

Inspection report for Greenfield Children's Centre

Local authority	Walsall
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Reporting inspector	Sue Crawford HMI

Centre leader	Deb Guy
Date of previous inspection	No previous inspection
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Linked school if applicable	Greenfield Primary School URN104216
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Greenfield Children's Centre Nursery URN 254449

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, centre staff, representatives of the partnership 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

Greenfield Children's Centre is a phase 2 children's centre and was designated in 2007 and serves a community ranked within the 30% most deprived in the country. The centre covers the Shelfield and Rushall areas which are located in the City of Walsall. There is a partnership board responsible for governance; the local authority oversees the running of the centre.

The centre is open five days a week for 48 weeks of the year and operates from Greenfield Primary School. There is some shared use of the premises by the school. The child development clinic located opposite the centre is used to deliver some services. Some activities are also held at other sites, such as local schools, health clinics and other children's centres.

The centre fulfils its core purpose by providing a range of services such as health and family support services, parenting courses, and advice and guidance. There are a low number of workless families dependent on state benefits, and unemployment in the area that the centre serves is relatively low. Most families are from White British backgrounds. There is a small minority of families from other minority ethnic backgrounds living in the reach area. The majority of children enter early years

settings with skills, development and knowledge below those expected for their age. A nursery operates in the centre, which is overseen by the centre manager.

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

Greenfield 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 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. Leaders and managers are supported by a passionate, caring and dedicated team. As a consequence, leadership and management are good and there is good capacity for sustained improvement. The determination of the manager and her team to succeed in all of the centre’s activities has led to 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 well to secure good 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, particularly in helping parents to improve their skills and employment prospects. The centre is not fully effective in evaluating and tracking the future success of users who have been supported in accessing services, volunteering, training and employment.

The local authority provides good support and robust challenge through regular monitoring, events such as the annual conversation and by providing good quality data for most areas to demonstrate the centre’s effectiveness. The centre has a well-established 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 partnership board, evaluation of

sessions and the graffiti board. Their views are taken into account when planning and delivering services; parents raise realistic suggestions for improvement such as a gradual increase in nursery fees rather than one big increase.

Safeguarding is given priority and is at the heart of what the centre does. Good inter-agency working with 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 teenage mums 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. Partners, such as a speech and language therapist, health visitor and community nursery nurse, attend 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 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 'Rushall Rabbits' and 'Let's get Cooking', resulting in 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 volunteering.
- Increase the range of adult learning and development opportunities, including opportunities for parents to improve their skills and employment prospects.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The centre offers a good range of opportunities for parents and children to increase their understanding of how to keep healthy, through targeted support and groups such as 'Cheerleading', 'Walk on Walsall' and 'Let's Get Cooking'. Parents reported

that they felt better able to support and enhance a healthy lifestyle for their families as a result of attending the sessions. Children who attended the breakfast club are provided with a nutritious healthy start to their day.

The large majority of families are engaging with appropriate health services. The proportion of mothers breastfeeding their babies is in line with the Walsall average and the number who are still breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks has increased by 5% from last year. Obesity in Reception-aged children has increased; the centre has pinpointed this to one particular school and is already providing additional activities to promote healthy eating and exercise. Staff work effectively in partnership with health visitors, midwives and other health agencies, including those at the child health clinic, to improve the physical and mental health outcomes for young children and their families to reduce health inequalities. Partners comment positively on how the work of the centre has helped reduce the feeling of isolation among young families. Parents' comments such as, 'The centre has signposted me to other people in the area,' and 'I no longer feel alone, I now have friends and we meet up outside of the sessions', are typical.

Parents and children say that they feel safe at the centre and are confident to share information with staff. There are well-established lines of communication and 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 in the nursery and national campaigns such as '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. Some families with children subject to a child protection plan are known to the centre and receive effective integrated support to keep their 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 to 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 nursery benefit particularly from focused support and an excellent range of play opportunities to help develop their communication and social skills. Children are developing in aspects of their personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy and are making excellent progress.

