

# Inspection report for Nailsworth Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Gloucestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	386949
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<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joy Law HMI

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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	N/A
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	N/A

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.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the local authority, centre staff, partner agencies, parents and carers. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the centre's self-evaluation form, data provided by the local authority and the centre, documents and policies, and minutes of management meetings.

## Information about the centre

Nailsworth Children's Centre is located in Nailsworth village, and covers a rural area which comprises a mix of social and private housing. It is part of the Parliament cluster with Painswick. All staff work across the cluster and all services across the three centres. Nailsworth Library Children's Centre was originally based on the site of a library. In September 2011 the centre's services moved to a new purpose-built community centre – The Arkell Centre, in the Forest Green Community and therefore were renamed.

The centre was designated as a phase two children's centre in 2008 and serves the community in one of the 70% most disadvantaged areas in the country. The area is served by a number of local amenities such as a community centre, two supermarkets, a chemist, two doctors' surgeries and many local shops. It has five primary schools and one secondary school.

The Nailsworth ward is made up of a population of over 5,355 people, of which the centre serves 666 children who are aged under 5 years. The area has below-average unemployment and low numbers of families in receipt of benefit with income deprivation affecting children. There are a small proportion of lone parents within the reach area. The children's centre serves a community that is 98.56 % White British, with the remaining population being from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds.

The centre has a multi-agency approach to working in partnership to provide a programme of universal and targeted activities to meet its core purpose. The centre

does not provide early years childcare provision. It offers advice and guidance to parents and carers on the daycare and childminding facilities available within the local community. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge which are below that expected for their age, particularly in regard to their communication and language development.

In September 2010 the local authority delegated responsibility for the management of the children’s centre to Barnardo’s. The partnership advisory board is made up of a cross-section of professionals, parents and carers. It is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day running of the centre and its strategic development.

Monthly meetings take place with Stroud Children’s Centre managers, health visitor, the Locality Hub team and the Children and Families Referral team. The centre works in partnership with Portage to run an Early Start support group for children with disabilities, and the centre delivers the Freedom programme. A memorandum of understanding exists between the centre and childminding coordinator. The centre has commissioned agreements with Gloucestershire breastfeeding support, Parent and Toddler Association (UK), Homestart Stroud and Dursley, Christians against poverty, Credit Union, Delivering Parents with Prospects for young parents and Active Gloucestershire.

## 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**

**3**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**3**

## Main findings

Nailsworth Children’s Centre is a satisfactory centre that is improving. It is an inclusive and welcoming place in which staff work hard to meet and serve the needs of its community. The disruption caused by the changeover of management, and staff absence, has been managed well by the centre manager and her enthusiastic and committed team. Consequently, she has continued to build on the centre’s strengths and drive forward improvement at a satisfactory rate. For example, she has started to address the weaknesses in collating data and information to evidence the impact of the centre’s work on the families it serves. She has a good awareness of the weaknesses and gaps in provision and has set realistic, challenging and

achievable targets to improve these. The centre has established firm foundations and has demonstrated that it has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Partnership working with agencies, such as health, social care, adult learning, Jobcentre Plus, Homestart, a breastfeeding support network and the local council, is a particular strength of the centre. Collectively, these organisations ensure families are given good care, appropriate information and support tailored to their individual needs. However, despite the manager's efforts, links with local primary schools are not sufficiently strong to promote effective transition arrangements for children when they move on to school.

Inclusion is central to the vision of the centre and all staff have a commitment to promoting equality and diversity. Despite the difficulties created by its rural location, the centre is sufficiently meeting the elements of its core purpose. The centre is particularly successful in its targeted work to support children and families who are in most need of help. It meets the needs of the most vulnerable well. Effective inter-agency working with skilled professionals means that the needs of potentially vulnerable families are identified at an early stage and the professionals intervene quickly. This prompt action and good use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) ensure efficient use of resources and reduce the number of children subject to child protection plans. Consequently, the centre is making a considerable improvement to the lives of some of the children and families who are accessing the services.

