

# Inspection report for Old Park Primary School & Children's Centre

Local authority	Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number	367849
Inspection dates	27–28 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Anna Coyle

Centre governance	Local authority
Centre leader	Scott Jones
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Old Park Primary School 133270
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Tots and Toddlers EY385945

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.

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the centre leader, senior staff, outreach workers, health workers, family support workers and representatives from the local authority and the advisory board. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Old Park Children's Centre is a phase two centre, which shares its site with Old Park Primary School and its nursery, and is known locally as 'Malinslee' Children's Centre. It serves an area of social deprivation in which the proportion of families on benefits and the levels of worklessness are high. Most families are from White British backgrounds and there is a small proportion of minority ethnic groups that includes families of Asian, Black and Chinese heritage. The centre was designated as a children's centre in 2006 and provides the full core offer in collaboration with the other three children's centres in its cluster group. Outreach services are based at the centre, which is used as a hub for health and community learning. The centre's data show that children's skills and knowledge on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are below those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy.

The centre is governed by Telford and Wrekin Borough Council, which works closely with the advisory board, and both contribute to the strategic management of the centre. The centre is currently going through a period of significant change due to the local authority's restructuring programme.

On-site childcare and day-care provision known as 'Tots and Toddlers' and the provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities known as 'Stepping Stones' are managed privately and are subject to separate inspection arrangements.

## 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

The centre effectively meets the needs of users in its reach area and the wider community and provides a welcoming, friendly environment. A key strength of its provision is the outstanding quality of care, guidance and support provided for children and their families. This stems from excellent procedures for assessing users' needs and the centre's outstanding multi-agency links with most of its partners, although there are currently no maternity services on site and only tenuous links with Jobcentre Plus. Even so, health professionals and staff liaise exceedingly well to make sure that users are signposted to the wide range of local services that include health and employment agencies. The comments of parents and carers echo the view of one who said, 'Activities are something to look forward to.'

Outcomes are good because users achieve well and enjoy the activities provided. Children make rapid progress in their personal and social development and learn to form amicable relationships with adults and other children. They play together harmoniously, behave well and participate eagerly in activities. However, their skills in communication, language and literacy are not as well developed, particularly in speaking and listening. This is because they have so much catching up to do and many have speech and language difficulties. Nevertheless, the centre identifies users' needs quickly and provides good support for those with special educational needs and those who learn English as an additional language. As a result, children and adults make good progress and learn effectively.

The centre's procedures for keeping families safe are outstanding. Safeguarding has a very high priority and users say that they feel safe. Staff have detailed knowledge of the reach area and its families, which helps them to identify those who are potentially vulnerable due to their circumstances. They effectively adapt outreach services and centre activities to users' individual needs and ensure that they assess the risk of all activities and trips. Equality and diversity are celebrated well and users of all backgrounds are fully included in activities.

The centre is led and managed very well by the centre leader who has very high expectations of himself and his staff. He works closely with the outreach and family

support coordinator and the community learning coordinator to provide a good sense of ambition and drive. Leaders monitor the centre's work carefully and make excellent use of data to help them measure the impact of the centre's activities and outreach services on outcomes. Together with the governing body and advisory board, they ensure clear strategic direction, although there are a few uncertainties at present due to the local authority's restructuring programme. Nevertheless, the centre's good outcomes, strong track record of improvement since it opened in 2006 and effective leadership mean that it has good capacity for sustained improvement.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve children's skills in communication, language and literacy, particularly in speaking and listening.
- Extend the range of services available to include greater access for users to maternity services on site and Jobcentre Plus.

## How good are outcomes for users?

2
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All users, including families with children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, benefit from the wide variety of integrated services that includes portage services, access to the teams for outreach and family support, community learning and mental health. Immunisation rates are high and the proportion of mothers initiating and sustaining breastfeeding is above average. Antenatal and paediatric clinics are held at the local hospital to help parents before and after the birth of their babies. Obesity rates in children are above average in the borough, but children in Malinslee have regular access to the centre's attractive outdoor area and they eat healthy fruit for snack. Parents and carers are encouraged to participate in regular events such as 'Cook and Eat' and 'Teen Parentcraft', which promote healthy lifestyles. The centre also promotes healthy eating through its healthy exercise and nutrition programme for young children.

