

# Inspection report for Holly Trees Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Worcestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	383514
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 November 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Anna Coyle

<b>Centre leader</b>	Judith Willis
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	St George's CE First School St Stephen's CE First School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Holly Trees Day Nursery

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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## 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.

An inspection of the satellite maintained first school and nursery was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

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

Holly Trees Children's Centre is a phase one centre which was designated as a children's centre in 2006. It shares a site with St Stephen's CE First School and Holly Trees Day Nursery. The centre is part of a cluster of four children's centres in Redditch and meets the requirements to fulfil its core purpose. Redditch Borough Council is responsible for the governance of the centre. It works closely with the advisory board to ensure strategic direction and accountability.

Outreach services include activities which are held at a satellite centre in St George's CE First School and in a community room based at St Stephen's CE First School. The children's centre serves an area in which the majority of families are from White British backgrounds. There are also significant proportions of families from Asian and Polish backgrounds whose spoken languages are Urdu, Punjabi and Polish. There is high unemployment in the area and many families are on benefits. There are currently 745 children living in the reach area, of which 84% are registered at the centre. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are well below those expected for age. The centre has achieved the Healthy Early Years Silver award.

## 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

The centre lives up to its excellent reputation within the community. It is a very welcoming, friendly and vibrant environment in which children and their families are cared for and supported extremely well. They benefit from a very wide range of services that includes plenty of activities in the centre and at its satellite centres, as well as excellent outreach services in the wider community. Parents and carers speak very highly of the centre and gave the inspectors many glowing comments about their experiences. One summed up the views of many by saying, 'If it wasn't for the children's centre, parents would still be getting in a pickle. The staff do a fantastic job.'

Outcomes are outstanding; children achieve exceptionally well in their personal and social development and greatly enjoy the activities provided for them. They behave extremely well and make very good progress, forming strong, trusting relationships with adults. Staff use their detailed knowledge of the reach area, its families and their needs to help them identify families who are potentially vulnerable. They make excellent use of data to check on the impact of the centre's services and adapt their planning accordingly so that activities are tailored to meet the needs of users. The centre's provision is greatly enhanced by outstanding partnerships with external agencies, other centres within the Redditch cluster of children's centres and local schools.

Safeguarding has an exceedingly high priority within the centre and all staff are very vigilant about children's safety. Parents, carers and children say that they feel safe and appreciate all that the centre does for them. They particularly like 'Messy Play' and being able to participate in courses about paediatric first aid. Equality and diversity are celebrated exceedingly well and users of all backgrounds are fully included in activities in a highly inclusive environment.

The centre is led and managed exceedingly well by the centre leader who provides inspirational leadership and is an excellent role model for colleagues. She works very closely with senior leaders to provide a strong sense of ambition and drive. Leaders check on the centre's work very carefully and self-evaluation is highly accurate. The

local authority fulfils its responsibilities for governance of the centre and liaises with the advisory board to hold staff accountable and ensure clear strategic direction for the future. The centre does not have a parents' forum currently, but there are clear plans to rectify this situation so that parents and carers have the opportunity to contribute to decision-making and governance. The centre's excellent outcomes and provision combined with its exceptional leadership show that it has outstanding capacity for improvement.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Implement the plans to set up a parents' forum so that users have more opportunities to contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre.

## How good are outcomes for families?

<b>1</b>
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Families benefit from plenty of activities that help to improve their health. For example 69% of mothers initiate breastfeeding, which is well above the national average, and immunisation rates are very high at 97%. All new mothers access maternity services; antenatal and postnatal clinics are well attended. Adults with mental health difficulties and postnatal depression build their confidence and self-esteem effectively through 'My Time' counselling sessions. The centre works hard to reduce the high numbers of smokers in the reach area through its 'Quit Smoking' scheme and has seen success rates improve steadily. It has also had very good success in reducing obesity levels. Children who attend the centre have regular access to fresh air in the outside area and on regular walks. They eat nutritious snacks, which promote healthy lifestyles. Children participate eagerly in activities such as, 'Stay and Play' and 'Baby Time'. The youngest children have regular opportunities for 'Baby Massage' which calm them and help them to sleep soundly.

The centre is an exceedingly safe haven in which parents and carers say that they feel comfortable and are able to talk to staff easily about any concerns they may have. Very good attention is given to health and safety in the home, which means that families can access safety equipment. They also find out about topics such as paediatric first aid and do-it-yourself (DIY) through courses held at the centre. Adults who experience domestic violence receive valuable support through the centre's very close links with external agencies and its 'Freedom Programme', as well as courses to help them build their self-esteem. Families whose circumstances make them vulnerable are assessed very carefully through the Common Assessment Framework. There are excellent partnerships with many external agencies and social services to support children who have child protection plans so that families benefit from additional support and professional expertise when most needed. Records known as 'Family Journeys' show that the centre's highly successful intervention programmes have had a very positive impact on users' lives.

Children achieve exceptionally well and make very good progress through their

engagement with the centre, especially in their personal and social development. Parents and carers say that they and their children enjoy attending activities such as 'Stay and Play' and the 'Parent 2 Parent' course. One said: 'It gets me out and I can talk about my problems and see that I am not the only one. I have also learnt not to spend a fortune on toys.' The drop-in session known as 'Talking Walk-in' benefits children considerably because they receive specialist speech and language therapy from trained professionals. Data show that when children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage their knowledge and skills are well below those expected for their age, but the gap is closing rapidly: 79% of children who accessed the centre's services last year attained at least 78 points across the six areas of learning by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Families feel that they belong to the centre and many parents and carers say that they often make new friends and gain self-confidence. Children behave extremely well and develop very positive relationships with each other and with adults. They play happily together during activities and successfully develop skills for the future as they interact with others. Parents and carers contribute to the centre by expressing their views through regular surveys and questionnaires, but there is currently no parents' forum for them to take part in decision-making and governance.

