

Inspection report for Summerfield Children's Centre

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| Local authority | Birmingham |
| Inspection number | 404417 |
| Inspection dates | 20–21 September 2012 |
| Reporting inspector | Joy Law HMI |

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| Linked school if applicable | N/A |
| Linked early years and childcare, if applicable | Summerfield Children's Centre EY336439 |

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.

Report published: *October 2012*



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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 local authority, Action for Children, centre staff, partner agencies, parents and carers. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the centre's self-evaluation form, data provided by the local authority and the centre, documents and policies, and minutes of meetings.

Information about the centre

Summerfield Children's Centre was originally a family centre and developed into a children's centre in 2006. The centre is a phase two children's centre, designated in 2007, and is situated in the residential area of Winson Green, which is within the Soho Ward of Birmingham. The centre is located away from the main shopping area on a residential road. It is close to a local primary school and local amenities, including a hospital and doctors' surgeries.

Statistical data for the Soho area indicates that the area is one of high social and economic disadvantage. The children's centre serves a community which is in one of the 20% most deprived areas in the country. The local population is mixed, with a large majority of families from minority ethnic backgrounds (90%). There are a small number of White British families. At least 39% of children live in workless households, resulting in high numbers of families in receipt of benefits. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities are below those expected for their age when they enter Early Years Foundation Stage provision.

The centre has an on-site early years provision. Crèches are provided to support families in accessing services. There are two childminders, three pre-schools, one day nursery, and two primary schools within the reach area. The centre serves a community of which there are 665 children aged under five years.

The centre is governed directly by the local authority. It has an advisory group made up of a cross-section of professionals, including representatives from the voluntary sector and parents. It is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day running of the centre and its strategic development. The centre also has a parents' forum. The centre manager, who was appointed in 2007, also manages Ladywood Children's Centre, and has been doing this since January 2012.

The centre works in partnership with voluntary and statutory organisations to deliver a programme of universal and targeted services to meet to meet its core purpose and the local community's needs. The centre's rooms and other venues are used to run group sessions. The centre is also used by other agencies for appointments with families and there are designated health rooms in which midwives are in attendance five days each week to deliver services.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

3

Main findings

Summerfield Children's Centre is satisfactory in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for the wider community. Recent organisational changes from a cluster to locality model have brought about significant operational changes, including staff changes, a re-established advisory board and new systems being implemented. Despite this difficult period, the staff have continued to deliver a range of services resulting in some improving outcomes for children and families.

The centre has successfully registered the large majority of families within the reach. However, only about half of these families engage with the centre's services. The staff are successful in ensuring that families feel supported. 'The best service ever. They have helped myself and my family.' 'Staff are really good and kind.' 'They have been a huge support for me and my children.' These comments are typical of those made by parents. Parents are having a greater say in shaping the centre's services. For example, a parents' forum, supported with crèche provision, is in place and well represented. Parents are surveyed annually and offer ideas through evaluation feedback forms. Although adult users evaluate activities regularly, children's views are not routinely sought.

Some aspects of the centre's work are stronger than others. For example, the on-site early years setting provides good quality care and learning experiences for children; it contributes well to preparing them for school. However, the range of opportunities, particularly to promote children's communication and language and to help parents develop their skills and knowledge so as to enable them to support their children's learning and development effectively, are less well developed. 'Stay and Play' sessions are well attended; children and parents appreciate having fun as they play and learn together. Parents comment that they enjoy coming to the sessions and their children are learning to socialise.

Some adults access courses, such as English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and engage in children's centre services. However, the assessment of adults' individual learning and development needs and the range of opportunities for adults to improve their economic stability and independence are not fully effective. For example, some sessions, such as parenting classes, are not planned well enough to meet the specific needs of the parents. Consequently, attendance at sessions reduces. The centre has successfully supported a small number of parents as volunteers, during which time they have achieved qualifications and employment. However, opportunities for parents to become volunteers are not explored extensively enough as staff and partner agencies do not routinely encourage parents to consider engaging in voluntary work. No volunteers are currently engaged in the centre's services.

