

# Inspection report for Netherhall Sure Start Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Leicester
<b>Inspection number</b>	383327
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 October 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Marian Pearson HMI

<b>Centre leader</b>	Sally Grief
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
<b>Centre address</b>	New Romney Crescent Leicester LE5 1NH
<b>Telephone number</b>	0116 292 4540
<b>Fax number</b>	0116 292 4541
<b>Email address</b>	sally.grief@leicester.gov.uk

<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Scraptoft Valley Primary School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Netherhall Children's Centre URN:EY419992 Humberstone Day Nursery URN:EY293485

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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**361**

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
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 of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with parents and users of the centre, the centre's manager and staff, representatives from the local authority, members of the neighbourhood advisory board and the parents' and carers' forum and various professionals who work in partnership with the centre.

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

## Information about the centre

Netherhall Children's Centre was designated as a phase two centre in January 2008 and became fully operational from January 2009. Its reach area covers a compact geographical area in north east Leicester. The centre is based in a self-contained extension on the site of Scraftoft Valley Primary School. Leicester City Council has commissioned the charity Action for Children to operate the centre on its behalf and conducts quarterly monitoring meetings to check contract compliance. The North East Neighbourhood Advisory Board 0-12 is responsible for overseeing the work of this centre and three other children's centres in the locality, each of which has its own centre manager. The centre has its own parents' and carers' forum.

Of the 470 children under five years of age in the reach area, almost a third live in one of the 20% most disadvantaged areas of the country. The majority of the reach area is situated within the 30% most disadvantaged areas nationally. A third of the children live in households where no one is working. The number of families claiming working families tax credit is rising. The majority of families are of White British heritage but the number of families from minority ethnic groups is rising, particularly families of Asian heritage.

The centre offers on-site health provision, information services, play and learning sessions and targeted support for families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. When children enter school at the age of three years, many have skills, knowledge and abilities at or below those expected for their age. The centre has two linked childcare providers: Netherhall Children's Centre and Humberstone Day Nursery. Netherhall Children's Centre is the centre's crèche provision and was inspected in July 2012. Humberstone Day Nursery was separately inspected immediately prior to the children's centre inspection. Inspection reports for the linked providers can be found at [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

This is a vibrant and lively centre. Families have quickly identified it as a hub within the community where they can access good-quality information, services and activities to help them improve their own and their children's lives. Leadership and management are strong, and a wide range of partner agencies are involved in delivering services to complement the centre's own activities. Provision is regularly reviewed and carefully tailored to meet the needs of users. The vast majority of families in the area engage well with the centre. As a result, outcomes for children and families are good, and the centre demonstrates good capacity to improve further.

'Sharing, growing, embracing the future with confidence and hope' – this vision, developed by the parents' and carers' forum, summarises the ethos of the centre and is embraced by everyone involved. Users feel very comfortable at the centre because their views are sought to ensure the environment is welcoming and inclusive. Typical comments from parents are: 'I love it here, it's my second home,' and 'Staff are really friendly and always there to listen.'

The centre has a positive impact on the health and well-being of local families. Obesity levels at the end of Reception Year have halved, and the number of mothers breastfeeding their babies at six to eight weeks is above the national average and

increasing. Following a continuous rise in the number of mothers smoking in pregnancy, a concerted campaign to reduce smoking has had some initial success. Centre staff liaise effectively with professional colleagues, including teachers at the local school, to ensure that families whose circumstances make them vulnerable are well supported and receive the help they need. Parents' confidence and independence have grown as a result of the centre's professional development pathway, leading them to develop their parenting skills, embark on qualification courses and gain employment. Teenage parents and pregnant teenagers appreciate having their own group as it enables them, without any expense, to make friends and gain useful advice related to work, health concerns and how to look after their children.

Parents and children have fun learning and playing together at skilfully designed activity sessions. Imaginatively themed 'Dads' Events', such as a 'Pirate' session and 'Rumble Tumble in the Jungle', provide opportunities for a large number of fathers to spend quality time with their children. Some tracking of children's learning and development is evident but has not yet been extended to all children using the centre. Parents, whose children are about to start school, contribute to an assessment of their children's progress, but this is not shared with the school and transition arrangements are under-developed.

