

# Inspection report for Pear Tree Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Worcestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	407019
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 August 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Susan Crawford HMI

<b>Centre leader</b>	Elizabeth Rouse
<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>	Sidemoor Pre-school EY365014

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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, 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

This is a phase two children's centre. In partnership with other local agencies it fulfils the full core purpose to a community which has pockets of deprivation. There are currently 960 children under four years in the reach area. There are 10% of workless families (of nought – fours) dependant on state benefits. Worcestershire County Council has a contract with Barnardo's to manage eight of the 34 children's centres in Worcestershire, of which Pear Tree is one. The centre has close links with Sunny Fields Children's Centre and is part of a cluster of five children's centres who work across Bromsgrove. The children's centre's advisory board holds the centre to account through its business plan and contract with Barnardo's. There is also a parent forum in place.

The centre provides health and family support services, adult learning, and early years advice and guidance. The level of unemployment, teenage parents and obese children of Reception age are below the Worcestershire and West Midlands average. There is a small minority of families from minority ethnic backgrounds. Some children's levels on entry to Early Years Foundation Stage provision are below those expected for their age.

A 30 place pre-school nursery for children aged from two to five years is located in the building. It operates 9am to 3pm in term time only. The nursery is managed by a committee and has separate early years inspection arrangements. The nursery was

last inspected in March 2012 and was judged as good with outstanding elements; the inspection report can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). The children's centre also runs a group for children with additional needs during the school holidays.

## 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

Pear Tree Children's Centre provides a good service and meets the needs of the community it serves well. The centre manager's clear vision for improvement and the enthusiasm and commitment of all staff is driving the centre forward. An increasing proportion of families make good use of the centre's facilities to improve their lives. Effective partnership and outreach services lead to good outcomes for target groups, including those in circumstances that may make them vulnerable. Good systems of governance provide challenge to the centre. As a result, it has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

Outcomes for children and adults are at least good. Immunisation rates are positive and contribute to good improvements to the community's health. There are improving standards for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the gap between the lowest achieving group and the rest is generally narrower than the national average. The centre has an excellent impact on helping children and adults stay safe. The centre makes generally good use of available data to measure its effectiveness; some of the information is not local and precise enough to set the sharpest targets for improvement. For example, there is limited local data for assessing how well it helps families gain employment or track the achievements of families in the longer term.

Through excellent support and outreach work, families who are considered most at risk receive timely intervention and support. This has had a particularly positive impact on mental health issues such as post-natal depression and social isolation. The centre works in close partnership with the other children's centres in the area to provide good support and training to early years providers. They are provided with good quality information about the centre's services to allow them to sign post users to services. However, the number of referrals for those that most need it is relatively

low from early years' providers. The centre itself provides a bright, warm and welcoming environment and this encourages parents to seek out support for many aspects of their lives. A good range of parenting courses are run regularly and are well attended. This has a positive impact on the economic well-being of many groups of users, helping them into volunteering activities and further courses. However, only a small proportion of families are currently involved in the governance and decision-making of the centre.

The centre is inclusive. There are excellent systems in place to ensure all children on child protection plans are identified and supported by the centre. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process is used well to support those with circumstances that may make them vulnerable and the centre promotes good outcomes for disabled users and those who have special educational needs. A very strong commitment to safeguarding by all staff and partners ensures children and their families are safe. Parents receive very good support, training and resources for keeping their families safe. Hospital admissions for unintentional injuries are below the Worcestershire average.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Continue to develop partnerships with the early years providers in the reach area to ensure all vulnerable groups are identified, supported and their needs are met.
- Increase parental involvement to enable them to more fully contribute to decision-making and governance through the parents' forum and the advisory board.
- Work with the local authority and partners to increase the availability of accurate and precise local data in order to more systematically target improvements and measure the centre's effectiveness.
- Further develop tracking of family learning and the Jobcentre to be able to trace the achievements of families in the longer term.

