

# Inspection report for Staffordshire Moorlands Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	383722
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<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sue Pepper HMI

<b>Centre leader</b>	Alex Binks
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
<b>Centre address</b>	Albert Street Biddulph Stoke-on-Trent Staffordshire ST8 6DT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01782 297970
<b>Fax number</b>	01782 297971
<b>Email address</b>	alex.binks@staffordshire.gov.uk

<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Not applicable
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	EY277720 Staffordshire Moorlands Childcare Centre and EY422402 Space Cadets Out of School Provision

The inspection of this Sure Start children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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## Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the head of centre, the senior leadership team, staff, speech and language therapist, a member of the advisory board, parents, key partners 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

Staffordshire Moorlands Children's Centre was designated as a phase one centre in 2006. The centre provides the full core offer of services with the support of partners. A range of supporting services, including health and adult training courses, is provided within the area to which parents and carers are signposted.

The centre is situated in Biddulph which is a small town in the north of the county. It covers the rural area in the district of Staffordshire Moorlands. The centre is ideally situated where there is the most significant deprivation. Traditionally, the local economy was based on mining and heavy engineering. As these industries have disappeared, unemployment has risen. Just over half of the adult population is economically active. A minority of families are in receipt of workless benefits. More recently, Biddulph has become an area of regeneration.

Almost all of the population in the area served by the centre is White British with a few families from minority ethnic backgrounds. Recent figures show that the population of children aged nought to five years of age is 1,037. Of these children, 296 live in the most deprived areas. A small minority of families are lone parents with dependant children and just over a third of adults have no qualifications.

Some children enter school with skills below expected levels for their age. The Early Years Foundation Stage is delivered through various settings and groups. The centre provides full day care for up to 84 children under eight years of age, and of these, not more than 24 may be under two years of age. The Space Cadets, the out-of-school club based at a local school, cares for up to 32 children under eight years of age. These childcare services are subject to separate early years inspection arrangements. The inspection reports can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The centre is open from 7.30am until 6pm, Monday to Friday, 50 weeks of the year. It is also open on occasional evenings and weekends as required to meet service users' needs. The centre has an established management advisory board. It is made up of representatives from the local community, professional agencies and parents.

## Inspection judgements

**Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

### Overall effectiveness

**The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for families**

**2**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**2**

## Main findings

Staffordshire Moorlands Children's Centre is a good centre which is led and managed well. The highly skilled staff team promotes high-quality practice and provides good-quality services. This promotes good outcomes for families. The centre's good attention to promoting healthy eating, oral health and good hygiene is a particular strength. This has been recognised by the centre achieving several awards which commend this work.

Safeguarding is outstanding, and all families are confident they are safe at the centre. A typical comment from a parent was, 'You know your child is in safe hands here.' The centre's strong partnerships enhance the capacity for early intervention and preventative work which can stop potentially extremely difficult situations from escalating. Accurate multi-agency assessment leads to excellent support. Those families whose circumstances make them vulnerable are exceptionally well targeted, and the impact of this work is often significant. Likewise, the individual needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are extremely well met and, as a result, they make good progress.

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. Structured family learning

programmes clearly improve parents' and carers' confidence, skills and ability. All parents were extremely positive about the impact the centre has had on their lives. Many parents highly recommended the centre and described it as 'invaluable and brilliant' saying, 'Staff are very friendly and approachable.'

A range of effective strategies is used by staff to actively seek the views of children and their families. This knowledge is used well to adjust and continually shape the services the centre provides. This demonstrates a good capacity to improve.

The staff team is enthusiastic and passionate about its work and has built many trusting relationships with families. The head of centre adopts innovative ways to ensure the staff team has an up-to-date knowledge and understanding of the wider community. Over time, the data the centre receives have greatly improved but, because the centre is not informed of live births, it cannot be accurate regarding the new babies in the community.

The centre is proactive in promoting economic stability, and over a third of those who use the centre are engaged in relevant adult learning. They recognise that further information on adults' successful engagement with adult education outside of the centre would enable them to demonstrate more fully all achievements which can lead to employment. Good relationships have been developed with Jobcentre Plus but no data are shared with the centre regarding the impact of its regular work.

The head of centre and her senior leadership team have a clear understanding of their effectiveness and have accurately identified priorities for the future. However, written plans lack clear measurable targets which can be informed by their data and easily measured.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve data sharing further to:
  - increase the centre's knowledge of its community
  - capture more fully the impact of key partners' work which can lead to greater economic stability and independence for families.
  