Staff place strong emphasis on promoting positive behaviour during one-to-one sessions within the home, during activities and in the nursery. Children are well behaved. Parents have very positive and mutually respectful relationships with staff

and with each other. 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. Some parents have engaged in volunteer work and have made gains in their personal development which have helped them develop skills in readiness to move on to further training and employment.

Staff recognise the importance of recruiting and training volunteers. However, they acknowledge that the number of volunteers working at the centre is still not as high as it should be. Effective partnerships with agencies such as Jobcentre Plus, Family Information Service, advice services and Citizens Advice Bureau mean that families are provided with a range of information to help them improve their economic stability and independence. Case studies and anecdotal evidence show that the centre has helped some parents develop their self-confidence through sessions such as ‘Crafty Devils’ and taster sessions put on by Walsall College such as ‘Cake decorating’. However, there is a limited number of adults moving on to accredited learning which means that opportunities to improve parents’ skills and employment prospects are not as good as they could be.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

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

How good is the provision?

2

The new birth data provided by health partners are invaluable to the centre and have helped the staff to successfully identify families who are most in need. Staff make good use of local health clinics 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.

Good quality services for families in difficulty are promoted through good 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. Family support workers and the centre manager ensure that plans are regularly reviewed so that services continue to meet the needs of each family and also, where possible, to gradually withdraw services to reduce dependency. Those parents who receive a service are treated with sensitivity and respect and they very much appreciate this. These parents speak of the invaluable support they have received in financial management and 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. The centre provides well for children and families who are disabled or have special educational needs. Excellent links with the child development clinic and inclusion team mean that a holistic package of support can be given to families who access the centre.

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 through activities such as 'Rainbow Rhyme Time' and the enjoyable 'Family Fun' events and 'trips out' which promote community cohesion and broaden the horizons of individuals. The early years nursery workers with the local schools provide home visits to ensure that effective transition arrangements support children as they move on to the next stage in their education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The centre is effectively led and managed. Governance and accountability arrangements are good; the partnership 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 partners, provide good levels of challenge and support. Strategic planning is based on accurate 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 all staff have a 'Can Do' attitude.

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' and 'They helped us get back on our feet and to get our children out of care' are comments from parents.

Safeguarding is given 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. Families experiencing crises, including domestic violence, are particularly well supported within the centre. Staff ensure that families are provided with a place of safety and are instrumental in ensuring they access appropriate services swiftly.

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.

Data and feedback from headteachers confirm how much better prepared for school are children who have accessed the centre's nursery and other services compared with those who have not. Children, including the most vulnerable two-year-olds, make outstanding 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 children and the rest is being reduced.

Users are influential in shaping services because they are engaged in meaningful consultation, for example through the partnership board. 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. While all staff have ownership of evaluating and planning their services, evaluation does not always capture the impact the activities have on improving outcomes and any long-term impact. All groups are made welcome and there are good strategies in place to engage those who are under-represented, such as lone parent families, fathers and those 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 services, training, volunteer work 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

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

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

The Children's Centre Early Years Provision was inspected on 22nd January 2013 and was judged as Outstanding. Greenfield Primary School Nursery was inspected on 20th September 2012 and judged as Good. The inspection of the children's centre was informed by the findings of this inspection.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Greenfield Children's Centre on 13–14 March 2013. We judged the centre as good overall.

Greenfield 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. 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 remains 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 always track or evaluate 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 'Let's Get Cooking' and 'Weaning Party' 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 good 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 being part of nursery 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 partnership board. Members are very 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 partnership board, the 'Feedback' on the graffiti board, course evaluations and by talking to staff and sharing your views. The centre responds to your requests for services, for example 'by providing play schemes during the school holidays'.

The inclusion of you and your children is central to the centre's vision. Partners, such as the speech and language therapist, health visitor and Citizens Advice Bureau, attend sessions to give you additional support and advice. Staff also provide excellent one-to-one support to families in 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 induction sessions, 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.