

# Inspection report for Cherry Trees Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Worcestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	365765
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 July 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joan Cawdron

<b>Centre leader</b>	Louise Langston
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
<b>Centre address</b>	Cherry Tree Walk Batchley Worcestershire B97 6PD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01527 592675
<b>Fax number</b>	01527 592675
<b>Email address</b>	Louise.Langston@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	116721 Batchley First and Nursery School 116724 Holyoakes Field First School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	EY274994 Kids Community 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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Piccadilly Gate  
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Manchester  
M1 2WD

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## Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior staff, outreach workers, health workers, family support workers, 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

Cherry Trees Children's centre is a phase two centre which was designated as a children's centre in 2006. It shares a site with Batchley First and Nursery School. The centre is part of a cluster of four children's centres managed by Redditch Borough Council and two further centres managed by the YMCA. The centre serves a population from predominantly White British backgrounds, with 10% of families of Asian and Polish heritage. There are 787 children under the age of five in the reach area and over 50% of these children live within wards of the highest 30% deprivation in the country, most of whom are registered with the centre and access services. There is a high number of workless families dependant on state benefits and some families are second or third generation unemployed.

Families live in homes that are a mixture of private ownership, those in local authority control, and a mix of social housing and private rental accommodation. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years provision are lower than those expected for their age

Governance of the centre is provided by the borough council. There is also an advisory board and a parents' forum. A range of health, social care, family support and education services is provided at the centre and by outreach services across the area.

## 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

Cherry Trees Children's Centre is held in extremely high regard by families and others in the community it serves. So many families said 'without the centre our lives would have been so much worse'. The centre is vibrant with activities and learning opportunities for users on most days in the week. The centre leadership team is passionate and committed, with a strong desire to improve the prospects of children and families in the area. As a result of the dedication of all the staff, it has continued to offer high level services to the users while participating in a major service review in preparation for authority wide re-structuring. There is a deep understanding of the local community and the many barriers to families, in particular lone women and those suffering domestic abuse, accessing services. A very high level of trust in the centre has been built up over time within a neighbourhood where many viewed professional services with suspicion.

Governance arrangements are very strong and highly effective. Senior managers know the centre's strengths exceptionally well. There is rigorous analysis of information about the area served by the centre. This is skilfully used, alongside local intelligence gathered from a broad range of sources such as schools and health workers, to provide an excellent range of service and activities that are extremely well-matched to local needs. Targets are set using wider local authority plans and with very specific targets linked to the reach area. Evaluation is used extremely well to review the centre's work and, as a result, services are developed precisely to meet community need. The centre's capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding due to the positive impact of its work on outcomes for children and families and the exceptional overall leadership and management of the centre.

The centre is extremely effective in keeping users safe and protected and, in partnership with other professionals, has significantly contributed to parents' understanding of wider safety issues such as first aid and safety in the home. The centre exemplifies high-quality safeguarding practice. All staff and partners give the highest priority to safeguarding all children and families. Their safety and well-being are significantly enhanced by the robust and consistent implementation of effective information-sharing protocols, policies, procedures and practice.

Highly effective activity programmes have a significant impact on the outcomes for families in the area, all of which are outstanding. Healthy lifestyles have been a major focus of the centre's work alongside the learning and development of young children. This has effected strong and sustained improvement in children's skills and abilities when they enter school and early years education and very strong improvements in the health outcomes for families across the area.

Adult learners engage extremely well with the learning opportunities that are on offer through the centre. Every opportunity is taken by the centre to promote progression and raise aspiration in adults. Through these learning activities, many adults have a desire to progress and continue their learning journey, with the result that many of them move on to other courses, volunteering and some into employment. While the centre has an excellent tracking system which records the journeys of their families, information on successful outcomes from family learning and referrals to the Jobcentre are not as robust.

Inclusion is central to the vision of the centre and all staff have a commitment to promoting equality and diversity. The centre is highly successful in its targeted work to support families who are most in need. Its high quality support through staff who speak Polish and Urdu ensures those families where English is their second language receive information and guidance in their own language. Many are helped through one-to-one support in appointments with other agencies, such as housing and debt advice.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Work with family learning and the Jobcentre to be able to track the achievements of families in the longer term.

