

# Inspection report for Teme Valley Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Worcestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	404552
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<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joy Law HMI

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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Clifton-upon-Teme Primary School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Not applicable

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 the local authority, Barnardo's, centre staff, representatives of the advisory board, partner agencies and parents. 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

Teme Valley Children's Centre is in a rural location in the West of Worcestershire. It falls within the Malvern Hills District. The centre was designated as a phase one children's centre in January 2006. Areas of relative prosperity are interspersed with pockets of deprivation. The centre operates from a temporary classroom on the site of Clifton-upon-Teme Primary School and delivers outreach services at community venues across the area.

The Teme Valley Children's Centre's reach area population is 619 families in which there are 898 children aged below five years of age. The percentage of workless households and those dependent on benefits is 9%. There are approximately 77 lone parents within the reach area. The children's centre serves a community of which the vast majority is White British (97%), with the remaining population being from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds.

The centre provides a range of services including health and family services, play and learning experiences for children and adults. The centre does not provide early years and childcare provision. It offers advice and guidance to parents on the day-care and childminding facilities available within the local community. The centre provides crèche provision for pre-nursery children while their parents attend sessions

at the centre. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years provision, are variable, with some children well below and others in line with those expected for their age.

The centre was initially managed by a local independent voluntary management board until Barnardo's took over management in April 2010. The partnership advisory board comprises a cross-section of professionals, including representatives from the voluntary sector and parents. The centre has a parents' forum.

The centre employs seven staff. The centre works in partnership with agencies to deliver a range of integrated services for families and children. The centre has also established working relationships with other professional organisations to deliver a programme of universal and targeted services to meet the local community's needs.

Poor access to services and poor transport infrastructure are major issues facing the rural community. The centre has experienced a number of challenges over the past two years, including a change in its leadership and a change in the majority of its staff's team.

## 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

Teme Valley is a good children's centre. It works effectively with its partners to provide well-coordinated support for the children and families who live in the reach area. The centre's staff and partners give high-quality care, guidance and support to all families, but especially to the families who are isolated or experiencing change, challenge or difficulties in their lives.

The centre's vision to serve its community well is at the heart of the work of leaders, staff and all those who are involved in the centre. Despite its rural location, the centre is a good example of what can be achieved when the shared vision and commitment of many people combine to serve the local community.

Leadership and management are good at all levels. Leaders and managers are

supported by a passionate, caring and dedicated team. Although many of them have been in post for less than a year, there is good capacity for improvement. The manager's and her team's determination to succeed and achieve excellence in all of the centre's activities has led to a good quality of provision and good outcomes for children and families. Nevertheless, leaders are not complacent and have accurately identified areas for further development. For example, they know that, although they are reaching the large majority of families and supporting parents to secure future economic stability and independence, there still remains a small minority of families, particularly those from the most isolated and vulnerable groups, which are not benefiting from the centre's services. Leaders also acknowledge that, despite continually looking at ways to promote adult learning opportunities, they have not been as successful as they might have been. The centre is not fully effective in tracking the future success of users who have been supported in accessing outside services, training and employment.

Barnardo's commitment to deliver a high-quality service, combined with strong leadership of the largely new staff team, has resulted in the centre making rapid improvements in both the quality and quantity of provision. The centre has demonstrated that it is in a strong position to move forward at an increasingly rapid rate.

The local authority provides good support and robust challenge through regular monitoring visits, good-quality monitoring reports and by providing excellent quality data to demonstrate the centre's effectiveness. The centre has a well-established and effective advisory board. Members are highly supportive and have a strong commitment to the centre and to the on-going development of its role in the community. Parents are actively encouraged to have their say and are becoming increasingly involved in decision making through the parents' forum, advisory board, evaluation of sessions and suggestion box. Parents say that they feel listened to, respected and valued.

Safeguarding is the centre's highest priority and at the heart of what the centre does. Good inter-agency working with highly skilled professionals means that the needs of potentially vulnerable families are identified at an early stage. The centre intervenes appropriately with provision tailored carefully to match families' individual needs. For example, parents suffering from domestic abuse and postnatal depression are well supported. Effective early intervention work means that there are only a few occasions when the centre needs to make use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). It does this well to target resources when required.