Parents and carers say that they feel safe and supported by the centre. They benefit from good supervision during activities and the centre's rigorous attention to health and safety. Families whose circumstances make them vulnerable are assessed very carefully through the Common Assessment Framework and the 'Team Around the Child' process, and there are excellent links with various agencies to support children who have child protection plans. Home visits contribute to parents' and carers' understanding of how to stay safe, and good steps are taken to promote safety in the home. Families are signposted effectively to the most suitable support when they most need it. For example, valuable support is offered to users who experience domestic violence through the 'Freedom Programme' and courses that focus on building self-esteem. Users' records and children's folders, known as 'Learning Journeys', demonstrate the effectiveness of the centre's intervention and the positive impact it has had upon the lives of parents, carers and children.

Children enjoy learning and achieve well. Personal and social development is

particularly good because staff focus well on this aspect of learning. The centre's data show that children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are below those expected for their age but the gap is closing between the lowest-achieving children and their peers. Children play happily together and behave well, developing good relationships with each other and with adults. Communication, language and literacy skills are not as well developed because many children struggle with this area of learning and a significant proportion have speech and language difficulties. The centre staff and speech and language therapists work together closely to target individuals for additional support and help them improve their speaking and listening skills. For example, the centre's good focus on promoting children's listening skills through the use of stories and soft puppets such as 'Lucy Lettuce' has a good impact on learning.

Adult users interact well together in activities such as 'Bump 2 Baby and Beyond'. They say that they and their children enjoy attending activities. For example, one parent said: 'The centre has helped a lot. I have seen progress in my child through attendance at the groups.' Users improve their personal and social development and confidence through activities such as 'Playing Together' in the family learning room. Parents and carers contribute to the centre through regular surveys and questionnaires. There are good opportunities for them to contribute to decision-making and the governance of the centre through the parents' panel meetings and membership of the advisory board.

The centre has encouraged a good number of users to develop skills for the future and improve their independence. Several users have trained as volunteers and now work at the Malinslee centre or in one of the other centres in its cluster group. This has given them the opportunity to increase their knowledge and experience, and some have moved into further training or employment. One user commented, 'I would not be where I am now without the groups because I would not have done the training or been a volunteer without the centre's help.'

*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

Highly accurate assessments of users' needs are made by collating the information provided by health professionals, external agencies and the local authority. This leads to an individualised approach and effective signposting of users to outreach services where necessary. Users' needs are also identified carefully, assessed regularly and reviewed so that staff can adapt the centre's activities accordingly. As a result, the centre staff have good insight into the needs of the families with whom they work. Their knowledge is based firmly on a very wide range of assessment information and the meticulous tracking of children's progress. Consequently, users have good opportunities to participate in well-organised activities that are tailored to meet their needs.

The centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment well because staff use their knowledge effectively to help children build on their limited skills on entry. As a result, children learn well, although they have a lot of ground to make up: 80% of children who accessed the centre's services last year attained at least 78 points in personal and social development but only 36% in communication, language and literacy. The good use of initiatives such as 'Every Child a Talker' and regular speech and language therapy aid children's learning well. The centre promotes adult users' understanding of the wider community effectively and celebrates cultural events to aid good community cohesion across the reach area. The outreach and family support team, community learning team and health professionals all work together closely to provide a good range of fully integrated services to support the welfare needs of all groups of users and the wider community. For example, adults enjoy healthy eating workshops and cookery sessions. They have good opportunities to attend sessions for home safety and 'Weaning' training, as well as the 'Teenage Parents Group'.

Good links with outreach services enhance the centre's provision so that it caters effectively for the community it serves. Staff have successfully increased the involvement of teenage parents and families from workless households. In addition, the centre targets groups of users who benefit from particular activities, such as in the 'First Start' programme and drop-in sessions, and participation rates are good. However, users do not have access to maternity services on site but have to travel to the local hospital. In addition, the links with Jobcentre Plus are limited and its services are not always easily accessible to all users of the children's centre.