Although the centre responds well to families who are referred to its services, and is successful in reaching all groups, it is aware that the numbers are low and that it needs to continue to increase the number of families it engages with, particularly the most isolated and target groups, such as the few minority ethnic families and fathers.

The outcomes for children and adults using the centre are mostly satisfactory. Children make satisfactory progress in their learning and development, although the gap between the outcomes for the most vulnerable groups and others remains relatively static. Parents participate in activities and courses which build their confidence and develop their parenting and life skills. Children who attend the centre's Parent and Toddler sessions benefit from a varied range of play opportunities that help develop their communication and social skills. Parents and children are developing a good understanding of how to stay safe. Children learn to share, play well together and behave well.

Safeguarding the users' health, safety and well-being is a high priority. Recruitment and selection procedures are robust and all staff are well trained in safeguarding, which equips them well in supporting vulnerable families. Parents are supported in making their home safe and attend training in first aid. They feel safe when attending sessions and during home visits and have a high level of confidence in the staff. Many say it is their first port of call if they face difficulties and feel it is a life line for them.

Managers routinely monitor and evaluate the work of the centre and implement improvement plans. However, there is not a systematic approach to ensuring that improvement work is coherent and fully effective across the whole provision. The partnership advisory board is supportive and has a strong commitment to the centre and to the ongoing development of its role in the community. Adult users evaluate activities routinely. Where users make requests for services, the centre strives to meet demand. Users feel listened to and respected.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the proportion of families who engage with the services available to them, particularly the most isolated and vulnerable groups such as the minority ethnic families and fathers within the reach.
- Engage and work in partnership with the local primary school headteachers within the Nailsworth Children's Centre reach to improve transition arrangements and outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly for the most vulnerable and hard to reach children and families.
- Make better use of all of the available data about the impact of the work of the children's centre in order to ensure that improvement planning and the work of the centre are as effective as possible by:
  - tracking children's learning and development throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage
  - monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of adult learning and access to services
  - establishing a clear, systematic and coherent approach to ensuring efficient use of all of the data and tracking information available to the centre.

## How good are outcomes for families?

<b>3</b>
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The health and well-being of families are improving. Parents and children are developing a satisfactory awareness of how to lead healthy lifestyles. Children accessing sessions eat varied, well-balanced snacks and enjoy regular physical play. Adults learn how to prepare nutritious meals reported that they had changed what food they bought and cooking habits as a result. The majority of families are engaging well with universal services. Immunisation rates and the uptake of mothers breastfeeding their babies are generally higher than national averages.

Effective multi-agency working provides good support to children with disabilities. For example, one parent commented positively on how the staff's involvement at a very important part of his child's life had been invaluable, that the child had made significant developments in confidence in readiness for school. Parents say they feel safe at the centre and how their awareness of keeping their children safe has

increased through activities such as the child safety week and attending paediatric first-aid training. There are currently no looked after children in the area.

Parents experiencing domestic violence feel well supported and are developing social skills and leading much happier and less isolated lives. Parents report positively on how the Freedom programme has given them the 'confidence to make positive decisions and choices'. Also, as one parent commented, 'The centre gave me the strength to keep going.' Homestart effectively supports families experiencing isolation or finding it hard to cope due to physical or mental illness, or struggling with emotional difficulties of having twins. Parents reported on how their confidence had increased and how they had made positive relationships with others.

Staff provide strong role models that support children's positive behaviour and a culture of respect is evident throughout the centre. Family drop-in sessions provide opportunities for parents and children to play have fun and learn together. Parents receive support from qualified and experienced staff that help build their confidence in parenting skills. Children develop social skills as they learn how to play well together. Parents are developing their understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage and are encouraged to support their children's learning at home.

