

# Inspection report for Happy Faces Sure Start Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Sandwell
<b>Inspection number</b>	383715
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 November 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michelle Parker HMI

<b>Centre leader</b>	Adam Cooper
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	N/A
<b>Centre address</b>	Windsor Road Rowley Regis B65 8JW
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 561 3746
<b>Fax number</b>	0121 559 8719
<b>Email address</b>	beverley.need@sandwell.gov.uk

<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Rowley Hall Primary School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Rowley Owls Nursery

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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 an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, senior leaders, front-line staff and representatives from the local authority. Discussions were also held with members of the advisory board, a wide range of partners, parents and carers, and service users. They observed the centre's work, including that of the on-site nursery, visited the outreach sites and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Happy Faces Sure Start Centre is a phase 1 children's centre. It was originally part of a cluster of two centres. It is situated in Rowley Regis on a shared site with Rowley Hall Primary School and opened in 2006. In September 2010 a new management team, under the leadership of a seconded manager from another Sandwell children's centre, re-launched the centre as Happy Faces Sure Start Children's Centre. Governance arrangements are through an advisory board reporting to the local authority.

The majority of families in the reach areas are White British, but there is a small and increasing number of minority ethnic families and in particular in the last six months there are an increasing number of families from Eastern Europe.

The area is characterised by high levels of unemployment and social deprivation. There are a high proportion of children affected by workless households. The proportion of children attending school in the area who are known to be entitled to free school meals is above average as is the proportion of children identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most children enter childcare and early education with skills that are well below those expected for their age. There is a high, and increasing, proportion of young parents in the area and a higher birth rate than the local authority average. In addition to the childcare provision at Rowley Hall

Primary School, the children's centre provides a 16-place playgroup which is separately registered with Ofsted. The centre provides a wide range of education, health and social services on its main site, as well as in six additional satellite venues. The centre also provides a comprehensive home visiting and outreach service through its family support and maternity support workers. The centre manager also manages another centre.

## 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**

**1**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**1**

## Main findings

This is a highly effective children's centre that is very responsive in meeting the needs of families and children. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are enthusiastic about the centre and the positive difference it makes to their lives. These views are strongly endorsed by the wide range of partners who work with the centre to support and help families.

Since the centre's re-launch in September 2010, it has gone from strength to strength. Previously, around 17% of local children and their families used the centre and this has now risen to 75%. The centre provides a welcoming and caring environment where parents are encouraged to 'drop-in' for a chat at any time. All the staff at the centre are keen to 'go the extra mile' in supporting and encouraging families to attend classes. This positive attitude motivates all the staff in their determination to improve the centre and outcomes for families. Consequently, the overwhelming majority of the centre's work is outstanding and outcomes for families are rapidly improving.

Strong partnerships with a wide range of different agencies, including local primary schools, have led to gaps in achievement narrowing. These partnerships have ensured that children are better prepared to start school and settle quickly into school life. The centre takes careful note of the views of parents and carers. Through the centre's extensive links with other agencies, it has provided a range of courses linked to education and training, which provide parents with a wide range of accreditation. These include courses to support parents improving their literacy and numeracy skills as well as helping parents new to Britain in learning English. If the centre is unable to provide a specific course for parents and carers, staff provide them with information about where they can receive training. Opportunities are sometimes missed in matching parents' and carers' needs with courses that will lead to accreditation and improve the chances of securing employment.

Safeguarding is outstanding and all staff understand the comprehensive systems and procedures which ensure the safety and well-being of children and vulnerable adults

at all times. The centre is keenly aware of the rich cultural diversity represented in its locality and uses this information to enhance its work. The centre continually seeks ways to increase its engagement with families who are new to the area or with children who do not speak English as their first language. The centre uses its data effectively to identify areas for development. As a result, the centre is particularly successful in tackling inequality. The centre uses the data it has collated to set challenging targets for improvement. The centre's effective use of data, combined with accurate self-evaluation, underpins its outstanding capacity to improve.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure that once adults have been involved in any training or education they are encouraged and supported to seek further accreditation or learning which will better support them into employment.

