

Inspection report for The Sunbeam Children's Centre

Local authority	Wolverhampton
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	St. Luke's Church of England Aided Primary School URN: 3363301
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Blakenhall Neighbourhood Nursery School URN: EY313852

The inspection of this Sure Start children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

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

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

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior managers and leaders of the centre and members of the advisory board including the parent representatives. They met with health and social care professionals, the acting head teacher of the sponsoring school, representatives of the local authority, community partners, family support workers, early years professionals and parents. They observed the centre's work, visited the local centres of service delivery and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Sunbeam Children's Centre is located in the Blakenhall Ward of Wolverhampton. It is managed by the governing body of St. Luke's Church of England Aided School although it also reports directly to the local authority. The centre has an advisory board with members from the local authority, health and education services and other partner agencies.

Ten staff provide a range of services and support in conjunction with other partner agency staff. The centre is co-located with the Blakenhall Family Resource Centre. Sunbeam was designated as a phase two children's centre in February 2008 and started delivering its core purpose from its current site in February 2009. In addition to its main site, the centre makes use of several other sites in close proximity to the centre to include Blakenhall Community and Healthy Living Centre and St Luke's Primary School. The centre offers a range of health, social care and family support services on weekdays for 50 weeks of the year. It also provides crèche facilities to support activities off-site.

The Sunbeam Children's Centre area has a population of 11,301 of which 584 have children under five years of age. The population of the centre is among the 20% most deprived in the country. Sixty five per cent of the reach area belongs to minority ethnic groups; of whom Indians are the single largest group.

The local area contains a mix of privately rented and owner occupied housing. Eighteen per cent of the families are out of work and claim benefits. Some families in the local area experience significant levels of poverty, unemployment, domestic violence and low levels of literacy and numeracy. Over 75% of the families attending the centre belong to minority ethnic groups including Eastern Europeans. A significant minority of those attending the centre speak English as an additional language. Children enter Early Years Foundation Stage provision with skills, knowledge and abilities that are below those expected for their age.

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

Sunbeam is an outstanding children's centre. Highly skilled, very well-qualified and experienced staff have empowered the targeted families to turn their lives around through outstanding quality of provision and support. In the word of one parent, 'Staff are like diamonds.'

Parents and children develop excellent knowledge and awareness of health matters and adopt healthy lifestyles. They feel extremely safe in the centre. They vastly improve their self-esteem and gain confidence as well as developing strong social and personal skills. Children are developing good skills for the future and are well prepared for school. Parents develop good awareness of economic independence such as debt reduction and several have improved their English language and caring skills. The local adult education service has withdrawn its classes in English, computing and mathematics that improve adults' economic position. However, the centre has made highly appropriate plans to run similar programmes with the local college.

The centre provides a very broad range of well-planned and extremely valuable activities and support such as speech and language, home learning, cooking, gardening and child development. Through intensive support during well-planned home learning activities, staff empower parents and carers to continue reinforcing these skills with their children.

Leaders and managers provide invaluable professional supervision and support to staff to help run the centre smoothly. Staff work exceedingly well with various partners in the voluntary sector and with public sector services such as health, social services and education to provide integrated and broad ranging services. Safeguarding arrangements to protect parents and children are outstanding. The centre has been instrumental in reducing the risk rating for several children from the targeted families. Performance management for the centre's staff and professional partners through the local authority is robust and it has identified the main issues correctly to improve the centre's work further. Demanding yet realistic performance targets have been set.

Managers make good use of views of the parents and carers, professional partners and staff to improve the service. The centre conducts evaluation of almost all activities; however, it does not use this evidence well enough to provide a comprehensive account of the impact of its services on users. The self-evaluation form is extremely long, descriptive and repetitive.

Sunbeam has made a significant contribution to improve the lives of the 78% of the targeted families who find it difficult to engage in society effectively. Its contribution to engage and support 'dads' and lone parents is exemplary. Parents and carers from diverse backgrounds work well together and learn about each other's culture in an environment of mutual respect. Children and parents and carers with multiple learning difficulties or disabilities are integrated extremely well in learning to achieve exceptionally well. Through its strong work with the partners, the centre provides outstanding value for money.