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

<b>2</b>
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The centre works in close partnership with health services and promotes outcomes well. The many activities aimed at promoting good eating and exercise habits have a positive effect. For instance, the centre has provided six 'Little Foodies courses'. These were well attended and led to a measurable improvement to all participants' health. 91% of parents said that they are more aware of the health benefits of healthy eating and physical exercise and how their own attitudes towards food impact on their children. As a result, parents receive good support and advice on children's health issues. Levels of obesity for children in the reception age group are

approximately 9.2%, just below local averages.

The centre effectively supports mothers with breastfeeding and weaning. Overall, rates of breastfeeding have improved well over the last two years. For example, the percentage of mothers who breast feed at six to eight weeks increased from 33% to 46%. The centre is working with other services to gather more information and uses partners local knowledge to identify need. The centre is at times inhibited in ensuring that it is having a maximum impact because up-to-date precise comparative data is sometimes limited. There is some tracking in place however this is not consistent across all user groups.

The courses to support children's early learning and development make a good contribution to their enjoyment and achievement. Sessions such as 'Little Movers', 'Little stars', 'Mucky Pups' and 'Songs and Stories' promote early learning well. The on site pre school was recently judged as good and provides good opportunities to those children who most need it. Outdoor provision was developed by a parent who consulted with other users and partners. The area provides an array of experiences and opportunities to enhance children's all round development. Effective transition arrangements give children a good start at school. 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, 83.16% of children achieved a total point score of 78 points or more, the most recent results show an increase to 85.57% of children achieving this outcome.

The centre is building on links with other early years providers in the reach to ensure all vulnerable families are identified. Parents report very positively on parenting courses in developing their understanding of children's learning, for example, 'I have learnt that I have to change my behaviour before my children will change theirs'. Children's behaviour and safety are promoted very well. They are happy and engage purposefully in the centre's activities. There are many opportunities for parents and babies, such as baby massage, to build a bond between children and parents. These also help adults, particularly those suffering depression or loneliness, to build relationships with others. The effectiveness of the centre's training for all staff means that children subject to a child protection plan, looked after children and the families who care for them, are kept very safe and helped to move forward. The centre has taken successful initiatives to support children who may be at risk through circumstances of domestic abuse and relieve pressure for the whole family. For example, the centre sign posts to the 'Freedom Programme' which has helped users gain self-esteem and confidence to improve the quality of their lives.

Disabled children and those with special educational needs or who may otherwise be vulnerable are supported very well through effective use of the Common Assessment Framework processes and excellent interventions. A good proportion of such families make use of the centre's provision. The family support workers have successfully helped several families to manage their concerns and improve their lives. Some of those parents who received this support have gone on to achieve qualifications and

work or volunteer, as a direct result of contact with the centre. This has made a good contribution to these families' economic well-being. However, currently only a small proportion of parents are involved in governance of 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 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>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**

The centre has good procedures for registering users and ensuring services are closely matched to their needs, 74% of the reach are currently registered. The quality and use of assessment to support all aspects of its work is good overall. The centre increasingly analyses its activities by their impact. This leads to more prolonged engagement by users with the centre and greater success. Last year over 80% of families in the reach made use of the centre's services and/or accessed nursery education funding. A good proportion of fathers are registered with the centre attending groups such as the weekend 'Dads Group'. They are also fully included in all other courses offering practical parenting and other skills.

The support for all early years providers is of good quality and has led to consistently good and better outcomes in their own inspections and assessments. The centre's outreach services make good use of such facilities to support families with children who are subject to a child protection plan or through the Common Assessment Framework process. The needs of target groups are met well by the centre. For example, one parent who suffered domestic violence who received support said 'the Freedom Programme saved my life and the recovery programme changed my life'.

The centre works well with partners across its reach area to meet its core purpose. There are good links with the schools within the reach area which contribute to children's smooth transition to full-time education. The centre is starting to track children through to the end of the foundation stage to monitor the impact that they have had on children and the difference they have made. Referrals to outreach services come through links with schools, health visitors and a variety of other partners. The centre is continuing to improve its profile in the community to ensure

all vulnerable families are referred. The centre has established partnerships with employment/training agencies and speech and language services which also contribute to the good outcomes users achieve.

