

# Inspection report for Oakengates Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Telford and Wrekin
<b>Inspection number</b>	410357
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 November 2012
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Oakengates Nursery EY390885
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Oakengates Nursery School and Children's Centre URN 123348

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.

An inspection of the registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

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

The inspectors held meetings with members of the locality group board, centre staff, partner agencies and parents. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the centre's self-evaluation document, data provided by the local authority and the centre, documents and policies, and minutes of meetings.

## Information about the centre

Oakengates Children's Centre is co-located on the site of Oakengates Nursery School and Oakengates Nursery. The centre is led by a locality manager on behalf of the local authority. The centre fulfils its core purpose through a range of integrated services relating to health, family support, adult training and childcare provision. The centre leader has been in post for just over a year and is responsible for five children's centres in the area. However, as a result of local authority re-organisation, the staff team has only been in place since April 2012. The centre's locality group board is a recent addition to the governance and accountability arrangements. The membership of the board is drawn from a range of partners including health, education, adult education and family learning, library service, Jobcentre Plus, police, maternity services, and the local authority. Parents are represented via the parents' panel.

The centre's staff team consists of a centre manager, a leadership team, early intervention practitioners, early years practitioners and childcare workers, and an administration team.

Oakengates Children’s Centre was designated as a stand-alone phase one centre in June 2005. It is one of 13 centres in the borough. It serves an extensive urban population. The centre has been purposely designed to offer multi-agency office and community development space and includes a 48-place nursery. Much of the centre’s provision is planned collaboratively with community partners to maximise services for families.

The proportions of families who claim benefits, or those who are workless, are above the national average. Parts of the reach area are ranked within the top 10%, 20% and 30% of the most socially and economically disadvantaged areas in the country. The large majority of families living in the reach area are of White British heritage. Approximately 9% of families are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Within the reach area, there are 751 children who are aged under five years. Children enter early years provision with skills, knowledge and abilities that are well below the national levels 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**

**3**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**2**

## Main findings

Oakengates Children’s Centre is a satisfactory centre. It is warm, inclusive, accessible and welcoming. Parents who made their views known to inspectors were universally complimentary and supportive of the work of the centre. Many parents said their involvement with the children’s centre has made a significantly positive difference to their lives.

The last year has been one of considerable change for the centre. A new leader was appointed in August 2011, and this was only the start of a period of transformation for the centre, as a result of local authority re-organisation. The vast majority of staff, employed in the last six months, are new to the centre. Under the hugely enthusiastic and skilled leadership team, practitioners show high levels of dedication and commitment to the centre, and to improving the lives of children and families. The ambitions for the continued success of the centre are shared equally with staff and leaders at all levels. Governance continues to be robust and there are clear lines

of accountability. The locality group board, which has replaced the advisory board, is a very recent addition to the governance of the centre, but early indications are that the group is well-placed to provide effective challenge and support to the centre.

Leaders at all levels are aware of the strengths of the setting. Key priorities, agreed by parents, practitioners and partners, are set out in ambitious development plans. Areas for development identified during the inspection came as no surprise to leaders. They recognise that parents may need further encouragement and support to access adult education and learning, and that adult education partners can enhance the information provided to the centre regarding learners' successes. Leaders have clear and exciting plans to further parents' participation in the running of the centre through opportunities to volunteer, and also as representatives on the locality group board. Importantly, they have significantly enhanced services to promote the good health of children and families. However, it is too soon to show what difference these initiatives and groups are having on the lives of families.

The centre has outstanding safeguarding arrangements. The centre leader is a leading professional in improving the local authority's safeguarding arrangements, and plays a vital role in developing practice and protocols across the borough. All centre leaders and many practitioners have higher-level safeguarding credentials. They attend child protection and safeguarding related training routinely throughout the year, to ensure they have the most current child protection information and best practice guidance. The centre's highly collaborative, effective multi-agency approach to child protection and safeguarding epitomises exemplary practice which is worthy of sharing.

The centre has good capacity to improve because of the strong, focused leadership and strengthened provision under the new management structure. As a result, there is an increasingly positive impact on families, even though outcomes, for the majority of families, are satisfactory at this time.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve the health of children and families by promoting the take up of more healthy lifestyles, including increasing breastfeeding rates and supporting the achievement of healthy weight, and monitoring the effectiveness of health promotion activities across the locality
  
- Improve outcomes for economic well-being by:
  - gaining a better understanding of the impact of adult education and training on the employability and economic stability of families
  - increasing parents' participation in adult education and training.
  
