehensive range of services and activities are delivered through the centre or on their behalf, and these are reflective of the specific needs of this particular community. The use of the well-established Early Years panel is a prime example of how the centre works in partnership to reach some of the most vulnerable members of its community. Parents speak of the life-enhancing support they had received and the confidence they had gained, enabling them to move forward. 'I feel I have something to get up for in the morning' said one mother, whilst another spoke of how much more confidence they have to read and play with their children. The sensitivity with which practitioners engage with families ensures that all, no matter how anxious, visibly relax in their presence, facilitated by the welcoming and comfortable surroundings.

Home visits from outreach workers have been hugely successful in engaging harder to reach families, identifying need and supporting them to access a range of services. These visits encompass a whole range of issues including domestic violence, safety checks and parenting assessments. The level of support received by families is greatly appreciated and this contributes to the genuine sense of trust and respect displayed by local parents towards all staff within the centre. The professionalism and expertise of all staff who work within the centre is recognised by other professionals locally. This has raised the profile of the children's centre and the work they do.

Good quality early years provision is ensuring that the achievement of children continues to rise. Every activity run by the centre incorporates a learning journey which tracks the progress and achievements of children throughout their time with a group. The high-quality and often innovative work of the qualified teacher, in partnership with the centre's staff, ensures the integration of the progress matters principles into all aspects of their work. This, combined with effective arrangements for transition which involve parents and carers, staff and schools, ensures that children are well prepared for this challenge. Evaluations from parents about the quality of support all highlight the difference this makes to their own and their children's development and well-being; ensuring all who engage with the centre gain

the confidence to take steps to improve the life chances of all in their families.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<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>2</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?**

**2**

The centre manager, ably supported by the school's senior management team, is relentless in the drive for improvement. All have a clear understanding of their roles, responsibilities and direction. There is a coherent link between the Children's Trust, Children and Young People's Plan, and the centre's delivery plan, and as a result, the centre's priorities link effectively to those of the wider area. The centre manager and local authority ensure that the profile of the children's centre is raised through representation on a wide range of local strategic partnerships.

The senior management team draw upon their substantial knowledge and understanding of the local community to identify future priorities, and coherent delivery and improvement plans are developed as a result. These are based on robust data combined with good local intelligence provided by outreach, community development and family support workers as well as other relevant partners. A key strength of the centre is its ethos of 'working with' rather than 'doing to' the community it serves. This is reflected in the good and improving participation rates in the activities it provides. Whilst the centre's delivery plan has success criteria, qualitative targets and reasonable timescales, progress against these are not clearly recorded and monitored. This limits the advisory board's ability to easily evaluate the ongoing impact of the centre's work. The centre manager ensures that the views of parents and users are collected through evaluations of individual activities and interventions. Responses are analysed in order to assess the quality and usefulness of the activity as well as to support improvement. The centre's self-evaluation is accurate and demonstrates a clear understanding and awareness of the strengths of the centre as well as its areas for improvement. However, this evaluation is not consistently supported by evidence of impact on users.

The centre is beginning to develop monitoring systems that will enable the longer-term evaluation of the impact of its work, tracking the journey of parents and carers through training into employment, and the progress of children into school. These systems are beginning to enable staff to monitor the progress of specific target



groups, including young mothers, fathers and lone parents. This helps to ensure equality of opportunity and to identify potential barriers to access. The voices of parents and users are listened to, and the community development officer works hard to develop and support the active parent and volunteer network. This group feels it has a genuine role to play in the future planning of provision.

Arrangements for the performance management of staff are good and systems for appraisal and supervision are thorough, with outcomes used to plan training and support staff development. Staff are well motivated. The centre management is committed to empowering all staff to develop their skills, qualifications and knowledge, in order to provide a holistic service to centre users.