Strong collaborative working with some partners, such as midwives, police, and the Education and Development Advisory Services (EDAS), is successful. They report favourably about the good partnership working and the positive effect the children's centre has in contributing to improved outcomes for parents and young children. For example, as one partner stated, 'This place is amazing; children and parents feel safe.' Others report how the health needs of the most vulnerable families have improved. However, partnerships with others, such as schools, health visitors and the Jobcentre, are less well developed.

Staff develop warm and trusting relationships with parents who are confident to approach staff and talk freely about any problems or issues they face. Satisfactory safeguarding procedures ensure children's safety and well-being are protected. Outreach work to target groups is having a positive impact, although the number of families supported is low.

Improvement planning, to ensure that the work of the centre is as effective as possible in meeting the community's needs, is satisfactory. Suitable procedures to improve the work of the centre have recently been introduced. For example, a robust tracking system is being used to monitor children's learning and development. This operates across the children's centres within the locality, ensuring consistency and rigour. The centre has been successful in increasing the proportion of families within the reach which engage with services, including all vulnerable groups. In particular, a growing number of fathers are accessing the centre's services as a result of the male worker. These successful initiatives demonstrate the centre's satisfactory capacity to

improve. This is not yet good because the way in which the centre collates and uses accurate and up-to-date information is not sufficiently robust. Although the centre manager is well supported by the information and evaluation coordinator, the information regarding service users is not routinely obtained from all partners and the tracking, monitoring and evaluation of services are inconsistent. For example, while the centre receives regular information from EDAS to demonstrate how many families have been supported in accessing information such as benefits and housing, there is no systematic approach to monitor families who are signposted to other services, such as the Jobcentre, training and employment, in order to measure the impact of this work. Not all partners and the advisory board are sufficiently involved in the evaluation of the centre's work.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the number of families engaging with the centre's services, particularly the most isolated and vulnerable families living in the community.
- Improve the rigour of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the centre to ensure that improvement planning and the work of the centre are as effective as possible by:
 - making procedures to track, monitor and evaluate services more robust
 - establishing a clear, systematic and coherent approach to the collation and efficient use of all data to plan and shape services
 - involving all partners and the advisory board in improving the centre's effectiveness.
- Improve parents' economic stability and independence by:
 - implementing a consistent and rigorous approach to identifying parents' individual learning and development needs
 - broadening the range of adult learning opportunities in order to increase the numbers of parents and carers moving into paid employment
 - increasing the number of volunteers who work at the centre.
- The local authority should endeavour to increase the level of engagement with partner agencies, such as the Jobcentre, local schools and health visitors.
- Improve all children's school readiness by:
 - increasing the range of opportunities to promote children's communication and language
 - increasing the range of activities to help parents develop skills and knowledge so as to enable them to support their children's learning and development effectively
 - improving transition arrangements into primary school.

How good are outcomes for families?

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The health and well-being of families is satisfactory overall. Parents and children are developing a satisfactory awareness of how to lead healthy lifestyles. Children accessing sessions are provided with healthy snacks, such as fresh fruit. Adults are increasing their knowledge of the benefits of healthy eating through attendance at

healthy eating workshops. However, despite this, some parents continue to purchase fast-food for their families. Consequently, obesity in Reception-aged children is higher than the Birmingham average.

Staff, in partnership with midwives, establish trusting relationships with parents. They ensure that parents have access to a range of ante and postnatal services and information, such as breastfeeding, weaning and feeding routines. The centre successfully visits all new parents and offers early support to families in need of help. Breastfeeding is actively promoted within the centre. Although the number of mothers' breastfeeding their babies is lower than the Birmingham average, those sustaining breastfeeding at six to eight weeks is higher.

Strong partnership working with agencies such as the Integrated Family Support Team, clear reporting procedures, attendance at initial case review meetings, and trained and knowledgeable staff, ensure that children are safeguarded well, particularly those on the child protection register. Common Assessment Framework procedures are implemented when appropriate and ensure that the vulnerable families known to the centre, such as those with looked after children and children with disabilities, are supported well. Risk assessments are routinely undertaken, children are kept safe and secure and all adults using centre services are required sign in and out on entry and exit to the building. However, users do have free access to the building via the reception area, but the centre confirms this is staffed at all times.

