

# Inspection report for South Oswestry Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Shropshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	404517
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 December 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Deborah Udakis HMI

<b>Centre leader</b>	Nina Kooner
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
<b>Centre address</b>	Baschurch Village Hall Eyton Lane Shrewsbury SY4 2JN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01691 656513
<b>Fax number</b>	01691 656513
<b>Email address</b>	nina.kooner@shropshire.gov.uk

<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Baschurch Church of England Primary School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Baschurch Pre-School URN 224035 Morda Pre-School URN: EY407758

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 centre coordinator, centre staff, members of the locality 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 document, data provided by the local authority and the centre, documents and policies, and minutes of meetings.

## Information about the centre

South Oswestry Children's Centre serves a geographical area in north-west Shropshire. It has a principal site located in the village of Baschurch and a linked site at Morda. The centre is managed by a coordinator on behalf of the local authority. The centre fulfils its core purpose through a range of integrated services relating to health, family support and adult training. Early years childcare, managed by private and community groups, is available at both sites. The centre coordinator had been in post for just three weeks at the time of the inspection. The locality advisory board supports the centre's governance and accountability arrangements. The membership of the board is drawn from a range of partners and includes representation from the health, maternity, education, library, adult education and family learning services, Job Centre Plus, maternity services, and the local authority. Parents from adjacent children's centres are represented on the board.

The centre's staff team consists of the children's centre coordinator, children's centre senior support workers, children's centre support workers, crèche coordinator, crèche workers and administrative staff team.

South Oswestry was designated as a phase three children's centre as part of the Sure Start Local Programme in June 2009. It is one of 12 centres in the county. It

serves a large rural population. Much of the centre's provision is delivered collaboratively with community partners to maximise services for families.

The proportions of families who claim benefits, or are workless, are below the national average. The area is not ranked within the top 30% of the most socially and economically disadvantaged areas in the country. The large majority of families living in the reach area are White British. Approximately 18% of families are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Within the reach area, there are 667 children who are under five years of age. Children enter early years provision with skills, knowledge and abilities that are typical of 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**

**2**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**2**

## Main findings

South Oswestry is a good children's centre. It is warm, inclusive, accessible and welcoming. Parents who made their views known were universally complimentary and supportive of the work of the centre. One parent commented, 'I don't know what I would have done without the children's centre.' Another said, 'One-to-one work with me has helped me to build my confidence.'

The centre coordinator was appointed in November 2012. The enthusiastic and skilled leadership team and practitioners show high levels of enthusiasm 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 and accountability arrangements are robust and there are clear lines of accountability. Leaders at all levels are aware of the strengths of the setting. They have developed highly collaborative and effective partnerships with a range of professional agencies. As a result, the availability and accessibility of good-quality services have improved significantly. This has led to impressive improvements in outcomes for families, particularly in relation to health, safety and

safeguarding arrangements, and children's enjoyment and achievements in the early years. Key priorities, agreed by parents, practitioners and partners, are set out in ambitious development plans, but these lack precise targets. Areas for development identified during the inspection came as no surprise to leaders. The locality advisory board plays an important role in the governance of the centre. Parents from other children's centres in the area are represented on the board; however, there are no parent representatives from this centre on the board currently. Leaders acknowledge that there is limited data from adult education partners and Job Centre Plus to demonstrate learner's successes and the number of those moving into employment.

The centre has good capacity to improve because of the strong, focused leadership. The centre provides a good range of effective services across the locality, based on the needs of the community and families. Services are provided in partnership with professional agencies and private and community groups, who share the centre's ambitions for families living in the area. As a result, there is an increasingly positive impact on families, and outcomes for the majority of families are good.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Extend partnership working with adult and community learning and training providers and Jobcentre Plus so that they improve the data available to demonstrate families improving economic stability
- Strengthen the role of the advisory board by:
  - making better use of data to set precise and ambitious targets and priorities
  - increasing the number of parent representatives.

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

<b>2</b>
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Health outcomes for children and families are good. Breastfeeding take-up rates are high at 81% and have improved significantly as a result of effective promotion and support from peer supporters and health partners. Childhood obesity at the end of Reception is well below the national average and continues to reduce. Far fewer women living in the reach area are smoking at the time of delivery. The number of women who continue to smoke when they have their babies has halved over the last few years and is now at 6.5%, and is below the national average. The number of young children admitted to hospital in the area is lower than the national average. Every accident and emergency case involving young children is followed up by the health visitors to minimise future risk of harm. Levels of childhood immunisation remain very high. The majority of all activities provided at the centre are designed to promote good health outcomes for children and families.

Staff undertake effective monitoring of the children's welfare, and this work is complimented by the effective partnership working that exists between professionals,

with a priority focus on child protection. Any concerns regarding individual children and families are acted upon with a strong focus on early help to prevent concerns escalating. Children subject to child protection plans receive effective and timely support. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used well by staff to secure improved outcomes for children and families. Risk assessments, conducted at the centre, are thorough. Family first-aid workshops are very popular with parents. Home risk assessments conducted by children's centre support workers, in partnership with parents, 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.

In the area, early years provision is predominantly good. Early Years Foundation Stage Profile data show that all children, including children with disabilities and special needs and those new to English, make good progress. Boys and girls are making equally good progress, and boys' learning is enhanced because of the effective outdoor learning environments and increasing participation in forest schools. The gap between the lowest- and highest-achieving 20% has closed considerably and is now at 14%. Good-quality speech and language support and early years practitioners' focus on communication and language have resulted in children's good achievement by the end of Reception.