The inclusion of all children and their families is central to the centre's vision. Staff are effective in removing barriers to ensure that all families are included and not disadvantaged due to where they live or their personal circumstances. Staff make good use of the centre's van, packed full of good-quality resources, to deliver sessions such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Bumps to Babies' out in the community. Partners, such as speech and language therapist, health visitor and community nursery nurse, attend these sessions to give parents additional support and advice.

Staff also provide excellent one-to-one support to families within their homes resulting in significant improvements in children's and their families' lives. Parents speak very positively about the centre's services and how these have improved their health and well-being, and helped them to overcome feelings of isolation and low self-esteem.

Partners speak highly about the effective partnership working and the positive effect the children's centre has in contributing to improved outcomes for young children and their families. Partners are very clear about the centre's main priorities. The relationships with a wide range of partners contribute to the centre's programme of activities. For example, good collaborative working with some local schools, early years providers and childminders, means that children and parents attend sessions such as 'Family Time Together' and 'Parents' Place' resulting in good transitions for children moving onto school and improved parental involvement in their children's learning.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Increase the number of families accessing the centre's services, particularly those from the most isolated and vulnerable groups.
- Track, monitor and evaluate services more thoroughly in order to measure the full impact of the centre's work, particularly where parents have been supported in accessing training, employment and benefits.
- Increase the range of learning and development opportunities for parents to improve their skills in supporting their children's learning and to secure future economic stability and independence.

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

<b>2</b>
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The centre offers a good range of opportunities for parents and children to increase their understanding of how to keep healthy, through targeted support groups such as 'Parents' Place', 'Family Time Together' and 'Ready Daddy Cook' sessions. Parents reported that they felt better able to support and enhance a healthy lifestyle for their families as a result of attending the sessions. Young parents who attended the breakfast club now regularly get up earlier and give their children breakfast.

The large majority of families in the area are engaging with appropriate health services. Uptake of immunisation and the proportion of mothers breastfeeding their babies is high. Obesity in Reception-aged children has increased slightly, but remains below the Worcestershire average. Staff work effectively in partnership with health visitors, midwives and other health agencies to improve the physical and mental health outcomes for young children and their families to reduce health inequalities. Where provision did not exist, sessions such as 'Bumps to Babies' now provide opportunities for parents to socialise and gain new skills and knowledge to support

them in caring for their children. Partners comment positively on how the work of the centre has helped reduce the feeling of rural isolation among young families. Parents' comments such as, 'The centre has connected me to other people in the area,' and 'I no longer feel alone, I now have friends and we meet up outside of the stay and play sessions', are typical comments.

Parents and children say that they feel very safe at the centre and are confident to share information with staff. There are well-established lines of communication and highly effective integrated working between professionals enabling them to make a good contribution to improving the safety and well-being of children in the home. Parents are well informed about safeguarding. They are helped to learn how to keep their children safe in the home and out in the community through activities during 'Stay and Play' sessions and national campaigns such as 'Safe at Home', 'Road Safety' and 'Child Safety Week'. As a result, most families report improved outcomes around safety. The vast majority of parents who completed training in paediatric first aid said they felt more confident administering first aid to their children. Families with child protection plans are known to the centre and receive effective, integrated support to keep children safe.

Staff are knowledgeable and have a secure understanding of how to raise children's achievement across all areas of learning. They make effective use of what they know about the children and plan sessions to meet their individual needs. Parents participate enthusiastically in activities and courses which build their confidence and develop their parenting skills. They are supported well in helping their children learn and play at home. Comments such as, 'I feel more confident in helping my children' and 'As a family we have learnt to interact with each other whilst having fun' are typical. Children who attend the centre's 'Stay and Play' sessions and 'Bumps to Babies' sessions benefit particularly from focused support and a good range of play opportunities to help develop their communication and social skills.

Staff place strong emphasis on promoting positive behaviour during one-to-one sessions within the home or during activities. Children are well behaved. Parents have very positive and mutually respectful relationships with staff and with each other. The buddy system in which parents give lifts to other families to enable them to access the centre's services contributes effectively to removing barriers for families who are isolated. Parents make a good contribution to the centre's work through a whole range of initiatives as well through governance and in decision making. Parents say that they feel listened to, respected and valued.