Home safety workshops and home visits provide support to parents in making their homes safe. The centre engages with the local fire prevention services to help raise children's and families' awareness of safety in the home and their communities. Car safety workshops improve parents' awareness of how to keep their children safe when travelling in cars. Consequently, the rate of accidents to children has reduced. Parents say they feel safe at the centre. Parents experiencing domestic violence, isolation, or bereavement, report positively on how the centre has improved their lives and how staff have helped them through difficult times.

Children are making at least satisfactory progress in their learning and development. Although below the Birmingham average, there are steady improvements in the numbers of children achieving 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage, and the gap between the outcomes for the most vulnerable groups and others is narrowing, albeit slowly. Sessions such as 'Let's Talk' have increased parents' confidence in sharing books, reading and singing with their children. Both parents and children enjoy participating in activities together. Parents report positively on how the parenting sessions help them learn about rules, boundaries, rewards and punishment, and on the difference the centre makes to their confidence as well as to their children's progress, development and behaviour. Children are well behaved, are developing respect for others and play well together.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

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| The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are | 3 |
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| physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles | |
| The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them | 3 |
| The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |

How good is the provision?

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The care, guidance and support provided to families who access centre services are particular strengths of the centre's work. Staff are effective in assessing the needs of individuals who are referred to the centre to ensure that these families are given good care, and appropriate information and support tailored to their individual needs. Home visits are used well to engage with parents who are hard to reach, although numbers are low. Parents expressed appreciation for the support they receive and the positive changes that have resulted for their children and themselves. Case studies show how staff support them through difficult times and how their lives would be very different without the centre's help. Comments from parents confirm that they value the opportunities to play and spend time with their children and that, for some, the centre has been their life-line and they would not know what they would do without it.

The centre satisfactorily supports children's learning. Stay and Play sessions are welcomed and well-attended. However, the range and frequency of other types of activities provided are sporadic, although there are plans under the new locality model to ensure families have access to a comprehensive range of activities across the five centres. An open day promoting the centre's services and activities are planned to take place at the centre. The centre regularly celebrates achievements.

The centre has some success in engaging adults with activities aimed at improving their skills and employability, although this is limited. Some parents have successfully moved into employment and voluntary work, although the numbers are low. Parents are well-supported in accessing advice and support to enable them to access services, such as housing benefits, health services and childcare provision. The lack of robust tracking systems means the centre is unable to confirm exactly how many have accessed these services.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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| The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups | 3 |
| The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups | 3 |
| The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups | 3 |

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Leaders are supportive and have a commitment to the centre and to the on-going development of its role in the community. The re-established locality advisory board is made up of a cross-section of members representing a range of interests, such as local authority, centre managers, Action for Children, health, childminder networks and parents. The advisory board's accountability arrangements are clear; however, members have not received training and are therefore not all are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities. Members are starting to challenge the centre manager but do not have sufficient access to information, such as data, to help them do this better. Parents on the advisory board play a vital role in representing parents and acting as a point of contact for others to share their views. Line management arrangements are clear and staff receive regular supervision.

The centre's safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. The vetting of staff is secure, and staff are appropriately trained. The centre's staff are aware of key safeguarding policies and are vigilant in identifying and responding to any potential dangers that families may encounter outside the centre. Effective inter-agency working with skilled professionals means that the centre identifies the needs of potentially vulnerable families at an early stage and intervenes quickly. This prompt action and good use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) ensure efficient use of resources and reduces the number of children subject to child protection plans.

The inclusion of all children and their families is central to the centre's vision. This is demonstrated through the attractive displays, the well-represented parents' forum and the respite nursery places available to families in need of support. All vulnerable groups are accessing the centres services to some degree, however, staff do not maximise opportunities to engage with all parents and promote the centre's services. For example, parents visiting the centre to attend antenatal clinics sit for long periods of time and are not routinely engaged with by staff or centre activities.