## **How good are outcomes for families?**

<b>1</b>
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Outcomes for children and families are outstanding. Excellent partnership working and the extremely effective systems for assessing users' needs, making referrals and intervening early are having a very positive impact on outcomes for children, including those subject to Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes, looked after children and children subject to child protection plans. Staff intervene swiftly to support families and as a result the centre, in partnership with professionals, has prevented situations from reaching crisis point.

A very large majority of families in the area engage well with an excellent range of appropriate health services ensuring families are achieving healthy outcomes. Midwifery services and health visitor clinics take place in the centre and the communication between these services ensures families receive sensitive tailor-made services quickly. Partnerships with health and leisure services have provided access to sessions at reduced rates for keep fit and swimming sessions. Fruit snacks are

provided during crèche sessions and fathers attend activities with their children which often have a physical activity focus. Healthy eating is a strong feature and the centre has achieved the bronze status in the Healthy Eating in Early Years award. Take-up rates of these programmes are high. Breastfeeding take-up rates are also high and, through peer support, many sustain this beyond six weeks. Families also attend baby weaning sessions where guidance on research-based information is provided on the correct age and important foods in their child’s diet, which will in turn prevent obesity in children. These sessions are supported by the interpreters where needed.

Excellent information, advice and guidance are provided on a range of issues by the staff and supported by the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) for parents. Information such as childcare options, financial issues, benefits and tax credits is provided, thus improving their economic stability and independence. Parenting programmes are highly successful in improving interaction and play within families. These are often followed up with attendance on English and mathematics courses with parents achieving qualifications. Appointments are arranged at the Jobcentre and some have gained employment. However, success rates and progression are not routinely shared with the centre from training providers or the Jobcentre. Families using the centre and the wider community treat each other with respect. Most families using the centre regularly express their views and contribute to shaping services. A significant number of parents are now playing an active part in the parents’ forum which is contributing to the governance of the centre.

Thorough monitoring of children’s development and subsequent intervention and provision, ensures all children make the maximum progress in their learning and development. Schools report that children arrive ready to learn and are confident and independent. Excellent transition arrangements and partnership working ensure the continuity of care, learning and development of all children. Parents are also supported exceptionally well in developing their parenting skills to promote their children’s play, development and learning at home and find out how to recognise achievements and developmental milestones. This has had an extremely positive impact on family relationships and children’s progress. Almost all three- and four-year-olds are accessing their free nursery education entitlement and the most vulnerable two-year-olds are accessing 15 hours of childcare a week through the government funded two-year-old nursery pilot. As a result, all of the children who accessed the children’s centre achieve 78 points in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile.

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

<b>target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</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>1</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?**

<b>1</b>
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Overall provision is excellent. Staff are highly skilled at identifying the needs of families. They intervene early to ensure families receive the personalised support they need to improve their outcomes and prevent situations reaching crisis point. Extremely strong partnership working and correct identification of the make-up of the reach area ensure the centre is supporting a very large majority of families identified as in most need of support. The centre has high expectations of families, and has been particularly successful in engaging with and improving the outcomes for families from the most deprived areas. The services and activities for most of the centre's identified target groups are excellent, some through one-to-one support provided by the family support staff, resulting in high user participation and satisfaction. Parents express unanimously that they receive excellent support that meets their needs, demonstrated by the following comments: 'Counselling was so good, I had agoraphobia and was helped step by step, I now have a job and it is so amazing'; 'I was so depressed I didn't know anyone, I've attended a few courses and feel more confident'.

The centre building and outreach accommodation in local schools and the local community centre are highly effective in bringing provision closer to families. Through this outreach provision, and rotation of provision around the cluster, adult learning and development activities are many and varied with high take-up rates. Services are of a very high quality and are securely linked to the centre's priorities and adults' needs. Adults are assessed prior to starting a course to identify any additional support they may need, such as English sessions, or the support of an interpreter. They keenly share experiences such as how they have used examples they learned in sessions with their own children at home, and how successful these have been.

Every opportunity to share and give information is seized by the centre. Reflection on how they have changed and improved following interventions, celebrations of success and photographs are used to inspire parents to look at what they can progress to. In times of crisis, the centre is invaluable in offering both practical and nurturing care, guidance and support to families. Fathers are increasingly engaged with their children in activities, including in a programme with the local library for reading together.