Despite the barriers of living in a rural location, some parents have engaged in volunteer work and have made gains in their personal development and achieved qualifications which have helped them develop skills and move on to further training and employment. Staff recognise the importance of recruiting and training volunteers and have recently trained six new volunteers. However, they acknowledge that the number of volunteers working at the centre is still not as high as it could be. Effective partnerships with agencies such as Jobcentre Plus, Family Information Service and Citizen's Advice Bureau, mean that families are provided with a range of

information to help them improve their economic stability or independence. Case studies and anecdotal evidence show that the centre has helped some parents into learning through sessions such as 'Wider Family Learning' to improve their numeracy and literacy skills. However, the limited number of adult learning sessions means that opportunities to improve parents' skills and employment prospects are no better than satisfactory.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment</b>	<b>3</b>

## How good is the provision?

**2**

Access to comprehensive and detailed data means that staff can accurately identify, by postcode, where families are and, therefore, target resources where they are most needed. Staff deploy resources well given the restrictions placed on them. They make good use of local community rooms and schools to deliver their sessions enabling the most vulnerable families, particularly the most isolated, young and lone parents to access services where previously there was no opportunity. The manager has been instrumental and highly successful in improving the quality of provision.

Good-quality services and excellent care, guidance and support for families in difficulty are promoted through strong partnership working. The centre works in close partnership with the early intervention team and other services to assess rigorously the needs of the most vulnerable children and families. Detailed assessments lead to an individual plan for the child and their family, avoid duplication of services and minimise the risk of the most vulnerable families falling through the net. Plans are regularly reviewed to ensure that services continue to meet the needs of each family and also, where possible, to gradually withdraw services to reduce dependency. Parents are treated with sensitivity and respect and they very much appreciate this. The centre has a good level of contact with targeted groups in the area. Many parents speak of the invaluable support they have received in financial management, parenting, and to promote health and well-being. They know they can



turn to the centre when they are most in need and receive constructive advice and guidance. The support is seamless, with centre staff and partners working collaboratively to ensure that needs are met in the most effective way. Families' needs are thoroughly assessed through first contact visits and subsequent visits to the centre. The centre provides well for children and families who are disabled or have special educational needs. Excellent links with the local special educational needs coordinator, portage and inclusion teams mean that a holistic package of support can be given to families.

A varied range of adult learning opportunities results in some parents gaining qualifications and support into employment. Parents and children gain from the sessions run by the centre, including good speech and language support and the enjoyable 'Family Funs' and 'Family Walks' which are planned around the Early Years Foundation Stage to encourage exploration and enjoyment of learning.

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>1</b>

## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

**2**

The centre is effectively led and managed. Governance and accountability arrangements are good at all levels. The advisory board is well informed and has a good understanding of local needs and the centre's priorities. Parents have strong representation on the board and, together with the broad range of partners, they provide good levels of challenge and support. Strategic planning is based on thorough self-evaluation involving all staff and partners. It is supported by clearly understood line-management procedures. Professional supervision of staff and regular one-to-one meetings with managers promote the shared values of staff and their ability to meet organisational expectations. Teamwork among staff is strong and morale is good.

The effective partnership working means that families receive fully integrated services. Family support workers liaise effectively with social care and health services, Jobcentre Plus and voluntary partners to ensure that families at risk or facing challenging circumstances receive support tailored to their needs. This helps to ensure children are kept safe and adults at risk receive the support they need. Good-quality training and regular updates ensure that all staff are fully aware of safeguarding and child protection procedures. Many parents reported positively about how the staff had helped them in times of crisis. For example, 'I don't know

where I would be if it hadn't have been for the centre, I might have slipped further into depression', 'They helped us get back on our feet' and 'I wouldn't have coped without the support of the centre and my child would definitely have ended up in care' are all comments from parents.

Safeguarding is of the highest priority and all policies and procedures are consistently implemented. Vetting and recruitment processes for staff and volunteers are robust. Training in safeguarding and child protection is of paramount importance. The centre plays a pivotal role in seeking to ensure that children are safe and, where necessary, child protection plans are implemented effectively.

Equality and diversity are actively promoted in all aspects of the centre's work. All groups are welcomed and included and feel well supported. The centre is very aware of what the barriers to accessing services are and is taking effective steps to reach the most vulnerable groups. Home visits are invaluable in reaching families with the greatest need. Staff are constantly looking at ways in which to reach those families who are not accessing services. Services and activities are well signposted and promoted. For example, monthly newsletters are sent to families, leaflets are displayed at community venues and partners verbally recommend. Families speak highly of the centre's services and readily engage in them. For example, 100% of parents attending the 'Family Time Together' sessions expressed their eagerness to return.

