

# Inspection report for Saffron Sure Start Children's Centre

---

<b>Local authority</b>	Leicester
<b>Inspection number</b>	383717
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 October 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Anthony O'Malley HMI

<b>Centre leader</b>	Jane Daw
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	N/A
<b>Centre address</b>	The Linwood Centre Linwood Lane Leicestershire LE2 6QN
<b>Telephone number</b>	0116 2221810
<b>Fax number</b>	0116 2221918
<b>Email address</b>	saffronadmin@leicester.gov.uk

<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	N/A
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Saffron Pre-School

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.



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

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

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

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

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

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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

No.100080

© Crown copyright 2011



## Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

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

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

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

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, the leadership team and staff, a representative from the local authority, a local primary headteacher, partners from a wide range of local services, including the health service, and users of the centre.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

The centre is close to Leicester and serves an area ranked within 30% of the most deprived in the country. Over half of the adult population claim out-of-work benefits and just under half of all households comprise lone parents with dependent children. Most children enter the pre-school nursery with skills below those expected for their age. Most families living in the area are White British although the proportion of families from other minority ethnic groups is increasing and is now around one third. The centre provides the full core offer of services as a phase one Sure Start children's centre. At present, the centre operates from two main sites. Most services are delivered from St Christopher's which is about half a mile away from the administrative base in The Linwood Centre.

In partnership with the Pre-School Learning Alliance, the Saffron Pre-School enables the centre to provide nursery education for 40 two-year-old children and 30 three- and four-year-old children. The report for this provider can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

There are close links with two other neighbourhood children's centres and some staff work across all three neighbourhood centres. The centre is managed by Barnado's on

behalf of Leicester local authority. It is supported by a neighbourhood advisory body which meets six times a year and oversees the work of all three centres.

## 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

A key strength of Saffron Sure Start Children's Centre is a highly effective team that is determined to make a difference for children and their families. The team knows its locality very well and understands the challenges faced by a significant proportion of its families. Working effectively with staff from partner services, the centre provides well-integrated support for families. Parents appreciate this and comments made by two parents, 'The staff will do anything to help' and 'I do not know how I would have coped without all the support' capture the value they place on the centre.

The centre focuses its resources well to support the most disadvantaged families in the community it serves. Its targets for better outcomes are ambitious and the good range of activities and services provided in the centre or in families' homes, usually enable children and parents to achieve them. For example, children from the Saffron area achieve skills in personal development, language and literacy by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage that are in line with the national averages. This represents good progress from low starting points and, not surprisingly, the local headteacher who met with the inspectors values greatly the work of centre staff.

The high priority given to improving parenting skills, particularly of those most in need of support, is having an outstanding impact on the safety of children. One parent commented, 'Parenting classes have given me other ways of disciplining my child. Now I do not lose my temper so easily and I do not smack him anymore.' Very effective links with health professionals and social care are reducing the proportion of children with child protection plans. Inspectors read and heard numerous testimonies from parents who were keen to share their appreciation of the professional expertise and personal skills of staff who have worked with their families.

The one area where the outcomes of the centre's work are satisfactory, rather than

good, is the impact of its provision on the health of its families. Despite the regular promotion of healthy lifestyles and high participation rates at antenatal parent craft sessions, the proportions of mothers initiating breastfeeding and of pregnant mothers ceasing smoking remain below the national averages.

The safeguarding of children and other users is the centre's highest priority. Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in this area. All receive training to enable them to provide exceptionally high levels of protection. Policies, procedures and practice are very strong and consistent. They greatly enhance the safety of children and adults, particularly those most at risk of harm. Robust procedures ensure the suitability of all practitioners and volunteers. The centre regularly conducts thorough risk assessments.

The centre manager has developed a highly motivated and skilled team that has earned the respect of users and partners. Together, they are securing improving outcomes for families and this record of success indicates their good capacity for further improvement. The centre's own evaluation of its effectiveness takes full account of feedback from families and the wide range of data provided by Barnado's, the local authority and its other partners. However, systems for collating and summarising this information to demonstrate clearly the difference it is making to the lives of its users are still developing.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Review the strategies for improving health outcomes to increase the proportions of mothers initiating breastfeeding and of pregnant mothers who stop smoking.
- Sharpen the approach to collating and summarising impact data, so that the centre can clearly demonstrate the difference it is making to its users in all important aspects of its work.

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

<b>2</b>
----------

Good involvement with the centre increases parents' understanding of how to improve the health of their families. Written evaluations show that they value popular sessions such as 'Discovering Babies' and 'Stay and Play' which always promote healthy eating and the importance of physical activity. Where necessary, targeted work takes place in the family home. For example, a family support worker successfully introduced a whole range of new foods to a family where there was a concern that a young child was emulating her mother's eating disorder. The positive impact of work in this area is shown in the below average proportion of five-year-old Saffron children who are obese. The centre has had less success in its efforts to reduce smoking in pregnancy, and this remains higher than average. Similarly, while its work with mothers who do breastfeed is of high quality and the proportion who sustain breastfeeding beyond six weeks is above average, the latest data available show that 40% of mothers do not initiate breastfeeding.

Children and their families benefit from the centre's exceptionally safe and supportive environment. Staff are extremely well trained and users regularly gain support on a range of well-being issues including managing their children's behaviour, postnatal depression and domestic violence. Discussions with users and case studies demonstrate the outstanding impact of this support. For example, Family Support Workers are dealing with 17% fewer cases involving domestic violence this year. Robust systems are used effectively to support children or adults whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Outreach workers, in partnership with health professionals, secure the early identification of families with additional or special needs. This ensures that the centre is able to offer prompt support to all children in need in its community. Where necessary the centre and its partners make very effective use of the Common Assessment Framework so that there is a decreasing number of children requiring child protection plans. There is also strong evidence of improved outcomes for looked after children.