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 manager and senior leadership team have established good relationships with staff, partner organisations and users. They have quickly built upon referral and accountability procedures to drive improvements. All staff are enthusiastic and share a common sense of purpose. There is a good commitment to training and professional development at all levels. The advisory board, which is representative of the partners and centre's community, provides a good range of support and guidance. As a result, governance and accountability arrangements are effective although few parents are currently involved through the advisory board and parents' forum. Self-evaluation is good, although the centre has identified the need for more precise and local data to make the very best improvements. The centre staff work effectively with partners to provide a good range of services. Consequently, the centre promotes good outcomes for users and provides good value for money.

User engagement is good. An increasing percentage of all target groups within the reach area, including children who have additional needs, engage with the centre's services thanks to the skill, enthusiasm and commitment of all staff.

Safeguarding procedures are very rigorous and include the vetting of staff, volunteers and others who have unsupervised contact with children and vulnerable adults. All statutory requirements are met. Early intervention arrangements are very effective, reflecting the positive partnerships with a wide range of agencies and services including those who provide effective services for children with disabilities. Child protection procedures are very thorough and well recorded on an electronic system. Good quality training in all aspects of safeguarding, including the use of the Common Assessment Framework, is provided for all staff and regularly updated.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. All members of staff demonstrate a good commitment to inclusion and to tackling any discrimination. Staff, including family support workers, make sure that families are well informed and all elements of their work are inclusive. For example, families were effectively communicated with through the use of interpreters on the Polish day. Staff help to provide transport or



target their resources to ensure all users have good access to the centre's provision. Activities are regularly taken out into the community for example, attendance at the Bromsgrove Carnival. The promotion of a positive view of diversity is well established in many activities and evident in the centre's displays.

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>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**

Sidemoor Pre School was inspected on the 5 March 2012. The overall effectiveness was good with health, positive contribution and partnerships outstanding. These judgements were taken into account when inspecting the children's centre.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Pear Tree Children's Centre on 15–16 August 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank you for speaking to us and telling us about the difference the centre has made to you and your families. We heard how welcoming the centre is, and how all staff respond to your needs. We heard of the wide range of ways that the centre uses to help you and your family be healthy, such as 'Baby Bistro', 'Introduction to Solids' and ideas for healthy food and snacks.

It is clear that the centre staff, the manager and partner organisations are trusted and provide good support that makes a difference to many families' lives. Many of you told us how much you and your children enjoyed stay and play sessions at the centre. Inspectors observed you and your children enjoying sessions such as 'Messy Play for all Ages'. These activities are of good quality and support your children's learning and development, especially in helping them be more ready for school.

You told us you feel very safe when using the centre, and we judged the centre to have outstanding procedures to keep you and your children safe and secure at all times. You told us how useful events such as the 'Safety Day' were and how you have been helped to devise home evacuation plans. There are good links with experts that can help in a wide range of issues. The centre has been successful in getting them involved when families need additional support or advice. We have asked the centre to look at how they can work more closely with the early years providers in the area to ensure all of those of you in need are offered and provided help.

You told us that many of you, including fathers, are involved in regular activities such as the baby massage sessions and 'Little Foodies' and attend many good quality courses to help you develop your skills as a parent. We heard of the outreach support many families receive if they are in a crisis, and of the consistently good standard of help and advice for all families. We heard that staff are quick to help you when you have emotional difficulties and need extra support. You also told us that attending the activities the centre runs has helped you to meet new people and overcome feelings of isolation.

We found that the centre staff and managers are committed to improving the work they do and welcome the ideas and feedback from people using the centre. Many of you have made good suggestions through discussions with staff and the feedback on courses. This is very important and your views often lead to further improvements. Several of you have also been able to give time as volunteers and learned new skills in the process. You have taken a number of training courses in parenting, literacy and other areas which help you into further employment. However, few of you are involved in the governance and decision-making through the advisory board or parents' forums and we have suggested the centre works towards developing this.

We judged the centre to be well led and managed and found that it is in a good position to continue to build on its many strengths. However, some of the centre's plans for future development are not based fully enough on local and precise data to show how their work is improving outcomes for you and your children in the longer term. We have recommended the centre works with its partners to improve the use of data.

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