

# Inspection report for Ladywood Sure Start Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	384066
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 April 2012
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<b>Centre leader</b>	Tracey Dickens and Lynn Willis
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Not applicable
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Ladywood Children's Centre Pre-School EY368522

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 centre managers, the information and evaluation co-ordinator, a representative from the advisory board, staff, volunteers, a local authority representative and partner agencies. They had informal discussions with parents.

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

## Information about the centre

Ladywood Sure Start Children's Centre opened in 2005 and was developed from a Sure Start local programme. The centre is a phase one children's centre providing the full core offer of services. It is situated in the residential area of Ladywood, Edgbaston and covers part of Birmingham City Centre, it is situated west of city centre. Statistical data for the Ladywood area indicates that the area is one of high social and economic disadvantage. The children's centre serves a community which is in one of the 20% most deprived areas in the country. The local population is mixed, with a large majority of families from minority ethnic backgrounds (over 80%). There are a small number of White British families. At least 51% of children live in households where no-one is working. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities are generally below those expected for their age when they enter Early Years Foundation Stage provision.

During the last two years, the centre has been through a number of changes. In December 2008, Ladywood was clustered with Summerfield and Soho Children's Centres. In 2011, the local authority reorganised directorate structures and the centre is currently in the first phase of moving into a locality model with a group of four other children's centres.

In June 2010, governance arrangements changed. An advisory board, which includes parents and users from the three clustered centres, a representative from Birmingham local authority and local professionals, was developed. The advisory board covers the three centres in the cluster. Ladywood is run by two managers. The centre uses a nearby library venue to deliver some of its services. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is provided on site at Ladywood Children's Centre Pre-School. It is registered with Ofsted to provide 16 places for children from three to four years old. The nursery is currently open two and half days per week. The setting was inspected in 2008. The inspection report can be found on the Ofsted website [www.Ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.Ofsted.gov.uk).

## 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

Ladywood Children's Centre provides a varied range of services which contribute to the good and improving outcomes for a range of users. The centre knows the local community well because it analyses available data to identify different groups and uses assessment sensitively. As a result, it has a good understanding of individual user's needs. Good partnership working with a wide range of providers, particularly midwifery, health, the childminder network and adult education, is making a significant contribution to improving outcomes for users. The leaders of the centre demonstrate a clear vision, whilst the local authority re-organises children's centres in the locality, and have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas to improve. Targets to bring about improvement are realistic and challenging but not always as precise as they could be to enable leaders and the advisory board to fully measure the impact in a timely way. The advisory board, senior leadership team and local authority work well together in monitoring the services the centre provides and are clear on how to sustain and improve these. There are plans, for example, to increase the numbers of fathers, lone parents and those parents who may be working in accessing services at the centre. Currently, the membership of the advisory board is not reflective of all partners and attendance is not always regular. Partners who do attend hold the centre to account and challenge its work.

The two centre managers are very ably supported by the information and evaluation co-ordinator and senior leadership team. Together, they implement the centre's

model of working together to create long-term sustainability. As a result, the centre has a good capacity to improve and build on its success further.

The centre is particularly effective at empowering individuals including parents and childminders who meet there on a regular basis. For example, the centre has had to withdraw from co-ordinating the childminder group which has led to childminders taking on this responsibility themselves with the help and guidance of the centre. Volunteers explain how they first attended services at the centre and were supported and encouraged to gain 'basic skills'. Parents independently run the very successful toy library and write the parents' monthly newsletter.

Inclusion is central to the centre's vision and everyone who uses its facilities feels welcome. Pre-school places are provided for children so parents can access a variety of adult training courses such as 'English for speakers of other languages'. These courses are very popular, with 92% of parents achieving their intended learning outcomes. The staff are friendly and approachable and have built high levels of trust among families who feel very well supported, including when they are experiencing a crisis. One parent, when talking about the centre, reported, 'I don't know what I would have done without it!' The centre meets all safeguarding requirements and works effectively with key agencies to ensure the well-being of children and users. Extensive use of the community café by parents and children is promoting healthy eating successfully.