## How good are outcomes for families?

<b>1</b>
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The centre knows its target groups of families exceptionally well and uses this information to help all families improve their health and economic outcomes. For example, young parents and families from minority ethnic backgrounds are given support to meet their individual needs. Success is achieved because the centre helps them to identify potential barriers and supports them in achieving their personal goals.

The centre works effectively in engaging families and carers in improving their health. A wide range of activities has successfully encouraged families to make healthier choices. For example, breastfeeding take-up rates are improving. The work of the maternity support worker has also ensured that breastfeeding is sustained for a longer period of time. Three staff have undertaken specialist breastfeeding training with UNICEF. Staff offer high-quality one-to-one advice and support, drop-in sessions and a loan scheme for breast pumps for parents. This initiative has been particularly effective and, as a result, nine breast pumps were issued last year and the centre has ordered an extra two because of the demand.

The family support team helps families identified with mental health problems or those families where domestic violence may occur. The work of this team ensures that parents are meeting their children's emotional needs. A large majority of contacts are made with pregnant mothers. Swift identification is made of any family where there are causes for concern, and home visits are subsequently made.

All one-year-olds are screened and a tailored intervention package is provided as required. Parents and carers are helpfully advised and supported when a referral to speech and language therapy may be necessary.

Following requests from parents to improve their health, a 'buggy fit' course together

with a 'Zumba' class and a 'walk to Beijing' have been introduced. Staff and parents are encouraged to use pedometers so that they will be motivated to take more exercise. Healthy cooking sessions called 'Fab Tots' are run through the Primary Care Trust (PCT), and these help parents and carers choose affordable and healthy foods.

Speedy referrals are made to support and help families and vulnerable adults to ensure their safety and well-being at all times. This is because communication between agencies working with the centre is effective. Case study evidence indicates that outcomes for children with child protection plans, those who are looked after or subject to the Common Assessment Framework are highly effective enabling families to manage themselves with greater confidence and independence. Families receive free home-safety checks and safety equipment. Strong links are made with organisations supporting families where there is domestic abuse, to help them to stay safe.

Good use is made of the community development officer who helps parents find opportunities for volunteering. As a result, many parents and carers go on to achieve formal qualifications. However, the centre misses opportunities to encourage and support parents and carers to take further courses which will lead to higher level qualifications, after attending an initial programme. Strong links with the local primary schools ensure that children are ready for school and all children are making at least good progress in achieving their early learning goals.

Children's behaviour in the centre is at least good and parents are supported in developing their skills in managing their child's behaviour in a positive and constructive way. The 'Dad's group' encourages fathers to be more involved and confidently play with their children and in so doing, understand their child's developing needs. Thus parents are helped in developing their confidence in their parenting skills and strengthen their relationships with their child.

The centre is effective in encouraging parents to become involved in the governance of the centre. It works closely with the parents forum and this together with those parents who are on the advisory board ensures that parents take an active role in decision making. The centre sensitively supports vulnerable parents in their involvement. Consequently a wide range and increasing number of families take part.

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>1</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>1</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop</b>	<b>1</b>

<b>positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</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>1</b>
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The centre rigorously assesses every family referred to it through family support services. The centre uses this information to ensure the needs of families are accurately identified and swift actions taken to keep vulnerable children safe. For example, the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) comes to the centre twice a week to help families with legal or financial concerns. The CAB is very successful in helping families manage any debt problems that they may have. The centre offers excellent one-to-one family provision for those in vulnerable groups. This includes accompanying less confident parents and carers to attend sessions at the centre until they feel able to come alone. The centre staff are particularly effective in engaging with families in a non-judgmental manner and this develops trust and acceptance.

A range of strategies is used effectively to help parents and carers support their children's learning. Staff have a good understanding of how well children are making progress and they use this information to provide helpful support. The Parents as Partners in Early Learning (PEAL) scheme is used well to assess parents' and carers' engagement in their children's learning. In addition, all Early Years Foundation Stage staff are trained in identifying any developmental delays and addressing these needs through carefully tailored and effective interventions.