The centre is making satisfactory use of resources overall. Sessions are now being provided across the locality to ensure services are not duplicated. The limited space available within the centre restricts the services provided. However, the centre does not maximise use of all rooms available within the centre or other available resources within the community venues. Leaders are aware that in order to improve sustainability and economic independence for the centre and families more effort is

required by all staff and partner agencies to encourage, support and recruit volunteers to run groups within the centre and community. The range of services currently provided has a satisfactory impact on outcomes for users. Consequently, the centre provides satisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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| The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood | 3 |
| The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes | 3 |
| The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups | 3 |
| The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |

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

The judgements made at the inspection of Summerfield Children's Centre early years provision in March 2012 were taken into consideration for this inspection.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Summerfield Children's Centre on 20–21 September 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

The centre manager and her dedicated team provide you and your families with a satisfactory range of services. Those of you who spoke to us said that you feel the

centre is supportive and staff are kind and caring, and give you good advice. Most importantly, you said it helps improve your lives and your children's lives, particularly for those of you who are facing difficult challenges. All staff place importance on you and your family's welfare and provide a listening ear for you. They are keen to create a warm and welcoming environment where you feel at home and are able to talk freely about things that matter to you or are causing you concern. As a result, you value the centre and use the services regularly, particularly the 'Stay and Play' sessions. The centre has successfully registered the large majority of families within the reach. However, only about half of these families engage with the centre's services. To develop further the work of the centre, we have asked the staff team to increase the number of families who engage with the services available to them.

Some aspects of the centre's work are stronger than others. For example, the on-site early years setting provides good quality care and learning experiences for your children and it contributes well to preparing them for school. However, the range of opportunities, particularly to promote children's communication and language and to help you develop your skills and knowledge so as to enable you to support your children's learning and development, are satisfactory. Therefore we have asked staff to increase the range of opportunities to promote children's communication and language, to increase the range of activities to help you develop skills and knowledge so you are able to support your children's learning and development. 'Stay and Play' sessions are well attended; you and your children appreciate having fun as you play and learn together. You told us that you enjoy coming to these sessions and how your children are learning to socialise.

Some of you access courses, such as English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and parenting classes, and engage in children's centre services. However, staff do not fully identify your individual learning and development needs and therefore the range of opportunities for you to improve your economic stability and independence are not fully effective. For example, some sessions are not planned well enough to meet your specific needs and therefore you stop attending. Therefore, we have asked the staff team to improve the way they identify your learning needs and broaden the range of opportunities to help you move into paid employment.

The centre has successfully supported a small number of you to become volunteers and some of you have achieved qualifications and moved on to employment. However, the opportunities for you to become volunteers are not routinely encouraged. As a result there are no volunteers currently engaged in the centre's services. We have therefore asked staff to encourage you to become volunteers who work at the centre.

You are supported well in accessing information and services. Good systems are in place to track families supported in accessing information such as benefits and housing, but the centre has no systematic approach to monitor families who are signposted to other services, such as the Jobcentre, training and employment, in order to measure the impact of this work. Not all partners and the advisory board

are sufficiently involved in the evaluation of the centre's work. Therefore we have asked them to do this.

Joint working with some partners, such as midwives, police, and the Education and Development Advisory Services (EDAS) is successful. They report favourably about the good partnership working and the positive effect the children's centre has in contributing to improved outcomes for you and young children. For example, as one partner stated, 'this place is amazing, children and parents feel safe'. Others report how the health needs of the most vulnerable families have improved. However, partnerships with others, such as schools, health visitors and Jobcentre services are less well developed. Therefore we have asked the local authority to increase the level of engagement with these partner agencies.

Those of you who use the centre are now much more aware of how to stay safe and healthy and to provide for your families. Staff provide you with sessions at the centre and home visits and give advice on how you can prevent accidents in and around your homes to keep your children safe. Consequently, the rate of accidents to children has reduced. Staff, in partnership with midwives, establish trusting relationships with you. They ensure that you have access to a range of ante and postnatal services and information, such as breastfeeding, weaning and feeding routines. Staff are helping you to keep yourselves and your children healthy by encouraging you to cook and eat healthy foods. However, obesity in Reception-aged children is higher than the Birmingham average.

We would like to thank everyone who came to speak to us. It was a privilege to be able to talk to you. Your honest and open discussions with us helped us immensely during the inspection. We thoroughly enjoyed spending time at your centre, and we wish you and your families the best for the future.

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