Early intervention and prevention is at the heart of the centre’s work and this is facilitated by some very effective partnership working. However, the centre recognises that there is scope to further develop some partnerships, particularly in relation to teenage pregnancy and ante-natal services. Well-skilled and knowledgeable staff are able to deliver cohesive and timely integrated services, intervening at the earliest opportunity to prevent situations escalating into crisis. There is a continued focus on the further development of policies and procedures in relation to safeguarding children and as a result, systems are well developed and comprehensive. Good arrangements are in place to ensure that all staff, professionals and local organisations working with children and families within the locality are suitable to do so. The centre maintains a central register which records these checks. All appropriate risk assessments to ensure the safety of children and their parents and carers are in place.

Strong financial management systems are in place to monitor day-to-day expenditure. Delegation of responsibility for resources is at an appropriate level to ensure timely and effective packages of support to families. Staff are well deployed and utilised ensuring good value for money. The centre manager remains acutely aware of the need to ensure the long term sustainability of the centre.

*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 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>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 evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>3</b>
<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>2</b>

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

All Saints children’s centre manages a full time day care provision (All Saints Nursery) for children aged from birth to school age. Five local primary schools, Stanhope, Ashley, Saints Peter and Paul, Lord Blyton and Holy Trinity, with Early Years Foundation Stage provision for children over three years, are also part of the centre’s remit. Information from their most recent Ofsted inspections has been taken into account when writing about early years provision and outcomes for children in this report.

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### **Summary for centre users**

We inspected All Saints Children’s Centre on 6 and 7 April 2011. We visited activities, looked at the centre’s plans and documents and talked with you and professionals. Following this work, we have judged the centre as providing good support to you and your family.

The children’s centre provides a wide range of activities, which are aimed at helping families improve their lives. Your views support this as you tell us that you are happy with the activities you use because they have helped you in lots of different ways. For example, some of you have received good support to lead healthier lifestyles, whilst others have found the support for families with children with disabilities as ‘brilliant’ and a ‘real lifeline.’ In particular, activities and provision for children before they start school is improving across the area and your children are doing better as a result especially in regard to making friends and developing speaking, listening and reading skills.

We found that the children's centre offers lots of programmes and activities aimed at improving the health of people in your local community. In particular it has done really well in encouraging people to eat more fruit and vegetables, as well as helping people to take more exercise through the work of the health trainers and well-being coordinator. However, there is still more work to do to reduce the number of people smoking and the number of children in reception who are overweight as well as to increase the number of new mums who choose to breastfeed their babies. The centre continues to take action to improve this for the benefit of you and your family.

Most importantly, you tell us that you '...feel safe at the centre,' and can 'trust the staff to help you when you most need it'. You particularly appreciate the support of the outreach workers and have welcomed home visits and the opportunity to go with someone to a group until you build your confidence and make new friends. We found that the centre was really good at helping you at times in your life when you most need it. We also found that action was taken quickly and that different people and organisations worked well as a team to support both children and families. However, there are some people who live in your area who do not currently use these facilities. So, the staff at your children's centre are developing ways to encourage more families to use the groups and activities they provide, so they can all benefit, if they wish, from the good support available.

We found that the centre is working very well with partners, such as health visitors. You tell us that it is good to go to the baby clinics and weigh and play groups where you have the opportunity to talk to the health visitor or the outreach worker in a relaxed, informal environment. For example, one mum had been able to get support for her child who was having trouble with his sleep routine. However, there is a need to further develop some of these partnerships in order to maximise the impact of the work the centre does for the community in which you live.

We found that those people in charge of the children's centre are doing a good job. Managers, together with partners and other staff have worked hard to make sure that everything the children's centre does for you will make a difference to the area in which you live. We know that everyone who works with All Saints Children's Centre shares this commitment and we heard lots of examples from you about how they are making a real difference to your lives. The centre has access to lots of detailed information to help them plan future activities. We have asked them to continue to develop the ways in which this information is used and monitored so that they can better track and evaluate the progress of the centre, continuing to improve outcomes for you all.

We know the centre is good at asking for your opinion on the activities and services you use. We know that you feel genuinely respected and listened to as a result. We were particularly impressed by the tireless work and dedication of the 'Parents and Volunteers Network' and heard first-hand about some of the fantastic memories this group has helped to create through its fundraising and family fun days. We hope that you continue to have great success in this aspect of your work.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to come and speak to us, we are very grateful and we wish you 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).