Learning and development for children, parents, carers and staff are a high priority for the centre. This approach underpins the entire centre's work in supporting everyone to develop their potential. Crèche facilities are provided to ensure children are well catered for while their parents are involved in activities in the centre. For example, successful English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes are run for parents who speak English as a second language. These classes also link to the 'All about Me' book used in the centre crèches to celebrate children's achievement. Story sacks, which children take home to support their early reading skills, help parents and carers in learning and playing with their children. A book loan service is offered to promote reading and increase literacy levels. As a result of this service, 13 families are now regular library users. Young parents and carers have the opportunity to attend a peer mentoring group and, as a result, three young parents are taking GCSE English qualifications. The 'Dad's Group' has been successful in increasing their involvement in the local community as volunteers and five of them have been nominated for a 'Forest Schools' award for their involvement in the community.

Care, guidance and support offered to families is outstanding and permeates all aspects of the centre's work and practice. One parent expressed a view shared by many, 'No one judges you; you are given options and not told what to do.' Parents and carers are encouraged to listen and support each other. This is crucial in



developing parents' own confidence.

**The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups**

1

**The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups**

1

**The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups**

1

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

1

Outstanding leadership is provided by the centre leader, and he is ably supported by his capable team of senior managers and their staff. Everyone shares the centre's vision for improving the lives of children and families in their area. This is evident in all aspects of the centre's work. Senior staff are successful in building a strong team spirit. They have the ability to get the best from everyone in the team. This is particularly important as the centre leader is only able to be in the centre for part of the week. Clear line-management structures ensure staff are appropriately supervised and encouraged to use their initiative. This ensures that safeguarding systems are robust and well understood by all staff. Appropriate levels of monitoring ensure consistently high-quality provision and effective use of resources, and thus outstanding value for money. Self-evaluation is effective because all staff understand the centre's strengths and areas for development and work together to achieve challenging targets.

The advisory board is well led by a parent. Parents and carers form a significant part of the board and represent a good mix of families from the local area. The centre has identified that it needs to encourage greater representation of minority ethnic families. Governance is strong because the board understands the centre's strengths and areas for development and uses this information to hold the centre to account. The parents' forum is carefully listened to so that the centre can develop and respond to their needs. Good communication with this group has helped the centre to improve its provision at a time of reducing budgets and while maintaining and increasing parental involvement.

Equality and diversity are celebrated by the centre at every opportunity both in marking festivals from a wide range of cultures and ensuring that reading materials are available in the majority of languages spoken by families. The centre is sensitive to any conflicts or discrimination in the local area and works well with other agencies to challenge and tackle this. This is reflected in the outstanding integration and working of all partnerships with the centre.

These are the grades for leadership and management

**The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and**

1

<b>understood</b>	
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>1</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>1</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>1</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>1</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>1</b>

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

None

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 Happy Faces Sure Start Children's Centre on 16 and 17 November 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding.

We spoke to many of you about the centre's work. We were impressed by how well you and your children are catered for by the centre and were interested in hearing your views. This information was very helpful.

The centre is outstandingly led by a highly effective team, which supports and encourages all staff to do their best. Ensuring the safety and well-being of children and families is a high priority for the centre and the home-safety packs are a key part in this. Thorough checks are made on all staff and volunteers to ensure their suitability to work with children and young people.

In the relatively short time since the centre's re-launch, it has ensured that a large majority of the families living in the area are registered at the centre and attend

sessions. This because the centre is a very welcoming place, where staff work effectively to put parents and carers and children at their ease.

We were impressed by how well the centre seeks your views and takes account of them in developing activities and courses for you. The one-to-one support has clearly helped many of you at times of great personal need. You told us how the staff respect you and listen to your opinions. You are encouraged and well supported when you undertake training or educational courses. We have asked the centre to help you to build on this to gain further qualifications. Children who attend the centre are effectively supported in being ready to start school and they are encouraged to become independent. Children learn well and make outstanding progress in developing a wide range of skills through carefully planned activities. This is helping to narrow the achievement gap.

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