- Increase the opportunities for parents to contribute to the governance and life of the centre by:
  - ensuring that parents are represented on the locality group board;

- improving opportunities for parents to increase their engagement with the centre through voluntary work.

## How good are outcomes for families?

<b>3</b>
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Health outcomes are satisfactory overall. Breastfeeding take-up rates are below the national average at 66%. However, breastfeeding initiation rates have begun to improve recently. Childhood obesity at the end of Reception Year is broadly in line with the national average at 10%. There has been some success in helping mothers to give up smoking during pregnancy, but figures remain above the national average. The number of hospital admissions regarding young children in the area is lower than the national average. Levels of childhood immunisation remain good across the whole range of vaccines. Around 60% of all activities are designed to promote good health outcomes for children and families. However, it is too early to assess the impact of the relatively new timetable on the health outcomes of all families.

The new leadership arrangements firmly establish the centre's effectiveness in early identification and intervention to support improving outcomes for families. High-quality monitoring of the children's welfare is enriched because of the effective partnership working that has been developed between professionals, with a priority focus on child protection. Any concerns regarding individual children and families are swiftly acted upon. Children subject to child protection plans receive highly effective and timely support. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used well to secure improved outcomes for children and families. One parent said; 'I don't know what I would have done without the support of the early intervention practitioners. Their one-to-one support has been invaluable.' Risk assessments conducted at the centre are thorough. Workshops in first aid are regularly attended by, on average, 35 parents per session. Home risk assessments conducted by early intervention practitioners, and the provision of home-safety equipment, help to raise children's and families' awareness of risks and dangers in the home and their communities.

When children start attending early years provision, many make rapid progress from their starting points. This is because the on-site early years provision is outstanding and all children are fully supported in reaching their full potential, guided by an extremely strong and highly-qualified staff team. However, in the reach area, most children make good progress during the Early Years Foundation Stage. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and the rest closed considerably between 2009 and 2011. High-quality speech and language support has resulted in a significant improvement in Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scores, in communication, language and literacy, by the end of the Reception Year. Practitioners and leaders make highly effective use of Makaton to support communication with young children, and families new to speaking English. Most children with disabilities and special educational needs living in the area attend outstanding provision at a nearby school, where they receive excellent support to

enable them to make good or better progress.

Partners and parents play a valuable role in the production of the centre’s development plans, priorities and evaluations. The parents’ panel is well established, and regular meetings are held throughout the locality. However, parents have yet to be recruited to the new locality group board, which has replaced the advisory board.

During the last year, 133 individuals have participated in accredited learning activities via partner adult education providers. However, this accounts for a relatively small percentage of adults living in the area. Several parents have participated in parenting programmes and health promotion workshops at the centre in the last year. Volunteers at the centre receive professional training opportunities and are well supported to develop their confidence and skills. However, there are too few volunteers currently to enhance parents’ employment chances and financial independence. Very few parents have secured employment as a result. The centre’s effective partnership with the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) has helped families to maximise their access to benefits, to which they are entitled, and to reduce debt. For instance, one family received almost £8,000 of additional welfare benefits as a result of CAB advice and support. Unemployment in the area is high and there are many more children living in homes dependent on workless benefits than seen nationally.

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>3</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>3</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>3</b>

## **How good is the provision?**

**2**

The engagement with families has increased significantly as a result of the improved and positive range of good-quality services and activities provided, especially in relation to health promotion and positive parenting programmes. Outreach work, completed by the early intervention practitioners, is very successful. Staff determinedly reach out to families identified as in greatest need. One parent

commented; 'I don't know where I, or my family, would be without the support with housing and counselling from the early intervention practitioner.'

Centre activities to encourage healthy lifestyles feature strongly in the timetable of provision. Parenting programmes have helped parents to develop clear and appropriate expectations of behaviour management to secure good outcomes regarding childrens safety. Adult and family learning activities are popular, and take-up rates for a few activities are good. However, overall too few parents are accessing adult learning opportunities, and there is a lack of robust data to show how the available adult education provision is supporting adults into employment.

Care, guidance and support are good. Parents who made their comments known spoke in very high regard of the work of centre staff and of packages of care and support they receive. Relationships between staff and families are trusting. Case studies provide persuasive evidence of improved outcomes for families at times of difficulty, as a result of high-quality support from the centre. Home visits, speech and language support, and direct one-to-one support for families are just some of the effective ways that staff are working to improve outcomes for families. The centre targets its support at those considered in greatest need, and provides flexible, good-quality services to meet their specific needs.

