

# Palfrey Sure Start Children's Centre

Access Centre, South Street, Palfrey, Walsall, WS1 4HE

<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 July 2015
<b>Previous inspection date</b>	7–8 July 2010

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
Access to services by young children and families		Outstanding	1
The quality of practice and services		Outstanding	1
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This is an outstanding centre.

- The leadership team know the community exceptionally well and are highly respected. They have created and developed a very talented staff team. As a result, the centre has maintained the high quality of its services for families that need them most since the previous inspection.
- The centre is at the heart of its diverse community and is held in high regard by all who come into contact with it. It is an extremely vibrant place and promotes cohesion in the community exceptionally well.
- A very strong element of the centre's work is its productive relationships with a wide range of official and voluntary partners in the area. This is built on trust and mutual respect, and ensures that information is shared so that the right support is provided for families when it is needed most.
- Systems to promote the work of the centre are proactive, innovative and successful. As a result, almost all families in the area are registered for its services and most are benefiting from its support and advice, or have three- and four-year-olds enrolled in early years settings.
- Most of the families from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds benefit from the services of the centre. Many are regular and enthusiastic participants. Barriers for some families are immediately broken down because staff speak most of the community languages.
- The centre's work with its most vulnerable families in their own homes is highly effective and results in considerable improvements in family life over time and a reduction in the risk of harm to children.
- There is a range of high quality services to support parents with their children's early learning and development. Staff are confident and highly skilled, and also lead developments with early years settings in the area. As a result, children make strong progress and are well prepared for school.
- The local authority and the Palfrey Community Association have successfully supported the centre's strong performance since the previous inspection. However, due to unfortunate circumstances, neither the Community Association nor its partnership board have met regularly in recent times and systems for assuring itself of the high quality of the centre's work are not as robust as they were.

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

- The Palfrey Community Association and its partnership board should meet regularly and review its procedures for ensuring that high quality services are maintained for families in the community.

**Information about this inspection**

The inspection of this children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, other members of staff, representatives of the local authority, the treasurer of the Palfrey Community Association and a member of the partnership board. They also met with parents and talked to key partners, including those in early years settings, health, and adult education, either in person or on the telephone.

The inspectors attended activities taking place at the centre and also visited services at the Palfrey Community Centre.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including information about families in the area, the centre's evaluations of its strengths and weaknesses and plans for improvement, and policies and procedures related to the safeguarding of children.

**Inspection team**

Graham Lee, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Heather Hartmann	Additional inspector
Lesley Talbot Strettle	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Palfrey Sure Start Children's Centre is a large stand-alone centre in Walsall. The centre is managed by the Palfrey Community Association under contract to the local authority. A partnership board, made up of key partners, oversees the work of the centre and reports to the employers. The centre manager has been in post for many years and, until recently, also managed the nearby Chuckery and Paddock Children's Centre. A reorganisation by the local authority resulted in that centre closing in April 2015 and the area it served is now covered by Palfrey. The centre offers a wide range of services, in conjunction with key partners, to support children's early learning and development. It also provides parenting courses, adult learning and support and advice for parents. The centre works with some of its vulnerable families in their own homes. Services are delivered at the main site but also at a range of community venues, including five schools in the area, Palfrey Community Centre, Palfrey Health Centre, Palfrey Park Pavilion, Life Charity, St Luke's Church and Park Hall Playgroup.

The numbers of families served by the centre has grown significantly since April 2015 as a result of the reorganisation. There are currently estimated to be 2,852 children under five living in the centre's newly extended area. Around 80% of families are from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds and the centre serves an extremely diverse community in terms of faith and culture. Families of Pakistani and Indian origin are the largest groups. There is a significant community of Gujarati Muslims in the Indian population and increasing numbers of Eastern European families in the area. Some families seeking asylum are regularly moving in and out of the area. The centre serves a largely disadvantaged community. A relatively high proportion of young children live in families in receipt of benefits or where no adult is working. Children's skills and understanding on entry to early years education are generally well below those typical of their age.

The centre's largest priority group is its diverse Black and Minority Ethnic population. Other groups it has identified as needing particular support are the relatively few lone parents and children with disabilities and special educational needs.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

### Outstanding

- The centre knows its community extremely well. It works very effectively with its key partners to share knowledge of families in the area. It also uses 'live birth' information tenaciously to approach new parents. This ensures that almost all families with young children and those expecting babies in the area are registered for the centre's support and services.
- The centre uses a range of innovative approaches to establish and maintain contact with families. Centre staff speak most of the community languages in the area and are respectful of the cultural background of their families. This helps to break down barriers and establish the trust and confidence of families very quickly.
- The centre takes its services into a range of schools and community venues to ensure that parents have every chance of taking part in services at places that are convenient to them. The centre uses community events, text messaging, a variety of social media and a comprehensive website to keep parents abreast of what is going on and to encourage them to take part.
- Most families with young children are taking part in the centre's services. