

# Inspection report for Saffron Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Worcestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	383807
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 April 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael Blakey

<b>Centre leader</b>	Becky Llewellyn
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
<b>Centre address</b>	Stanley Road Primary School Stanley Road Worcester WR5 1BD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01905 767107
<b>Fax number</b>	01905 358916
<b>Email address</b>	rllewellyn@worcestershire.gov.uk

<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Stanley Road Primary School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Not applicable

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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Piccadilly Gate  
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Manchester  
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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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with parents, children's centre leaders and managers, representatives of the local authority and a range of partners including health visitors, speech and language therapists, the headteacher of Stanley Road Primary School and social services. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Saffron Children's Centre is a phase two centre delivering health, education and family support services. It is situated on a shared campus with Stanley Road Primary School, although there is no shared governance. The centre is managed by Worcestershire County Council in a cluster containing four other children's centres and a further centre managed by Family Action. They all share one Strategic Advisory Board.

The centre serves the central area of Worcester city, and its reach area covers thirteen super output areas, two of which are within the 30% most deprived localities nationally. There are 1006 children under five living in the reach area and the majority of families are of White British origin with large groups of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and a few Eastern European families living in close proximity to the centre. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years provision are below those expected for their age. In the centre's reach area, 116 families live in workless households and 13.9% of eligible families take up the childcare element of working tax credit.

## 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

Saffron Children's Centre provides a wide range of high quality services, including effective targeted family support, which makes a significant difference to improving the wellbeing of children and families. The impact of these services is typified by a comment from a parent: 'The support I received was fantastic and literally life changing. I went from feeling very depressed and having a lack of confidence to a strong mum who was happy and content.' A highly committed and determined staff team effectively lead the centre. As another parent said: 'The centre is so important to a lot of people's lives. The atmosphere and happy welcoming faces make it a lovely place to be.'

Safeguarding practice is exemplary and children and adults are very effectively safeguarded. The number of admissions to hospital following accidental injuries to children has fallen by 25% over the last twelve months. All families who access family support are subject to a rigorous assessment of their needs, which is used to ensure that they receive timely and early support from a wide range of agencies. When appropriate, families are subject to Common Assessment Framework processes or referred to more specialist services. Evidence of effective safeguarding practice is typified by comments from social workers such as: 'accessing the centre and the continued support you provide to the family contributed to an informed decision being made for children's services to feel confident in closing the child protection case, knowing that the family support will continue.' A social care family support worker said: 'The children's centre is our 'port of call' for children who are subject to child protection plans. Many children are taken off plans and the centre effectively supports them through the 'step down' process.'

All of the 152 parents who completed satisfaction surveys in 2012 said they were satisfied with the centre. Over the last three years Saffron Children's Centre has increased its reach so that 56% of families living in the local area now access services and, through effective targeting, 93% of those families living in the two 30% most deprived areas. The centre has been highly effective at engaging minority ethnic families so that 98% of these families access services. Families from almost all target groups are well represented with 56% of fathers attending services, including midwifery clinics and health visitor appointments. However, White British families are slightly less well represented and the percentage of pregnant teenagers and teenage parents reached has fallen recently following cuts to a local specialist service.

The total number of children living in workless households has fallen from 140 to 116 since 2009 and the centre has increased its reach to these families from 12% to 40% during the same period. However, a lack of sufficiently detailed geographic data is hampering the centre's ability to reach approximately 60 children who live in workless households and the percentage of children benefiting from the childcare element of working tax credit is lower than the national average. Despite this, the overall uptake of Working Tax Credits has increased from 11% to 14% over the last three years.