The introduction of lead intervention roles, distributed to centre staff, based on well-understood criteria ensures a consistent approach to specific areas of work. For instance, the parental engagement lead works very closely with other key partners and agencies to ensure consistency and improved service provision. As a result, families using the centre say they feel safe and their needs are met very well. The Common Assessment Framework and Early Years Foundation Stage assessments are very well embedded and ensure that services and interventions improve outcomes. The voices of families are a consistent feature within documentation, recording the centre's successful early interventions. Parents and children who are in receipt of intensive support are consistently encouraged and supported to contribute to the process of assessing and reviewing their achievements.

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>3</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 new locality arrangements, post local authority restructuring, has strengthened the good governance and accountability of the centre. Leaders at all levels are effective. Their strong, confident leadership includes clear expectations, well understood roles and responsibilities. Morale is good within the centre. The centre leaders are very motivated and ooze enthusiasm, which is shared by practitioners and partners. There are clear priorities for the success of the centre, and these have been negotiated and agreed by staff, key partners and parents. The centre's priorities include some specific and challenging targets. Evaluation of the centre's work is a routine feature and partners, parents and children's views are always taken into account. Parents are well-represented on the nursery and nursery school's governing body, and were represented on the centre's advisory board. However, parents' role on the recently established locality group board has yet to be realised.

Leaders, practitioners and their partners worked positively during the period of transition to minimise the impact of the re-structuring on children and families. There are robust and well-embedded performance management systems in place and staff receive on-going professional support, career development opportunities, and regular monthly supervision. Engagement with children living in the area has increased over the last three years. The centre is interacting with the large majority (75%) of children and their families. Partnerships are good. One key partner spoke of their collaborations with the centre. They said; 'They empower you, (centre leaders) are responsive and forward looking, filled with enthusiasm and energy...it's like a re-birth.' The highly effective partnerships and joint working collaborations between professional agencies results in exemplary safeguarding arrangements. The Family Connect service plays a vital role in the excellent inter-agency working arrangements to protect children and to quickly and effectively address safeguarding concerns. There are rigorous and effective recording systems in place to enhance the centre's outstanding safeguarding practice. Recruitment procedures are extremely thorough, including Criminal Records Bureau checks, and the implementation of robust induction helps to assess the suitability of individuals to work with young children.

This is a very warm, friendly and inclusive centre. Children with disabilities access high quality early years provision and their individual needs are well met. All families attending receive consistently good care, guidance and support. Those families identified as vulnerable due to their circumstances, including lone parents, same sex parents, families living with domestic violence, families from minority ethnic groups, and those with disabilities receive timely, sensitive and very effective support. In these cases, the interventions provided by the centre are having a significant impact on outcomes for the families. However, despite the increasingly positive provision and the strong leadership and management, outcomes for the majority of families, are satisfactory overall. Therefore, currently, the centre provides satisfactory rather than 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>3</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**

Oakengates Nursery was inspected at the same time as the children's centre and was judged to be outstanding.

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### **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Oakengates Children's Centre on 15 and 16 November 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We would like to thank all of you who took the time to come in and meet with us and tell us about your centre. Many of you said how safe and happy you and your children feel at the centre. You told us that staff are always friendly and supportive and that they have helped you and your families a great deal.

Health outcomes are satisfactory despite the increasing focus on health promotion during the year. We have asked the centre to ensure that the improving health of children and families remains a key priority.

The centre is providing you with important support in times of difficulty. Staff are very effective at meeting your individual needs and working with you to improve your circumstances. Children thrive in the outstanding on-site nursery provision. Children with disabilities and special educational needs make equally good progress because they are included in the positive range of activities and also receive additional support. Centre staff are good at helping you to keep your homes as safe as possible and we know several of you have received home-safety equipment and many of you have attended paediatric first aid workshops.

However, too few of you are accessing adult learning provision to support your confidence and self-esteem, and ultimately, your pathways to employment and financial independence. Centre leaders are eager to develop opportunities for you through the volunteer programme. We have asked the centre to ensure you are able to access a good range of high-quality personal development and professional learning opportunities.

We were impressed with the highly inclusive environment and the commitment of the centre staff to ensure all families are welcomed into the centre. Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding. The engagement with parents is good and is well supported by strong partnerships with a wide range of professional and voluntary organisations.

Thank you again for helping us with the inspection. It was good to meet you all and we wish you all the very best for the future.

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