Home safety workshops are a regular monthly feature at the centre with as many as 23 parents attending individual sessions. Evaluations show how individual starting points are assessed and the impact that the training has had on them and their ability to keep themselves and their children safe. Children behave well and develop good positive relationships.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the centre's action plan by ensuring that there are agreed timescales, levels of responsibility and clear targets against which to measure success.
- Continue to develop the plans to engage with those groups that the centre has already identified as not yet fully benefiting from its services, including fathers, lone parents, and parents in employment.
- Review the membership of the advisory board to ensure it is fully reflective of all partners who are engaged in service delivery to improve outcomes further.

## How good are outcomes for families?

2
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The centre is developing systems for evaluating the impact of its work and available evidence demonstrates that it is improving and in most cases strongly contributing to the outcomes for its users. Some vulnerable families remain together as a family unit

due to the interventions of the centre, particularly the family support workers. Families in times of crisis feel confident to approach the centre for support and trust adults to help them. Family support workers and the integrated family support team are key to this work, particularly when supporting children and families, who are subject to 'team around the child' or child protection plans. All relevant staff are trained in the use of the Common Assessment Framework which supports children by engaging other agencies and involving their parents and carers. Users behave in ways that ensure the safety of children and themselves in the centre, for example by following the mobile telephone policy.

A large majority of parents are developing a good understanding of how to keep themselves and their children healthy. The numbers of mothers breastfeeding their young babies is high at 66.4% against the Birmingham average of 54.3%. This is due to a number of initiatives which provide advice and support for example through new birth visits which are undertaken in partnership with the midwives and the breast feeding support group.

Children settle well in the play cafe as they have positive relationships with the adults and quickly become familiar with routines. Parents enjoy opportunities to engage in their children's play and gain an understanding of how to support their learning when attending the drop-in sessions. Specific input from sessions such as 'Accounting Early for Lifelong learning' (AcE) is benefiting both parents and children and helping children make progress. This programme promotes emotional well-being and healthy lifestyles with the children. AcE data shows that the lowest achieving children in the pre-school made 30% progress in emotional well-being. Evidence is building that those children who have contact with the centre have a smoother transition into school. The children's centre teacher works well with the early years pre-school; she has monitored the children's achievements over a period of time. The Foundation Stage Profile scores for the children in the reach area have steadily improved in personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy. In 2009, 44% of children achieved a total point score of 78 points or more, the most recent results for 2011 show an increase to 57% of children achieving this.

Parents are increasing their confidence and self-esteem by attending a range of adult learning courses. Parents recognise that taking courses in basic skills for mathematics and literacy helps them to support their children's learning. The centre successfully encourages volunteers to support activities, for example the toy library. Children and families using the centre treat each other with respect. Parents represent the different views of users on the parents' forum and two parents sit on the advisory board. As a result, users feel highly valued as their views are listened to and they are actively involved in shaping services. Parents were consulted about changing the days that the pre-school ran. Their views were considered and the service was changed to meet their needs. It now runs two and half days rather than five days a week.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

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

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

**2**

The centre is effective at sensitively assessing the needs of individual users. This is particularly evident when family support workers skilfully work with those who are most vulnerable and may be subject to social care involvement. Staff have a strong knowledge of the local community and their particular needs. Provision is tailored to meet their needs through targeted and managed services, for example through courses which help them to manage their child's behaviour. The centre is skilful in directing parents to access different services by for example ensuring a worker is present to talk to new parents who attend the baby clinic to introduce the various health promotion workshops.

There is a good range of services that reach the wider community including the minority ethnic groups, and children and parents with disabilities. Parents are engaged in a range of purposeful learning, particularly through the groups they attend, such as, 'Music makers', a course for parents and their children which shows parents how to support their child's learning through music. Parents said that this has helped them improve their own speech and language as well as that of their child.

The centre celebrates achievements and users value this. For example, the last session of a programme to promote healthy lifestyles is used to celebrate parents' achievements and highlights what they have learnt. Parents said that such courses have made a vast difference to them and their children and have made them more aware of how to make themselves healthy.

Overall, the provision for children across the centre is good. The centre provides a warm and welcoming environment, which has a 'family feel' where users take ownership. Families feel well supported by the centre and the services it provides. A comprehensive range of information is provided for all users in a wide range of formats including leaflets and discussions with staff and outreach support. The support for those accessing training and employment is good through partners such

as the Workers' Education Association.