The centre provides families with a broad range of information on job opportunities. Representatives from Jobcentre Plus hold regular sessions in the centre, providing job searches and support to users looking for work. The Citizens Advice Bureau also runs sessions for general guidance and to help families access benefits to which they are entitled. This has led to very successful outcomes for some individuals. Many parents and carers are referred to college or training providers and a good number have gained qualifications as a result of the centre's work. The centre also effectively encourages users to train as volunteers, some of whom are very enthusiastic and provide excellent support to families while developing new skills themselves. This has given them excellent opportunities to improve their independence.

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 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>1</b>

## How good is the provision?

**1**

The centre provides an outstanding range of services that meet the needs of users and the wider community. Staff have an excellent knowledge of the local area and assess the needs of the community meticulously, so that they make contact with families who need help most. Consequently, the number of users registered with the centre is increasing well and attendance rates at most sessions are high. The effectiveness of sessions is evaluated comprehensively by staff and feedback is taken from families regularly and acted upon. This leads to excellent signposting of users to outreach services that meet their needs.

The centre promotes purposeful learning exceedingly well across the six areas of learning. Parents, carers and children play, learn and have fun together through high-quality activities. Sessions such as 'Together Time' and 'Stay and Play' provide excellent opportunities for children and their families to enjoy a wide range of experiences. The highly skilled and enthusiastic staff encourage all users to participate, as children develop their creativity during well-resourced imaginary play. For example, they love to join in and sing songs such as 'Twinkle, Twinkle', 'Wind the Bobbin up' and 'I'm a Little Teapot'. Urdu, Punjabi and Polish speakers have good access to translation services, and bilingual support staff help them to understand the English language.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The family support team provides excellent help for families, and staff are highly conscientious. Comprehensive advice and guidance cover a broad range of topics, including health, employability and general matters. Colourful wall displays and leaflets give parents and carers plenty of useful information, and staff signpost families to other agencies where appropriate. Excellent support for families in crisis has led to some striking examples of where the centre has made a significant difference to the welfare of adults and children and helped them overcome barriers to their learning and personal development.

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>1</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>1</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?

**1**

Governance and accountability arrangements are very clear and understood at all levels. The leadership of the centre is outstanding. Highly accurate self-evaluation is used to set ambitious targets for the future, and the centre's development plan reflects leaders' strong sense of drive and determination to succeed. Staff are

dedicated and very enthusiastic. They are very well qualified and work together as an outstanding team for the benefit of the children and their families. The advisory board provides a watchful eye and plenty of professional expertise so that it helps the local authority to set the strategic direction of the centre very effectively.

The centre promotes equality and diversity very successfully. It has effective strategies to engage with high proportions of users from its priority groups and is improving their outcomes rapidly; for example, many parents are able to attend sessions while their children are in the crèche facilities provided by the centre. 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 very successful inclusion strategies.

Safeguarding has an extremely high priority. Policies and procedures are very clear and understood by everyone. All staff are checked thoroughly to make sure that they are suitable to work with children, and Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) records are updated regularly. Risk assessments are conducted rigorously and all staff are trained in child protection and paediatric first aid.

The centre provides excellent value for money. It has outstanding partnerships with external agencies and professional bodies that make a strong contribution to improving outcomes for users. It also has excellent links with the three other children's centres in its cluster because staff and other resources are used exceedingly well across all four centres where appropriate. This means that families benefit from the huge range of expertise and experience available to them. Parents and carers say that they feel fully included and their views are taken into account. There have been very successful attempts to engage hard-to-reach groups and, in particular, many fathers participate in activities with their children.

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>1</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</b>	<b>1</b>



<b>integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose</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**

Inspectors took account of the fact that St Stephen's CE Primary School and Holly Trees Day Nursery were inspected recently and both were judged to be outstanding. The inspection of St George's CE First school took place at the same time as the inspection of the children's centre and was judged to be good.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Holly Trees Children's Centre on 22 and 23 November 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

We would like to thank you for your contribution to the inspection. Many people enjoy coming to the centre and appreciate the excellent care, guidance and support they receive from all staff. Some of you told us how the centre has made a difference to your lives and that you now feel better equipped to deal with various problems. You also told us that you feel happy and safe in the centre.

Staff organise a wide range of activities for you at the centre and other nearby locations which are greatly enjoyed by everyone. For example, we were pleased to see that you and your children enjoy using the toys during activities such as 'Baby Time' and 'Stay and Play'. Families learn to play with each other and children behave exceedingly well. Parents and carers also gain from the support they receive from staff and other centre users. The centre has excellent links with St George's Primary School and St Stephen's CE Primary School. As a result, children make exceptional progress and are very well prepared for the next stages of their learning and development.

You told us that you appreciate all that the staff do for you and your children. Some of you told us about the 'My Time' counselling sessions and one-to-one support from which you say you benefit tremendously. Similarly, having staff from the Citizens Advice Bureau and Jobcentre Plus helps you to gain advice on employment opportunities and other matters. Safeguarding at the centre is outstanding. The

centre provides a very safe and friendly atmosphere and leaders ensure that all staff and volunteers undergo suitable safeguarding checks.

Leadership is outstanding. The centre leader and the senior staff evaluate the quality of the centre's work comprehensively and make sure that they have up-to-date information so that they can meet the needs of all families in the area. We know that staff listen to you when you discuss the centre's work with them and they often make changes in response to your suggestions. We have asked them to carry out the plans for setting up a parents' forum so that you have even more opportunities to contribute to decision making and the governance of the centre.

Once again, thank you to everyone who took the time to speak with us and we wish you every success for the future.

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