- Develop planning so that the centre can:
  - track precisely the progress made towards meeting clearly defined targets by using measurable success criteria
  - systematically demonstrate the impact of improvements on outcomes.

## **How good are outcomes for families?**

<b>2</b>
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The 'Friendly About Breastfeeding' (FAB) parents' support group helps the centre successfully promote sustained breastfeeding. This has led to later child-led weaning

for some. The large catering kitchen is used especially well to promote the enjoyment of eating fresh and nutritious home-cooked food. 'Healthy Eating and Nutrition in the Really Young' (HENRY) courses are extremely popular. Families learn the importance of a balanced diet and what are the recommended food portion sizes. Staff model excellent practice extremely well and have achieved 'Healthy Eating', 'Nurturing Health' and 'Oral Health' accreditation. They have produced interesting recipes which families use at home. As a result, although obesity in the area is high at 10.4%, this has greatly reduced from over 12% in the last few years.

Children are exceptionally well safeguarded through the 'team around the child' approach taken by the Common Assessment Framework. This is used particularly well to support those families who are experiencing a range of difficulties, such as depression, domestic violence and substance misuse. This prevents the escalation of some difficult situations. Excellent liaison with social care and other agencies ensures that the life chances and well-being of those on the child protection register are significantly improved through regular consultation. One parent said, 'My child did not smile until he came to this centre.'

Home-safety packs ensure risks to children within their home are minimised. Parents and carers find home visits worthwhile and say that they are making their homes safer. Structured parenting programmes, such as 'Strengthening Families and Communities', support parents, carers and children to learn new skills together. Achievements are well celebrated. Good day-to-day advice further enhances parents' and carers' understanding of the importance of play and the benefits of building up close and positive relationships.

Children flourish in the safe and stimulating environment where they are encouraged to be active, inquisitive and independent learners. The Early Years Foundation Stage profile results for the centre community indicate that children are making good progress. The gap is slowly closing for the 20% who have the lowest scores.

The centre has several success stories of voluntary work leading to paid employment. Staff recognise the importance of confidence-building opportunities which can lead to some parents and carers successfully accessing a range of courses. Over time, this steady progress has enabled a few to move on to further education and a clear route towards a career.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment</b>	<b>2</b>

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

<b>2</b>
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Services are well matched to families' needs, and many users described them as 'fantastic'. Considerable effort is made to ensure the centre caters for families who most require its support. Although a specific fathers' group has thrived in the past, it has currently ceased. A few fathers regularly attend universal services and plans are in place to act on consultation of their needs. Exceptional attention is paid to creating an extremely secure, welcoming and high-quality, relaxing environment. A plethora of high-quality information is readily available. The entrance lounge with piped music and soft furnishings was observed to have a positive impact on users' feelings of well-being. Consequently, the care, guidance and support are exceptional.

Sessions such as 'Stay and Play' prevent parents and carers feeling isolated, and they aid families' enjoyment of learning. They are complemented by, for example, 'Jo Jingles' which promote early language development. The family support team conducts outreach work and then liaises closely with the family activities team to set up enjoyable purposeful activities. Staff are proactive at removing any barriers to engagement. For instance, the 'Smile' support group is set up for parents and carers with children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Parents said, 'The group was called this name because this is what it made us do.'

The new training suite is used well by the centre and others in the community. Adults have access to a range of programmes of learning which include courses on vital basic literacy and numeracy skills. Family learning opportunities support parents, carers and children to learn new skills together. The well-stocked toy and book library, which is now based at the centre, is also utilised well to run 'Play, Stay and Borrow' sessions.

The centre has further improved all its outdoor play spaces and sensory experiences for children. The separate sensory room is used well. The speech and language support team based at the centre provides good support for staff and families to help develop children's communication, language and literacy skills. The breakfast and out-of-school club run by centre staff was recently judged outstanding in all areas.

Strong links have been formed with the schools in the area. The centre is highly effective in preparing children's transition onto their next stage of learning. 'Playday' events encourage a good community spirit and effective partnership working. Consequently, the centre is developing a good reputation.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>1</b>

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

<b>2</b>
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The relatively new head of centre embraces change extremely well. She has strengthened the dynamic senior leadership team. Professional supervision is effective in communicating high expectations and setting clear individual goals for all staff. Professional development opportunities increase skills, promote successful team development and a highly reflective approach to the centre's work. The staff team is highly motivated and committed to continual improvement. Many complimentary written comments were observed by the inspectors regarding the positive impact of the centre's good work.