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>2</b>

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

**2**

The centre's leaders work well as a team. They have built strong and effective links with other agencies and providers in order to provide good quality services, which are matched well to users' needs. Line management arrangements are clear and understood and staff value the regular supervision and professional development they receive. Safeguarding is on everyone's supervision agenda: this is an example of the high regard that the centre gives to safeguarding. The centre has a strong commitment to providing an inclusive environment and removing barriers. Resources are used well to meet the specific needs of individuals and the wider community. The centre uses some services that are available free of charge such as a group that supports children and families who have a disability. In this respect, the centre provides good value for money.

The senior leaders are effective in focusing the centre's efforts on prioritising and celebrating diversity, for example the effective work to engage minority ethnic groups, which is highly valued by the community. One user reports, 'The centre is a great place to come. All the staff make everyone feel wanted.' The centre has good, effective relationships with partners and professionals in health, social care and adult education. The different groups who use the centre appreciate the partnership with the organisation that provides benefit, debt and housing advice. Its members have been instrumental in ensuring that parents receive the benefits that they are entitled to.

All staff are included in the process of self-evaluation in order to identify strengths and areas to improve. They are aware of the need to increase the engagement of those groups who are not fully benefiting from the centre's services such as fathers, lone parents and parents who are in employment. There are many targets within the action plan and these are not always clearly measurable with specific success criteria. Parents are represented on the advisory board and are keen to share their views to shape services. The centre gains views through complaints, compliments and comments. All are acted on immediately. For example, parents asked for songs and rhymes in the external Stay and Play Group, and so this was included in the timetable.

Governance and accountability are clearly understood by those partners who are



represented. However, not all partners are represented and attend on a regular basis. Those advisory board members who do attend are working well with the local authority and senior leaders to ensure front line services for users are sustainable and are of good quality. They have a clear understanding of safeguarding arrangements and have effective systems in place to ensure these are met. The centre has robust safeguarding policies and procedures in place, including risk assessments. Centre staff demonstrate a good knowledge of the procedures to follow if they have a child protection concern.

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>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>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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision</b>	<b>2</b>

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

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 the Ladywood Sure Start Children's Centre on 25–26 April 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Your children's centre provides parents and their children with a warm and welcoming environment where they feel safe and secure. Staff and centre users have built trusting relationships and show mutual respect for each other. Parents told inspectors that they fully appreciate the way they feel valued and included at the centre and it feels like a 'second home'. Parents told us that they feel the activities and support they access are helping to improve the outcomes for their families.

Parents and children enjoy the range of activities on offer from drop-ins to courses such as those to promote healthy lifestyles including 'Get heart active'. Parents enjoy and benefit from the range of courses available. They value the opportunities to develop their skills in literacy and mathematics in order to help support their children's learning. The centre is helping to improve the outcomes for healthy lifestyles by providing you with free fruit and vitamins. The café is well used by all groups throughout the week and is actively promoting healthy eating and when meals are not being served, it is used as a drop in play café.

Users report a sense of achievement when they successfully complete courses, raising aspirations still further. One parent reports, 'I have found out things about myself I didn't know.' Volunteers are used to support the work of the centre particularly in the running of the toy library. The centre has established some strong partnerships with other professionals to ensure users have access to a wide range of inclusive services. This partnership working ensures those who may be experiencing a crisis are well supported and can access the services, which help them the most. One parent reports that the centre has been a 'lifeline'. The centre actively seeks the views of its users and asks how it can do things better. Parents who attend the advisory board represent the views of different groups of users. As a result, users feel they are involved in shaping services for the community.

Those in charge manage the centre well and have a good understanding of the strengths of the centre and where they need to improve. However, the targets set are not always precise enough to allow the advisory board and senior leaders to fully measure the impact services are having on improving the outcomes for users. The advisory board meets regularly to contribute to ensuring the services the centre provides meet the needs of the users. Currently, not all partners are represented on the advisory board and some do not attend regularly which means that they are not always fully involved in the shaping of services. The advisory board is working well with the local authority to ensure that resources are used effectively and the services that have the most impact for children and families can continue. Centre staff look at ways of providing interesting activities and courses that will have the most benefit. They have identified gaps in the service for some groups who are not yet fully accessing a range of services and have plans in place to improve this. The groups the centre wants to reach further include dads, lone parents and those parents who are working.

We would like to thank the centre users for speaking with us and contributing to the inspection at Ladywood Sure Start Children's Centre.

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