There are many opportunities for adults and children to play, learn and have fun together. Children are keen and active learners and they benefit from the close link with Saffron-Pre-school. At the Pre-school there are 40 nursery education grant places available for two-year-olds for referrals coordinated by the children's centre. This provision, and the targeted work by the centre teacher with families of children at risk of underachievement, has directly contributed to a closing of the gap between the lowest 20% of attainers at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and other children. This gap is narrower than the national average.

A high number of parents volunteer in the centre. Their experiences and training opportunities have helped some to get back into work and others to achieve accredited qualifications. The Young Parents group has been particularly successful in guiding adults towards activities that improve their employability skills as well as their parenting skills.

Adults using the centre provide valuable feedback on their experiences. They are also involved in consultations about reviews of the core offer in response to changes in available resources. Parents contribute to the centre's development through the parents' forum and the neighbourhood advisory board. The centre engages well with all groups including families from minority ethnic backgrounds. Both White British adults and adults from minority ethnic groups told inspectors that the centre is a very positive force for developing strong community cohesion.

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>3</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</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>and social development</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?

**2**

The key principle underpinning the work of the centre team is its ambition to overcome the negative impact poverty can have on children's well-being. Consequently, its prime target group are parents and their children facing the challenges of living on a low income. It successfully engages this group in its activities because of its excellent local knowledge, good links with partner agencies and its tenacity in gaining the confidence of those initially reluctant to participate in its activities or accept support from its services. During the inspection, mothers and fathers spoke warmly of advice they are receiving on breastfeeding, weaning, playing with their children and promoting language development. Others praised the effectiveness of the centre as a 'one-stop shop' for support, explaining how having midwives and health visitors on-site supports them on a range of health matters. They also spoke of how advice on housing and accessing welfare entitlements has enhanced the lives of their families.

The effective partnership with health and voluntary groups helps the centre to identify at an early stage children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This leads to the provision of timely multi-agency support that meets the children's needs well. For example, early intervention from specialists such as speech therapists helps children to make a good start at school. This partnership is also at the heart of the exemplary care, guidance and support. One parent who spoke to inspectors judged the support given to his family through the Common Assessment Framework as 'amazing' and this echoed the views of others who reported that the centre always provides the help needed, particularly at difficult times.

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?

**2**

Governance and accountability arrangements are clear and understood well at all levels. All partners can contribute to strategic planning and service provision. Parents are active members of the neighbourhood advisory board. Through monthly meetings, the local authority checks how successfully the centre is working towards its targets. Both Barnado's and the local authority quality assure the centre's self-evaluation of its performance effectively.

The centre successfully promotes equality and diversity. It has devised effective strategies to engage with high proportions of users from its priority groups and is improving their outcomes. For example, the majority of parents whose children receive the nursery education grant attend sessions while their children are in the pre-school. Staff and volunteers are keen to promote their centre by giving out leaflets and timetables, and talking to families about its services. As a result, participation rates are high and reflect the centre's successful inclusion strategies. Adults and children with disabilities have gained much from contact with the centre, further demonstrating the centre's successful promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity.

Safeguarding arrangements are excellent. Procedures for ensuring staff are suitable to work with children are robust and, in a number of aspects, go beyond the requirements. Training for staff gives child protection the highest priority. Staff records of their recent training show the high value placed on ensuring they have the skills to meet an increasing number of roles and responsibilities. These records include examples of how training has helped staff achieve positive outcomes with children and families, and are strong examples of the centre's good value for money.

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</b>	<b>2</b>

reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	
---	--

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

The inspectors took into account the findings of the inspection of Saffron Pre-school which was inspected on 12 February 2010. The overall effectiveness of the provider was judged as good.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaining about inspections*, which is available from our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## Summary for centre users

We inspected Saffron Sure Start Children's Centre on 4 and 5 October 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to come and speak with us, particularly those who came to the meeting on Wednesday afternoon. It was a pleasure to hear how much you value the services the centre provides. You told us that the centre is a very important part of your community and plays a crucial part in helping you as parents. We also read many things users of the centre have written about its work, and it is clear that it is improving family life in many ways, particularly for those families who face difficult challenges.

Your children's centre staff team is committed to providing the best possible services and it works very closely with you to make sure that the centre's programmes meet your needs. Staff at the centre take great care to ensure that you feel at home and are able to talk freely about things that matter to you or are causing you concern. As a result, you value the centre, which means that you have no hesitation in using the services regularly.

The centre offers a good range of services and activities for families in the area. These are helping you to keep yourselves and your children healthy and preparing your children well for school. Sessions such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Cook and Eat' are helping you to keep your families healthy by promoting healthy eating and emphasising the importance of being physically active. The staff at the centre encourage you to engage in play with your children from a very early age at sessions such as 'Discovering Babies' and 'Peek-a-Boo'. We could see how much you and your children enjoy these activities and the positive effect they are having on you and your families.

The centre is outstandingly effective in working with you to keep your children safe. Its good links with local schools, health professionals and social workers mean that families in most need get the support they require. All of you benefit from the guidance staff provide on how you can prevent accidents in and around your home and so protect your children.

To develop further the work of the centre, we have asked its leaders to increase the proportion of smokers who give up the habit during pregnancy and the proportion of mothers who breastfeed their babies from birth. We have also asked them to ensure that they can always show the difference the centre is making to the lives of families who have used its services.

Your honest and open discussions with us helped us immensely during the inspection. We thoroughly enjoyed spending time at your centre and we wish you and your families the best for the future.

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