Leaders and managers have an accurate understanding of the centre's strengths and current priorities. The parents' and carers' forum provides a strong local voice in the life of the centre by offering constructive comment and highlighting the needs of users. Action for Children evaluates proactively the impact of the centre's work and, in particular, the effectiveness of its services for the most disadvantaged groups. The local authority is diligent in retaining overall responsibility for delivering improved outcomes through regular, rigorous monitoring of the centre's work. The centre has benefited from recent improvements in data and analyses these increasingly efficiently to maintain high levels of engagement and to identify emerging priorities.

The local authority has good procedures for self-evaluation and development planning. However, the timescales for these are not in line with each other as development planning runs from April to March and self-evaluation from October to September. As a result, the centre is hampered in demonstrating performance against its annual targets. A few targets are less challenging than they could be and have been achieved easily within the first six months of the development plan. However, overall, targets are specific and well focused; most are ambitious and data demonstrate good progress on most key outcomes over the life of the centre.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve outcomes for children by:
  - extending tracking of children’s development to all children participating in the centre’s activities
  - working with the local school to improve liaison and information sharing to support every child’s transition into school.
- Strengthen self-evaluation and development planning by:
  - refining the local authority’s processes to ensure the centre can demonstrate more easily its performance against annual targets
  - ensuring that all targets are increasingly ambitious.

## How good are outcomes for families?

2
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The effective partnership with health professionals is successful in identifying those in need of early intervention. Parents of children at risk of becoming obese are appropriately signposted to ‘Rumble Tumble’ physical activity sessions and ‘Cook and Eat’ sessions which have encouraged families to eat more fruit and try different healthy food. Breastfeeding is promoted well and those experiencing difficulty are encouraged to continue by volunteer peer supporters. Baby massage sessions promote a sense of calm and relaxed well-being for both baby and parent. The ‘Starting Something Special’ course prepares expectant parents well for transition to their new role. During the centre’s award-winning ‘Step Right Out’ campaign, a large number of families pledged to make their homes smoke free and, with peer support, a number of users have successfully stopped smoking.

Families feel safe when using the centre and are aware of safeguarding procedures. They are confident to ask for help because they know and trust the centre workers. The number of users seeking help when experiencing domestic violence has increased sharply as a result. Staff use the Common Assessment Framework effectively, in conjunction with families, to assess children’s needs and devise realistic action plans for improvement. Outcomes for children on child protection plans and children deemed to be in need are good because of careful assessment of need, effective multi-agency working and individually planned support. Parents attending the ‘Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities’ course have developed strategies to manage their children’s behaviour more confidently. They recognise they now shout less which enhances relationships with their children.

Health and safety are treated as high priority with risk assessments conducted before each session and regular evacuation practices. ‘Whoops’ training has enhanced users’ confidence to identify hazards and assess risks around the centre and at home. First-aid courses and road-safety sessions increase users’ awareness of how to keep children safe and healthy. Data indicate that emergency hospital admissions from unintentional and deliberate injuries are decreasing and are now low compared with the rest of the country.

Children’s behaviour is good. They develop positive relationships and show consideration for each other as they share toys and join amicably in imaginative play. Many are becoming independent, inquisitive learners, squealing with delight as they

explore the feel of shaving foam and cornflour mixture. The number of children reaching a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is increasing and is higher than the local city average at 67.3%. The gap between the lowest 20% and the rest is narrowing, and 61.7% of those living in the most disadvantaged areas reached a good level of development last year, although boys' development still lags behind girls'. Language and literacy skills are promoted well through reading challenges, the 'Bookstart Corner' and in the 'Dads events' which help support positive role-modelling for male readers. Parents learn the importance of early communication and book sharing during 'Discovering Babies' sessions. As a result of these initiatives, library membership has increased and a high percentage of boys now borrow books from the centre's library.