Data and feedback from headteachers confirm how much better prepared for school children who have accessed the centre's services are compared with those who have not. Children, including the most vulnerable two-year-olds, make good progress in their learning and development, with an increasing percentage gaining at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scales. Consequently, the gap between the lowest-achieving and the rest is being reduced.

Users are influential in shaping services because they are engaged in meaningful consultation and evaluation, for example, through the parents' forum. Staff go to great lengths to reach out into the community and ensure the needs of all are known and met in the centre and through outreach work. All groups are made welcome and there are good strategies in place to engage those who are under-represented such as families from ethnic minority groups.

A culture of self-evaluation and continuous improvement is integral to the work of all those involved with the centre. The leaders' identification of the many areas they seek to improve provides evidence of their reflective practice. However, the centre is less effective in tracking the future success of users who have been supported in accessing outside services, training and employment.

The centre provides good value for money by working in partnership with agencies, sharing resources across other children's centres, and taking the services to the users. The centre meets its community's needs well because staff place great effort to gain parents', children's and partners' views about the quality of services provided

and any gaps.

These are the grades for leadership and management

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision</b>	<b>2</b>

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

None.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Teme Valley Children's Centre on 12–13 December 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Teme Valley is a good children's centre. It works effectively with its partners to provide well-coordinated support for you and your children who live in the reach area. Leadership and management are good. The centre's leaders are supported by a passionate, caring and dedicated team, many of whom have been in post for less than a year. The manager's and her team's determination to succeed and achieve excellence in all of the centre's activities, has led to a good quality of provision and

good outcomes for you and your families. Nevertheless, leaders are not complacent and have accurately identified areas for further development. For example, they know that, although they are reaching many families and supporting you to secure future economic stability and independence, there still remain a small number of families who are not benefiting from the centre's services. Leaders acknowledge that there is more to be done to promote adult learning opportunities, and that the centre does not track the future success of those of you who have been supported in accessing outside services, training and employment. Therefore, we have asked leaders and staff to take action to improve these areas of the centre's work.

The centre offers a good range of opportunities for you and your children to increase your understanding of how to keep healthy, through targeted support groups such as 'Parents' Place' 'Family Time Together' and 'Ready Daddy Cook' sessions. You reported that you feel better able to support and enhance a healthy lifestyle for your families as a result of attending the sessions.

There are good arrangements in place to make sure you and your children are kept safe. You told us that you feel very safe during sessions and that you trust the staff to help you in times of crisis or personal difficulties. Staff ensure that those of you who are in most need of support are given excellent care and appropriate information and support tailored to your individual needs.

A good range of activities are provided which are linked to your children's interests and which support their communication and social skills. You enjoy the popular 'Stay and Play' sessions which you say help you learn about how to support your children's learning and give you and your children opportunities to play together and meet other people. Comments such as, 'I feel more confident in helping my children' and 'As a family we have learnt to interact with each other whilst having fun' are typical.

The centre has a well-established and effective advisory board. Members are highly supportive and have a strong commitment to the centre and to the on going development of its role in the community. It was good to see how you contribute towards shaping the centre's services through being involved with the parents' forum, advisory board, the 'Feedback' board, course evaluations and by talking to staff and sharing your views. The centre responds to your requests for services. For example, 'Puddle Ducks' walks now take place.

The inclusion of you and your children is central to the centre's vision. Staff make good use of the centre's van, packed full of good-quality resources, to deliver sessions such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Bumps to Babies' out in the community. Partners, such as the speech and language therapist, health visitor and Citizens Advice Bureau, attend these sessions to give you additional support and advice. Staff, also provide excellent one-to-one support to families within your homes resulting in significant improvements in your lives and those of your children. You speak very positively about the centre's services and how these have improved your

health and well-being, and helped you overcome feelings of isolation and low self-esteem.

Partners speak highly about the effective partnership working and the positive effect the children's centre has in contributing to improved outcomes for you and your children. For example, good collaborative working with some local schools means that you and your children attend sessions such as 'Family Time Together' and 'Parents' Place' resulting in good transitions for children moving onto school and improvements in your involvement in your children's learning.

We would like to thank everyone who came to speak with 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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).