Sunbeam has a strong record of increasing the engagement levels of the reach area as well as improving outcomes. Outcomes for parents, carers and children are outstanding as well as the quality of provision and leadership and management. Partners, parents and staff are well involved in developing self-evaluation. The centre knows its provision well and the self-evaluation report is broadly accurate. Staff development and training is outstanding. Staff are highly committed to provide excellent provision and outcomes.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the economic well-being of the parents in the reach area by:
 - using the local authority's influence with various local providers, including schools, to facilitate the access to appropriate training, programmes and courses.
- Work with the local authority to improve the self-evaluation process and annual report by:
 - developing self-evaluation, based on broad ranging evidence including data, on a regular basis
 - enabling the centre to produce the self-evaluation report that focuses on the impact of the centre's action on children and families.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

Health outcomes to improve emotional and physical well-being for children and families are outstanding. Many mothers experiencing depression overcome social isolation, gain confidence, and improve their self-esteem. They make new friends through the centre and develop positive networks of support. Families engage well in improving their physical health through regular exercise in the gym, walks with 'Sunbeam Strollers', various outings, gardening and active play. They adopt healthy lifestyles by learning to cook healthily through 'cook and taste' sessions. Children get into the habit of eating healthy snacks and healthy eating from a very young age. Breastfeeding rates, for babies in the 6-8 weeks period, to protect them from minor ailments are well above the city and national averages. Immunisation rates are high. Sunbeam has had a strong impact on parents including teenage parents. Parents and carers gain invaluable knowledge about first-aid and food hygiene to protect themselves and their children.

The centre is highly effective at identifying and supporting vulnerable groups such as drug users and those experiencing domestic abuse. Staff are highly proficient in the use of the Common Assessment Framework and work exceptionally well with other agencies to protect children from emotional, sexual and physical harm as well as neglect. They conduct thorough checks of the homes of vulnerable adults and provide useful guidance and support. The centre has provided subsidised home safety equipment to an increasingly large number of families. Parents and carers display strong awareness of risks and safety precautions. Through highly relevant training programmes, parents and carers learn useful skills to assess the risks and protect themselves and their children from harm.

All children and adults make outstanding gains in personal and social skills. Children are very well prepared for school as they learn boundaries of acceptable behaviour, anger management and turn taking. Parents are delighted by the well-targeted and

excellent support for speech and language development. By using invaluable hints and tips learnt during the one-to one support sessions, parents accelerate the speech development of their children. Children love the fun activities at the centre enormously. The centre, supported through home learning, has effectively contributed to narrowing the attainment gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and the national average, this is better than the local authority average figure.

Staff provide a wide range of useful, fun activities that develop children's communication, language and literacy skills to a very high level. Significantly large numbers of fathers enjoy taking part in activities while playing and learning together. Staff value all parents' and carers' views and adopt a child-centred approach to programme development. Adults develop appropriate skills leading to economic independence such as debt management, accessing housing and accommodation and benefits advice.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	1
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	2
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	2

How good is the provision?

1

The centre is highly diligent in its approach to needs assessment and establishing the provision. The centre plans and provides a broad range of purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for the parents, carers and children. These include a range of programmes for parents to develop their parenting skills. A dedicated midwife for teenage parents and carers provides excellent support and service. Other sessions such as 'Stay and Play', 'Chat and Relax', 'Gardening Programme' and trips to various venues provide a platform for adults to learn from each other and enjoy quality time with their children. Ante-natal and post-natal home visits are closely linked with promoting breastfeeding and children centre services.

The centre has been highly effective at reaching its targeted groups. The number of parents with young children engaging in the universal centre activities has

substantially increased from 38% in 2010/11 to 54% in 2011/12. The attendance rates are good. Home learning and speech development programmes are of an excellent quality and are highly effective.

Staff plan their sessions and workshops very well with a logical and clear learning focus and provide clear explanations to the parents. For example, 'Groundwork West Midlands', an environmental charity, has played a significant role in the design of the centre's garden and the delivery of a much-loved gardening and environmental programme. Through the centre's provision, parents and carers become more aware of the value of play and the associated learning. They are helped to enjoy the emotional bond they develop with their babies through massage. Children's creativity is developed through making models with play dough and junk models as well as growing vegetables and fruits, all of which they thoroughly enjoy. The centre has been exceptionally successful in developing a non-stereotypical programme for fathers that helps them learn more about pregnancy and bonding with the baby and the mother. All these programmes have had significant impact on the targeted families.