Self-evaluation processes are wholly accurate and based on sound evidence, and leaders and managers know exactly what they need to do to drive further improvements. However, annual reviews and improvement planning with the local authority is not always sufficiently focussed on clear priorities with specific and measurable targets. The lack of data at a sufficiently detailed locality level is slowing progress and limiting the analysis that the centre's staff require to target services further. Health data is not always provided in a timely manner. The centre has begun to implement effective tracking of outcomes in some of its services, however the medium and longer term evidence of impact is limited. Despite this, the centre has made rapid progress at increasing reach and improving outcomes. The capacity for sustained improvement and value for money are good.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- The local authority should support the centre to increase its reach and improve outcomes further by:
  - providing more detailed data so that leaders and managers can identify and target services for all children living in workless households and in the smaller pockets of deprivation in the 70% most deprived Super Output Areas
  - ensuring that outcome data is broken down by ethnic group so that more targeted interventions can be effectively delivered
  - challenging the centre to create plans that clearly identify a small number of priorities which include specific, measurable outcomes targets.
- The Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust should support the centre to target its services further by providing timely and detailed data on breastfeeding, obesity and accidental injuries children to enable the centre to identify any areas for development and to plan its services.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that processes to track the medium and longer-term impact of services and interventions are fully embedded, to inform future planning and service delivery.

## How good are outcomes for families?

2
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Children and adults are safe at the centre. The annual 'Child Safety Events' are well

attended. In 2012, 53 parents attended, 100% said that they felt safe at the centre and many parents signed up for free home safety checks from the fire service. A parent attending the paediatric first aid course said: 'after attending the course I felt a lot safer in my abilities to cope if an emergency arises with my new born baby.' Outcomes for children subject to child protection plans are very positive.

Breastfeeding rates, at 6-8 weeks after birth, were well above national and local averages at 55% in 2010 and the most recent unvalidated data indicate that this rising trend will continue. The centre is working closely with partners to ensure that Worcestershire is accredited with the UNICEF 'Baby Friendly' award. Obesity rates in the reach area, which are broadly in line with national averages, have risen slightly from 9% to 9.8% over the past three years and the centre has correctly identified that it needs to do more to reverse this trend. However, data provided by the local NHS trust are not recent enough, or broken down sufficiently well, to support the centre in fully targeting its interventions.

The centre uses Early Years Foundation Stage Data well to plan effective activities for children. The overall trend of achievement of children living across the reach area is improving. The percentage of children achieving 78 points or more including 6 points in Personal Social Emotional Development and Communication, Literacy and Language is now 55%, an improvement of 14% over three years. The achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and their peers has narrowed significantly and is now well below national average. The centre has begun to track educational achievement more closely and followed a cohort of children it deemed to have had significant contact with the children's centre in 2010/11. Data indicate that 87.2% of this cohort achieved 78 points or more at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, which is well above local and national averages.

Children behave well and the centre supports over a third of parents to improve their parenting skills. As one parent said: 'We now have a few strategies in place such as family rules and praise charts, but the one thing that worked really well in our family is the hot air balloon story at bedtimes. My boy loves it. It helps him relax and forget his worries.' Attendance at the parents' forum is high, with parents actively shaping provision at the centre.

Parents access an increasing number of adult learning programmes, including 'Garment Making' and 'Fitness 4 the Health of it'. Crèche facilities are always available and well used. In 2011/12 over a third of parents registered at the centre accessed training. An increasing number of parents become volunteers at the centre, and the staff cite examples of volunteers moving on to full time employment. Many parents are positive about the impact of the centre, for example, one said: 'My confidence grew so much that when my daughter went to pre-school 3 mornings per week I became a volunteer, because I wanted to give something back to the centre.'

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

Most families living in the two most deprived super output areas and the majority of families from across the reach area access Saffron Children's Centre services. Children and parents from almost all the target groups are well supported through outreach and family support. The centre is currently reaching 88% of Pakistani families and 100% of Bangladeshi and Black African families. However, fewer White British families currently access services and the centre has identified this as an area for development. Activities are well attended and often over subscribed. For example, The 'Natural Beauty' course is well attended by mothers and grandmothers and some go on to more formal learning, such as English for Speakers of Other Languages.

The highly effective family support team have increased the number of families that they help over the last three years and provide high quality care, guidance and support. In 2011/12 they supported 141 families with a wide range of issues including domestic violence and alcohol abuse. The centre evaluates the impact of its family support and records outcomes achieved. Evaluations clearly show that family support has a positive impact for the large majority of families, particularly on improving health, achievement and safety.

Opportunities for learning and development are highly effective. Good partnerships with local schools are having a positive impact on the achievement of children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The centre plans the curriculum jointly with the co-located school and has effectively targeted specific improvement issues in mathematics. Parents speak highly of all the activities on offer, including 'Bumps to Babies. One noted: 'The group has been a real support for myself and has definitely contributed to my child's development and learning.'