Parents and partners play a valuable role in the evaluation of the centre's effectiveness. Many parents, including those from target groups, participate in regular parent group meetings. These are informal gatherings where parents can share their experiences of the centre, make their views known and suggest changes and improvements. The outcome of these meetings is communicated to centre leaders and informs the advisory board meetings. However, parents from the centre have yet to be recruited to the locality advisory board. In addition, the board plays a limited role in developing the centre's action plan, and there is limited use of data to set priority targets.

All parents, engaging with the centre, participate in regular learning and development activities; a large proportion of these relate to health promotion. For instance, family first aid, healthy eating, oral health, and baby massage sessions are all very popular and participation rates are good. Several parents also attend local colleges and many of them are working towards nationally accredited qualifications. However, there is limited data available to show the outcome of their learning. Unemployment in the area is relatively low and there are fewer children living in homes dependent on workless benefits than seen nationally. JobCentre Plus provides valuable advice and support to parents looking for employment. However, there is a lack of available data to demonstrate anything other than satisfactory outcomes regarding economic well-being.

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>
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<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, 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 is successfully targeting those families made vulnerable by their circumstances. Staff determinedly reach out to families identified as in greatest need. One parent commented, 'I think centres like this are a godsend ... I felt able to discuss my early problems and worries of postnatal depression without being judged.'

Centre activities to encourage healthy lifestyles feature strongly in the timetable. Parenting programmes have helped parents to develop clear and appropriate expectations of behaviour management to secure good outcomes regarding children's safety. Adult and family learning activities are popular, and take-up rates for activities are good. However, 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. Individualised targeted support is a particular strength of the centre. Convincing case studies provide evidence of the skilled and expert support provided to families in times of crisis. One parent commented, 'I felt there was nothing more the centre could do better.' Home visits, speech and language support, and direct one-to-one support for families are just some of the effective ways that staff use to improve outcomes for families. Parents who made their comments known spoke in very high regard of the work of centre staff.

A good range of services is targeted to meet community and family needs across the area. 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. Parents, who made their views known, said they are engaged and consulted at each stage to ensure 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>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>

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

**2**

The new centre coordinator is quickly establishing herself in the life of the centre. Leaders at all levels are effective. The advisory board is well established, meets regularly, and provides good opportunities to evaluate the effectiveness of the centre. The chair of the board played a significant role in the appointment of the centre coordinator. There are clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Morale is good within the centre. All staff are motivated and enthusiastic, and this enthusiasm is shared by partners. Action planning includes clear priorities for the success of the centre but is not always supported with measurable targets. Nevertheless, the successes of the centre during the last two years, including the improvement in outcomes for families, the increasing engagement with families, and especially those families identified as being in greatest need, are impressive. Evaluation of the centre's work is a routine feature, and partners, parents and children's views are always taken into account. Parents' views are routinely gathered through day-to-day activities and also within parents' meetings.

Staff receive professional supervision and are well managed. Performance management systems are effective. Engagement with children living in the area has increased over the last three years. The centre is interacting with the large majority (66%) of children and their families. Highly collaborative and effective partnerships with a wide variety of agencies are key to the success of the centre and the development of provision across the locality. The centre has a strong focus on commissioning services as it continually develops its partnerships with other agencies. One key partner spoke of their collaboration with the centre which included a 'Sleep Well' week to support children's emotional well-being, concentration and achievement. The event was supported across the area by key agencies and private, voluntary and independent providers and was hailed a success by all.

The centre's safeguarding arrangements are thorough. Rigorous and effective recording systems enhance the centre's safeguarding practice. Recruitment procedures are very thorough, and include Criminal Records Bureau checks. All staff attend training on child protection at least annually.

This is a very friendly and welcoming centre. Children with disabilities access high-quality early years provision and their individual needs are well met in partnership



with other agencies. 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. As a result of the positive provision, and the strong leadership and management, outcomes for the majority of families are good overall. The centre provides 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>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**

Baschurch Pre-School was inspected in November 2009 and was judged good overall.

Morda Pre-School was inspected in 2011 and was judged outstanding.

Baschurch Church of England Primary School was inspected in June 2010 and was judged to be satisfactory.

Morda Church of England School was inspected in March 2010 and was judged satisfactory overall.

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the South Oswestry Children's Centre on 12–13 December 2012. We judged the centre as good 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.

We were impressed with the way the centre and its partners are supporting good outcomes for you and your children, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in health. In the early years, children with disabilities and special educational needs, make equally good progress as their peers because they are included in the range of activities and also receive additional support.

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. We know several of you have received home-safety equipment and many of you have attended paediatric first-aid workshops. As a result, you have developed good-quality skills and are able to take swift and appropriate action if your child suffers an accident.

However, there is too little accurate information to show the successes of those of you who are accessing adult learning provision. It is not always clear how many of you are improving your employment opportunities and financial independence, as a result of your involvement with adult education and JobCentre Plus partners. We have asked the centre to work closely with these partners, to ensure they provide improved information about the difference the good range of personal development and professional learning opportunities is making to families and supporting improving economic well-being.

No parents from the centre are currently serving on the advisory board. Centre leaders are eager to develop opportunities for you to become more involved in the governance and decision-making processes. We have also asked that the advisory board supports leaders to set ambitious targets and priorities, making better use of available data.

The centre is very inclusive and all families are welcomed into the centre. Safeguarding arrangements are good. The engagement with families is also good

and is supported well 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).