Adults have access to a wide range of opportunities to develop their skills and qualifications, including cake decorating and beauty courses identified from consultations as courses in which parents would be interested. These courses have generated much interest and now have a waiting list. Many users are keen to progress from one course to another as they develop their confidence as learners and each achievement is well celebrated. The parents' and carers' forum facilitates helpful sessions where users share their skills, build 'Personal Pathway' portfolios and find out about further training to increase their future employability.

Users are proud of the centre. Clear expectations and boundaries are set out in a 'user agreement', which users themselves are keen to enforce. The parents' and carers' forum's fund-raising activities have enhanced the centre's work with £12,000 of additional resources in the last year. The centre's well-trained volunteers undertake a variety of roles, mainly assisting with sessions and providing a personal welcome for those new to the centre. They are keen to give something back to the centre for all the help and support they have received. This work has been mutually beneficial as volunteering has provided a progression route into work and training for a number of users.

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>2</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
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The centre knows its community well. Almost all families have had contact with the centre over the last 12 months and the business team works determinedly to keep in touch with families whose contact with the centre is infrequent. The centre is also popular with families from outside the reach area who say that they prefer coming to this centre because of the good-quality resources and the wide range of age-appropriate activities.

Together with partner agencies, staff use assessment well and regularly monitor take-up of activities to ensure that the needs of users are consistently met. Over 200 families used the 'drop-in' in the last year as it is recognised as an accessible source of valuable information and advice. Users seek help to cope with a range of issues, including access to welfare benefits, housing difficulties and help in seeking employment. The knowledgeable staff team has built up a wide range of partners, who help improve users' lives materially with specialist help such as legal advice, support when seeking employment and assistance with financial management. Family support workers work closely with families to assess their needs when referred to the centre for additional support, skilfully using the Common Assessment Framework as required. Case studies show how sensitive partnership work helps parents to cope with difficult situations and increases their self-confidence in developing social networks, thus reducing risks to children.

Parents are keen to extend children's learning at home and make good use of a well-stocked toy library and the good range of books, including dual-language books, for loan. Provision of imaginative activities and explanation of how these promote children's learning enhance parents' understanding of their children's development. Crèches, run by well-qualified staff, facilitate adults' take-up of training opportunities. Children attending the crèches and those due to start school are closely observed and their progress is tracked to build on their interests and ensure activities are appropriate to their stage of development. However, the tracking does not extend to all children attending sessions at the centre, and liaison with the school to ensure smooth transition is not yet well developed.

Key messages are promoted weekly through all centre activities, raising awareness of health and safety such as precautions to take before taking children out in the sun. The 'Be Smart' service is user-friendly in providing advice on sexual health and relationships as it was designed in consultation with young people.

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**

Governance and accountability arrangements are clear. Although the centre does not have its own advisory board, parental representation on the neighbourhood advisory board ensures that the centre's identified priorities and those of the wider area are linked effectively. Neighbourhood team meetings provide useful peer support and additional challenge for the centre manager. The well-respected centre manager is ably supported by dedicated staff who channel their enthusiasm for their work to good effect. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and fully understand how their individual targets link to the centre's development plan. They are supported sensitively in handling their caseloads and their performance is monitored well by managers.

Although current processes for self-evaluation and development planning do not help the centre to demonstrate its performance on an annual basis, there is widespread understanding among leaders and managers, the staff team and partner agencies of the difference the centre is making for users and where it needs to focus its work. Leaders and managers regularly evaluate the relevance and impact of the centre's work by scrutinising data for the reach area, listening to feedback from users and using tools developed by Action for Children. Targets for improvement are mostly challenging. For a few outcomes, such as breastfeeding, a dip in one year's performance has not always been taken into account when setting the following year's target. This has resulted in a small number of targets being under-ambitious and achieved with comparative ease.

Safeguarding arrangements are good. The centre implements effective safer-recruitment systems for staff and volunteers, including obtaining Criminal Records Bureau checks. Staff and volunteers receive a thorough induction in safeguarding and health and safety procedures and are well trained in wider child protection issues. Staff work well with social care colleagues to ensure that those subject to a child protection plan and looked after children receive the support they need. Common Assessment Framework records are analysed to identify causes and trends in the support families require which then informs preventative work across the centre.