Speech and language support is provided on a weekly basis at the centre. Therapists provide both appointments for families and a drop-in session for more informal advice, guidance and assessment. Specialist intervention groups are delivered to address speech delays or disorders. As one speech and language therapist said:

'Coming here is better because we can run play sessions rather than a formal clinic, which helps parents and children feel more relaxed and willing to speak to us.'

Care, guidance and support are very effective. The centre and local authority provide a free counselling service through a service level agreement with Relate. Between September 2011 and March 2012, 22 individual people attended and impact evaluations show positive improvements in relationships, self-esteem and communication. Parents also access advice from the Citizen's Advice Bureau on a wide range of issues including housing and benefits. Attractive displays and relevant leaflets supplement the advice available to parents.

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 is rapidly improving outcomes for children and families and provides good value for money overall. Safeguarding is outstanding and staff undertake high quality regular training on a wide range of issues, including using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), safe recruitment and protecting vulnerable adults. Safe recruitment, including Criminal Record Bureau checks and the recording of this information, meets all statutory requirements. This focus on prioritising safeguarding ensures that families receive support as early as possible. The number of CAFs completed is therefore low, as families receive effective multi-agency support beforehand.

The centre has contributed well to narrowing the achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and their peers and effectively engages all the minority ethnic groups living in the reach area. It has made a significant contribution to strengthening the local community. Children with disabilities and those with life threatening illnesses are integrated fully into the work of the centre.

Capacity for sustained improvement is good. Leaders and managers have effectively increased the reach of the centre, targeted services to those families most in need, and strengthened partnerships. For example, local partners delivering adult learning say: 'It is now extremely easy to work in partnership with the centre and they always make sure we have interpreters so that we can enrol learners from different backgrounds.'

Leaders and managers know what the centre needs to do to improve further and are



driven to bring about further improvements. They demonstrate an excellent understanding of data and use these well to plan services. However, although the local authority and NHS trust provide some good quality information, it is not always sufficiently broken down to ensure that the centre can target its interventions further. The use of data to set priorities and specific, measurable targets is underdeveloped.

Recent changes across the cluster of six centres in Worcester city have brought together a number of advisory boards into one citywide board. This new board has clear terms of reference, and representation from a parent user of Saffron Children's Centre. However, it is too early for this board to have provided appropriate support and challenge to the centre. Parents are routinely and effectively engaged in the running of the centre and attendance at the parents' forum, 'Saffron Little Steps', is high.

These are the grades for leadership and management

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>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>1</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the 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**

Inspectors took account of the report for Stanley Road Primary School, which was inspected in 2010 and judged to be good.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaining about inspections*, which is available

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Saffron Children's Centre on 26–27 April 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank those of you who took the time to speak with us during the inspection and for making us feel so welcome. Your assistance helped us to make our judgements about the centre. We were impressed by the highly committed and determined staff team leading the centre and delivering services to you. We agreed with what one parent told us when they said: 'The centre is so important to a lot of people's lives. The atmosphere and happy welcoming faces make it a lovely place to be.'

We concluded that Saffron Children's Centre provides a wide range of high quality services including highly effective support to families. One of you told us: 'The support I received was fantastic and literally life changing. I went from feeling very depressed and having a lack of confidence to a strong mum who was happy and content.' The centre is making a positive difference to the lives of children and families that live in the reach area, particularly in improving health outcomes and helping both children and adults to learn.

We judged safeguarding practice to be exemplary and concluded that children and adults are very effectively safeguarded. All of the 152 parents who completed satisfaction surveys in 2012 said they were satisfied with the centre.

Over the last three years the centre has increased its reach to families living in the local area, particularly those of you who live in the more deprived areas. The total number of children living in workless households has fallen from 140 to 116 since 2009 and the centre has increased its reach to those families living in workless households. However, we have asked the centre to engage more of these children and families.

We have also asked the local authority and the NHS trust to provide more detailed information on families so that the centre can target its services even more effectively. In addition, we have asked the centre to do more to track the impact of what it does so that it can demonstrate the differences that it is making to your lives.

We wish you well for the future.

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