Staff enjoy the trust and confidence of the users and partners. They always 'go an extra mile' to provide highly effective personalised support for individuals, particularly in times of crisis. Support from the health visiting service and other outreach provision is excellent.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

The governance and accountability arrangements are strong. Staff understand their job roles and purpose clearly. Professional supervision, support and staff development are first-rate and provide useful updates to all staff. The centre's teacher has helped improve the planning and evaluation of the whole team activities. Staff share good practice through regular team meetings. The local authority has invested in an appropriate data system that it uses well to monitor performance, evaluate the impact of the services and set targets.

Staff make prudent use of high quality facilities and learning resources in the centre and its partner community venues. The centre is highly effective at early intervention strategies to enable parents and carers to develop strong skills to deal with the issues with their children. In doing so the centre has laid the foundation for the local

authority to save a great deal of time and resources requirements from various agencies in the future.

The centre promotes equality and diversity exceptionally well to its users through its services. The culture, ethos and practice of the centre promote respect and inclusion. Users feel fully included in all its activities. The centre fulfils its statutory duties to eliminate unlawful discrimination very well. The centre promotes cultural diversity extremely well, including promoting multi-lingual resources. Over its life span, the centre has made a significant difference to the lives of over 700 families to re-engage them into society through providing timely support, skills development, raising aspirations and by offering them hope for themselves and their children.

Managers conduct Criminal Records Bureau checks rigorously on its entire staff and other staff from the partner agencies. All staff are highly trained and are fully aware of child protection processes including how to recognise abuse and the reporting procedures. Multi-agency cooperation is exemplary in dealing with issues of child protection. Risk assessments of rooms and activities are robust. The users feel welcome, safe and respected. The building is secure and fully accessible to wheelchair users. Health and safety procedures are robust.

Sunbeam has established strong links with a broad range of partners to provide integrated care and support to families with children under five including targeted groups. Of particular note are its partnerships with Groundwork West Midlands, Base 25, a charity that works with young men under 25 years of age, Blakenhall Neighbourhood Nursery, the Healthy Living Centre, the health service and the social services. All of these services work exceptionally well to provide excellent services and outstanding outcomes for children, parents and carers.

Parents' and carers' satisfaction levels are extremely high. Users make positive contributions to evaluate and improve the programmes. Staff respond promptly to the users' views by changing the programme and providing support and activities. However, they do not keep them informed about the actions taken. The centre has refined the arrangements to improve the effectiveness of its recently reformed advisory board.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	1
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its	1

statutory duties	
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
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	1
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	2

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

Inspectors considered the inspection report of the Blakenhall Neighbourhood Nursery School

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Sunbeam Children's Centre on 30–31 August 2012. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

Almost all the parents and carers we spoke to told us that they and their children enjoy coming to the centre. You particularly value the excellent support that you get from the highly professional and knowledgeable staff. Many of you echoed the words of one parent, who said, 'The centre is like a second home that is safe and secure.' You say that you now have a much greater appreciation of the health, emotional and physical needs of your children. Many of you have a much clearer idea of how you can interact with your children by providing them with a range of stimulating activities. We were pleased to hear how well you use the skills learnt in the sessions and from other parents to make positive changes to improve your lifestyle. Many of you talked about the changes, such as healthy cooking and eating, gardening and exercise.

You particularly value the home learning support the staff are able to offer. This has helped you to make learning fun at home by using everyday objects, rather than spending money on expensive toys. Many of you feel that the centre has filled a gap in your lives and you have developed a routine to your lives. The centre has helped most parents to improve their parenting skills. All parents we spoke to talked about their increased self-confidence and enhanced self-esteem.

The programmes and workshops are broad ranging. These have helped you to expand your knowledge and offered you the opportunities to help you and your children learn and prepare well for the school. Some of you have improved your knowledge and skills in topics such as food hygiene and first aid and have gained qualifications; others of you have improved your English language skills. However, the centre has not been able to offer courses and programmes that will help you to prepare for employment.

The centre makes good use of your views to improve its services. Many of you have decided to make changes to your routines in the centre to ensure that children are safe.

We have asked the centre to do two things to improve its services even further. The first is to offer you qualifications such as English, mathematics and computing and opportunities for volunteering that will enhance your employment prospects. The second thing is for the leaders and managers to evaluate the work of the centre more accurately through greater analysis that speaks of the impact of its work on you and your families.

Thank you for taking the time to speak to us and offer your opinions of the centre so freely. Your comments and stories were very useful for us to confirm our findings and make judgements.

We wish you and your families every success in the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.