Governance and accountability arrangements are clear and understood well at all levels. The management advisory board engages the participation of parents and carers who provide the centre with good support. Governance arrangements are currently under review at a strategic level by the local authority. Plans are in place to standardise arrangements across all children's centres within the local authority. An established finance sub-committee monitors the centre's budget well. The centre constantly looks for efficiencies in executing duties and services which promote good value for money. The 'Friends of Staffordshire Moorlands' set up by parents further enhances the support of the centre's work by attracting additional funds to aid further development. Although the parents' forum has now ceased, there are plans in place to consult on how to resume it again.

Equality and diversity are promoted well by the centre's inclusive ethos and approach. The centre regularly celebrates the festivals of a range of different cultures. It tackles any discrimination swiftly and effectively. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported extremely well by bespoke services. A parent described this care as 'absolutely phenomenal'.

The centre has successfully registered over half of the families in the community. This number includes target groups, the majority of which are fully engaged. Staff carefully monitor engagement and plan to further increase it. Parents and carers evaluate all services, and good systems are in place to share the centre's response to their opinions and ideas.

Attention to safeguarding is excellent. The centre exemplifies high-quality practice. Policies and procedures are fully understood by staff and applied rigorously across all



areas of the centre's work. Staff have a comprehensive awareness of safeguarding issues which is kept up to date by regularly refreshing their knowledge. A single central record is maintained to ensure recruitment checks and vetting of staff are rigorous. Protocols and practice for sharing information between relevant agencies within and outside the centre are exemplary. The centre works effectively with all partners to create a climate of trust to reduce safeguarding risks to children and their families. Early intervention and multi-agency work are extremely successful enabling quick action to be taken where necessary.

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>2</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>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 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>2</b>

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

Space Cadets out of school provision was inspected on 16 August 2011. This childcare service was judged to be outstanding. This has contributed to the children's centre report and judgements.

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected Staffordshire Moorlands Children's Centre on 21 and 22 September 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

Those of you we spoke to made us most welcome and it was a pleasure to hear how much you value the services the centre provides. Many of you have thanked the staff for their 'hard work, kindness, help and patience'. You all expressed extremely high levels of satisfaction with the centre. It was apparent that the centre wants the very best for you and your families.

Good partnerships are in place with other agencies and in times of crisis they work extremely well together to support you. They combine their professional knowledge and experience effectively to meet your individual needs. You described the staff as, 'non-judgemental, good listeners' and you told us that you were confident that they care and will respond to any concerns you have. You told us, 'The care is absolutely superb and children are extremely well supported,' and said, 'The support of the centre staff is brilliant.' We agree the centre provides an exceptionally safe place for you and your families where you can be sure to receive outstanding care, guidance and support, particularly in relation to safeguarding your children.

The centre has many awards which recognise its good commitment to healthy eating, and the promotion of good oral health and hygiene. We applaud the positive changes some of you have made to ensure you and your families adopt more healthy lifestyles. We were impressed that some of you have been particularly successfully sustaining breastfeeding and that you delay weaning your babies until they indicate they are ready to try food. We have asked the centre to further improve the information they collect so that they have a clear understanding of when babies are born into the community to ensure no one misses out on the services it can offer.

We understand many of you have learnt the importance of a varied, nutritionally well-balanced diet through cooking courses. You have introduced your children to different foods, more healthy eating options and suitable portion sizes. Children regularly eat fruit and vegetables and they enjoy drinking water.

We know many of you enjoy the popular 'Play Day' events which encourage a good community spirit. You told us that you regularly attend the health visitor baby clinic and 'Stay and Play' groups. You told us that you look forward to meeting other families at the 'My Baby Time', 'Jo Jingles' and 'Musical Movers' sessions which help you develop your children's early speech and language skills.

We were impressed with the centre's work with many of the local schools which aids your children's transition onto the next stage of their learning. We understand your attendance on a wide range of different courses has helped develop your confidence and self-esteem and taught some of you new skills. The centre ensures that there are good opportunities for you to develop your knowledge and understanding through voluntary work which can place you in a strong position to enter the

workforce. We have asked the centre to monitor adult learning to which it and other professionals direct you so they have a clear picture of how many of you are successful in becoming more independent of workless benefits.

The centre wants your views and ideas about what they should provide for you. The head of centre and staff know what they do well and what they need to improve. We have asked the centre to improve plans for the future so that it can clearly show the difference it is making to your lives. We have asked the centre to ensure everyone can see whether the centre achieves what it sets out to do.

We would like to thank everyone who was willing to speak to us. We are very grateful for your help and 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).