Outstanding care, guidance and support are major features of the centre's provision. Excellent support for families in crisis has meant that the centre has made significant contributions to the welfare of parents, carers and children. Staff have also worked together successfully with the local police to help victims of domestic violence. The centre's regular involvement with the 'Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference' (MARAC) has helped to reduce the incidents of domestic abuse crimes over the last year. Sensitive advice and guidance are provided through helpful leaflets and displays, as well as through 'Playing Together' sessions. Individual advice on accessing benefits through the Citizen's Advice Bureau is very well targeted and the

centre uses external services exceptionally well to help users with family difficulties and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

*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>1</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>1</b>

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

**2**

Leadership of the centre is focused well on driving improvement and maintaining high expectations for users and the wider community, despite the imminent changes and uncertainties stemming from the local authority's restructuring programme. The centre leader provides inspiration and determination and the senior leadership team provides efficient day-to-day management and professional supervision. Well-qualified staff are committed to fulfilling the centre's aims and priorities. Their roles are clearly defined and there is a good sense of teamwork, ambition and drive. This leads to an integrated approach to providing services for users. Accurate self-evaluation and effective development planning are underpinned by a strong understanding of the reach area and its users.

The local authority acts as the governing body to provide good strategic direction for the centre. It holds leaders to account through regular evaluations and target setting and works well with the advisory board, which is representative of the local community. The views of users are sought regularly to help the centre develop its provision and meet the needs of the whole community, including those with disabilities and those who are hard to reach.

Safeguarding is outstanding because it is given paramount importance and the centre's arrangements for keeping users safe are very well managed. Leaders ensure the safe recruitment of staff: Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are conducted to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children and records are updated regularly. Staff are well trained in child protection awareness and are qualified in administering first aid. They are vigilant about fire safety and make very careful checks of any potential risks in activities.

Partnerships are outstanding and make an excellent contribution to improving users' outcomes. The centre is one of a cluster of four in the reach area, with whom it has strong and effective links. The childcare and day-care provision, nursery and primary school, which are all co-located on the same site, contribute very well to the overall effectiveness of the centre. Excellent and very supportive professional relationships with external agencies ensure that expertise is readily available for families who

require help and guidance. Regular referrals of children and families in need and the cooperation between multi-agency groups contribute exceedingly well to improving the mental and emotional health and well-being of users. The centre effectively celebrates diversity and it values all children and their families equally. It provides good value for money and ensures that its resources are easily accessible and cover a variety of cultures.

*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>1</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>2</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>1</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**

The private day-care provision, known as 'Tots and Toddlers' was inspected in 2009 and judged to be good. The inspection of Old Park Primary School took place in February 2011 and the school was judged to be satisfactory.

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Old Park Primary School & Children's Centre on 27–28 July 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank those of you who spoke to us. All of you were positive about your experiences at the centre and you told us that you feel happy and safe there. We saw how much you and your children enjoyed 'Bump 2 Baby and Beyond' and using the colourful toys during 'Playing Together' activities. The staff provide a well-planned range of activities and programmes for you and your children to enjoy. As a result, children are prepared well for the next stages of their learning when they move into the nursery. The centre is also good at helping you to train as volunteers and increase your independence and self-esteem. Some of you told us that you have gone on to further education and training or employment because of the help you received at the centre.

The centre has some excellent features. It provides outstanding care, guidance and support for you and your children and it has excellent assessment systems. As a result, your children make good progress in their learning and achieve well. They achieve particularly well in their personal and social development but speaking and listening skills are less well developed. Excellent partnerships with external agencies and other professionals ensure that expertise is readily available for families who require help and guidance. The centre has worked particularly hard to reduce the amount of domestic violence in the area.

The centre leader provides very effective leadership for the staff and instils a good sense of ambition and drive among senior leaders. The governing body checks on the centre's work effectively and helps it to improve. Self-evaluation is accurate. This means that everyone at the centre works together as a good team to provide the best that they can for you and signpost you to suitable outreach services. You told us that you appreciate all that they do for you and your children, including the 'Teen Parentcraft', 'Cook and Eat' and 'Weaning' sessions.

Safeguarding is outstanding. This aspect is given a very high priority and the centre staff protect you and your children as well as they possibly can. They have all been vetted to ensure that they are suitable to work with children and are well qualified in health and safety and in administering first aid.

Even though your centre is good, the leaders and staff are determined to make it even better. We have asked them to do two things: we want them to improve children's communication, language and literacy skills, particularly in speaking and listening; we also want them to try to find ways of giving you greater access to maternity services on site and Jobcentre Plus.

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