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?**

<b>1</b>
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Partners state that managers and staff care greatly about the community and their families and are passionate about making a difference to their outcomes and future life chances. The leadership team take every opportunity to develop partnerships with a wide range of services and professionals and are highly regarded by all partners. This has resulted in a variety of partnership activities and services being delivered and vast collective knowledge of the issues and needs of the community. This greatly enhances the well-being of and makes a substantial contribution to the outstanding outcomes for families. All partners commented how working with the centre has contributed to the ongoing success and high standard of interventions with families.

Governance and strategic leadership are provided extremely effectively through the borough council and the advisory board. They set challenging priorities and provide a clear strategic vision. Policies, procedures and systems are clearly presented and accessible with safeguarding amongst its highest priorities. Procedures for referrals between agencies, child protection, safer recruitment, staff safety procedures and risk assessments are robust. Staff training and highly effective controls ensure all staff skills are at the level appropriate for their job role. All staff are checked thoroughly to ensure they are suitable to work with children, and Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) records are updated regularly. Highly effective professional supervision and management arrangements, supported by an educational psychologist, are in place to monitor and ensure staff safety, well-being and professional development.

The centre plays a significant role in the life of the community and is successfully promoting tolerance and understanding of different minority ethnic groups. The inclusion of all families is promoted very effectively and the centre has truly established itself in the community. This positioning has been supported by the headteacher of the attached school, through changing the entrance to the school so that all families have to pass the children's centre rather than the centre being tucked away behind the school. This change has had a significant impact on the footfall in the centre. Provision and services are exceptionally well used and engage the very large majority of families in the area, particularly those identified as most vulnerable, those children with disabilities, fathers and young parents. Through its outreach activity and collaborative work with partners to build the provision, the centre provides excellent 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>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 integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision</b>	<b>1</b>

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

Before the inspection, inspectors read the Ofsted inspection reports on Batchley First and Nursery School, Holeyokes Field First School and Kids Community Nursery, in order to see what was written about their partnerships with the centre. Inspectors noted that the inspection report for Holeyokes Field First School took place some considerable time ago.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Cherry Trees Children's Centre on 3–4 July 2012. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

When we were inspecting the centre, many of you wanted to take the opportunity to speak with us. This demonstrated to us the very high regard that you have for the centre. Without exception, you told us how much you value and benefit from the

centre's work. Your safety and well-being are a high priority for the centre. Safeguarding is extremely rigorous and reception staff are highly vigilant on your behalf.

The centre management team is very well supported by the borough council to make the centre the outstanding place that it is. The centre uses the information it has about your local area and the families who live in it extremely well to plan and deliver an excellent range of activities. The number of families who take up the opportunities on offer in the centre and across the area is very high and this includes those whose circumstances might make them hard to engage. We know that you have different opportunities to tell the centre what you would like to do and that you take time to give feedback at the end of a session or course.

Provision to help your children learn and develop is exceptional. You are developing your parenting skills and, as a result, are helping enable your children to make outstanding progress. This is due to the exemplary support the centre provides to develop your understanding of how to recognise and support your children's learning and development at home. You value the excellent opportunities provided by the centre and schools to support your children's transition to school which ensures they arrive ready to learn, are confident and independent.

You have access to exceptionally good opportunities to develop your employability skills, embark on training and find suitable employment. We were very pleased to see how many of you progress on to other courses and that a good proportion of adults are looking to get a job or indeed have found a job. We have asked the centre to work with the Jobcentre and family learning providers to be able to more clearly measure the successes you are making in training and finding work.

Your centre provides families in this area with exceptional care, guidance and support, particularly when you are facing times of crisis, with outstanding results. You expressed unanimously that you receive excellent support, as some of you told us, 'Without the centre I wouldn't be where I am today. I am beginning to do well and now have a job, something I thought I would never be able to do a few years ago.'

Your centre continuously strives to be better and is always looking for ways to improve to ensure it is having the biggest impact on improving outcomes for you and your families, and has clear plans in place for improvement.

We would like to thank everyone who came to speak with us. It was a privilege to be able to talk with you. Your openness helped us immensely during the inspection. We thoroughly enjoyed spending time in your centre and we wish you and your families the very 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).