Parents and children are becoming increasingly involved in decision making through a number of channels: informal discussion during sessions; completing evaluation forms; the parents' forum; and more formally through membership of the partnership advisory board. The introduction of the Graffiti wall at the Dads' group is particularly successful in obtaining fathers' views. Comments included how these sessions were invaluable, that parents enjoy spending quality time with their children and want the service to run more often. Consequently, the centre is recruiting volunteers to help them achieve this.

Evaluations of activities, discussions with parents and individual case studies comment positively on the difference that activities and support have made to parents' own and their children's well-being. Parents say they feel 'included' and comment on the difference that the centre has made to their confidence and their children's progress and development. A small number of parents have achieved further qualifications and moved into employment.

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

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

<b>3</b>
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The centre team knows and understands its community well and works effectively with its partners to improve the life chances and personal development of parents and children. Parents expressed appreciation of the support they receive and of the positive changes that have resulted for their children and themselves. Case studies show how staff support them through difficult times and how their lives would be very different without the centre's help.

Staff satisfactorily promote children's learning and development. They adequately support parents' understanding of the age-appropriate learning activities they can provide for their children. The assessment of needs and the tracking of progress for families receiving one-to-one targeted support are good. The progress of all vulnerable families is documented well, monitored and provides a bank of case studies to help subsequent evaluations. The centre's very good links with family and children's services enable it to provide effective support for the most vulnerable groups such as teenage parents, lone parents, families in crisis and those experiencing domestic violence.

Although numbers are low, the centre is increasingly successful in meeting the needs of the wider community. Outreach work is driven by the referral process which is given high priority. Managers and staff are sensitive to the particular needs of its users and work effectively in the community to meet the needs of those families who are isolated and vulnerable. All families registered at the centre this year are from targeted groups. The centre manager has placed great emphasis on building relationships with local early years providers and staff work well together to support vulnerable children and families. However, partnerships with local schools are underdeveloped, making it difficult to share information to promote children's learning and development.

Many children and their families have low starting points to learning, which are sensitively assessed and supported with tailored learning opportunities. Partnership working with the local college and other agencies has resulted in adult learners having accessed some form of training; however, the numbers are relatively low. Courses such as Healthy Living Adds Up provide parents with opportunities to explore healthy living choices and, at the same time, take an accredited literacy and numeracy qualification.



Effective multi-agency working provides regular opportunities for parents to access professionals and other agencies during drop-in sessions. For example, the health visitor, Jobcentre Plus, Credit Union and Stroud District Housing provide information and advice to those needing help in accessing benefits, seeking training or employment, or to talk through any concerns they may have. Consequently, families are improving their economic stability and independence and outcomes are satisfactorily improving.

The centre supports childminders through weekly drop-in sessions where they promote quality practice through networking, sharing ideas and training, to the benefit of the children they care for. Staff work in partnership with the local playgroup in supporting children referred through the New for Two programme. However, the number of families accessing this programme is relatively low. The centre is actively responding to an identified need of developing children's early language and communication skills. Through training and partnership working, staff are supporting the early years providers to deliver the Every Child a Talker programme.

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>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>

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

**3**

The manager provides satisfactory leadership and management for the centre. She has a deep commitment to creating links within the community, consistently looking for opportunities to engage with users. The manager is supported by a very committed and dedicated team who deliver an improving service to the families in their reach. Users and partner agencies expressed how highly valued staff are. For example, one partner stated, 'The manager is incredibly supportive and innovative, I can't really praise her enough, and she is trying very hard to make things happen.' Another talked positively about how 'staff are very good, very professional and I couldn't do my job without them'.

Regular and effective supervision supports the professional development of staff well. Staff are well trained and fully understand their roles and responsibilities. The inclusion of all children and their families is central to the centre's vision; equality is promoted, diversity celebrated and discrimination tackled. Users with disabilities are supported well. The centre is making an encouraging contribution to community

cohesion through good partnership working with Nailsworth town council to develop services at the Arkell Centre. Successful joint work to run events such as the Return to Work jobs fair encouraged local employers and colleges to work in partnership to support users back to employment.