Equality and diversity are promoted well as there is a strong culture of respect and inclusive practice throughout the centre. Displays represent positively the diversity of the local community, and the very few users who speak English as an additional

language are supported to access courses at a neighbouring centre. Staff provide good role models, and users are empowered to tackle any discrimination. Disabled parents and families with disabled children receive good assistance in gaining any extra support needed. The annual user survey indicates that parents do not feel judged if they need to ask for help, and responses express high satisfaction with the centre's services.

Outcomes for families are good, the achievement gap is narrowing and the centre is successful in engaging with the vast majority of families from the reach area, including those in target groups. The centre makes good use of feedback from users and partner agencies to adapt and improve the range and focus of its provision. As a result, the centre provides good 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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>2</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 Netherhall Sure Start Children's Centre on 4–5 October 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We were pleased to spend time at the centre looking at its work, visiting the sessions and meeting with some of you. We also met members of the centre staff team and other professionals who work with you.

We found that the centre is a lively place to visit as many of you call into the centre because you know its staff are a good source of information and advice. You also recognise that the services and activities provided will help you to improve your lives and those of your children. The centre works well with all families in the area because it provides a welcoming and safe environment for you, where everyone treats each other with respect. You and your children have built up good relationships with each other and with the staff, and you feel confident to share any concerns with the staff as you know they will not judge you if you ask for help. Some of you told us the centre is like a second home for you, and many of you commented on how friendly and willing to listen the staff are.

We thought the vision the parents' and carer's forum has developed for the centre – 'Sharing, growing, embracing the future with confidence and hope' – sums up very well the way in which the centre works with you. Staff are keen to seek and listen to your views about how to make its services most useful to you. They regularly review the activities they offer and change them to meet your needs. For example, the cake decorating and beauty courses were arranged when you said that these would be of interest to you. Some of you have now developed an interest in learning and are putting together a book about your learning journey. It is good to hear that some of you have progressed to courses that will give you a qualification and some of you have gained employment as a result of the training and volunteering opportunities you have participated in.

The centre has supported many of you to breastfeed your babies and it is good to see that the majority of you continue to breastfeed for at least six to eight weeks. Some of you told us how much assistance you had had from the peer supporters to achieve this. The centre works well with a lot of different partners to help provide you with the support you need at an early stage. This helps them to focus some services for the families who need it most. We heard how much families using the 'Rumble Tumble' sessions enjoy them and how the 'Cook and Eat' sessions have helped to improve your families' diets. These sessions have also helped to halve the number of children who are obese by the age of six years compared with previous years. It was also good to hear that many of you have signed the pledge to make your homes smoke free and that some of you have given up smoking altogether.

The centre is good at helping you to keep your families safe, especially when you are experiencing a crisis in your lives. Your knowledge of how to help keep your children

from harm in the home has been improved through the 'Whoops' and first-aid training, as well as the key message shared with you each week.

We found that a large number of you are very satisfied with the centre's services and that some of you travel from other areas because you like the way this centre organises the activities to be suitable for different ages of children. We observed how much fun you have playing and learning with your children in 'Weigh and Play' and 'Explorers' sessions. We heard how exciting the 'Dads' Events' are and that you appreciate being able to spend quality time with your children. Many of you find the toy library resources and book loan useful as you can extend the range of your children's toys to play with them at home without expense. Some of you have been helping staff to track your children's progress. We have asked the centre to extend the tracking of children's development to all sessions and to build partnerships with the local school to share this information to help your children when they start school.

The centre is led and managed well and everyone is very clear about how well the centre has helped to improve different aspects of your lives. The centre collects lots of information from you, the local authority and its partners and uses this information to make the centre as good as it can be. However, we have asked the local authority to look at how it works with the centre to help it to demonstrate really clearly how successful it has been each year. We have also asked the centre to check how it is using the information to make sure that a few of the targets it sets itself are even more ambitious in helping you and your families to benefit from its work.

Thank you very much for your welcome and for taking the time to talk with inspectors. We thoroughly enjoyed meeting you and sharing your experiences. We wish you every success in the future.

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