Governance is satisfactory and improving. There are clear links between strategic planning, development plans and service provision. The centre manager is supported well by both the local authority and Barnardo's in developing the provision. All leaders acknowledge that numbers of families currently accessing the centre's services are low. However, having secured new management, staff and premises, the centre is now in a strong position to move forward at a much faster pace. Data are becoming increasingly available to enable the centre to have a clearer understanding of its reach, and systems have been introduced to monitor and evaluate the centre's effectiveness. However, the process in which to bring all this together is yet to become fully embedded and effective.

Safeguarding is at the heart of the centre's ethos with rigorous attention to child protection, vetting and recruitment procedures. Staff are effective in ensuring children and families are safe. Resources are shared across the cluster and deployed satisfactorily, given the challenge of reaching families who live in rurally isolated villages. Innovative ways to try to reach the most excluded families include: recruiting volunteers to run groups within the community; taking activities out into the community; and making effective use of local services to promote the centre's services. The centre provides satisfactory 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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>3</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>3</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>3</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>2</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>3</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>3</b>

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

None.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Nailsworth Children's Centre on 7 and 8 December 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall. We talked with some of you, your children, staff, and a wide range of partners and members of the local authority linked to the centre. We observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documents.

The centre manager and her dedicated team have provided you and your families with a satisfactory range of services that are carefully tailored to meet your particular needs. Some aspects of the centre's work are stronger than others. For example, you receive good care, guidance and support and you are safeguarded well. The centre is particularly successful in its targeted work to support children and families who are in most need of support. Staff are well trained and work effectively with agencies to offer one-to-one support.

Those of you who use the centre are now much more aware of how to stay safe and healthy and to provide for your families. Staff provide you with access to training, such as first aid, and give advice on how you can prevent accidents in and around your homes to keep your children safe. They also provide you with training and information to help you understand how to meet the needs of your children. You told us how drop-in sessions have improved your level of understanding of how to care for, and play with, your children, and how you feel more skilled in meeting your children's needs. As a result, your children are developing securely. The centre supports you and recommends services to you to help you improve your economic stability and independence, and some of you take up opportunities for training and adult education programmes.

Partnership working with agencies, such as health, social care, adult learning, Jobcentre Plus, Homestart, a breastfeeding support network and the local council, is a particular strength of the centre. Together, the centre and these agencies ensure families are given appropriate information and support tailored to individual needs. However, despite the manager's efforts, links with local primary schools are not strong enough to promote effective transition arrangements for children when they move on to school. As a result, children's learning and development are slowed. Therefore, we have asked the local authority and staff team to engage and work in partnership with the headteachers of the local primary schools.

Those of you who spoke to us said that you feel the centre is supportive and staff are kind and caring, and give you advice. Most importantly, you said it helps improve your lives, particularly for those of you who are feeling isolated or vulnerable. All staff place importance on you and your family's welfare and provide a listening ear for you. They are keen to create a warm and welcoming environment where you feel safe and are able to talk freely about things that matter to you or are causing you concern. As a result, you value the centre. Staff listen to what you have to say about the centre and what you need.

The centre responds well to families who are referred to its services, and is successful in reaching all groups. However, staff are aware that the numbers are low and that more needs to be done to engage with the most isolated groups, such as the few minority ethnic families and fathers. Therefore, we have asked the local authority and staff team to increase the number of families who engage with the services available to them. You can help by spreading the word about how much you enjoy attending and how the centre is making a difference to your lives.

Managers routinely monitor and evaluate the work of the centre and implement improvement plans. However, the way the centre does this is not as efficient as it could be. Therefore, we have asked the centre's leaders and managers to ensure that improvement planning and the work of the centre are as effective as possible by making good use of all data, by tracking children's learning and development throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage and by monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of adult learning and access to services.

We would like to thank everyone who came to speak to us. It was a privilege to be able to talk to you. Your honest and open discussions 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).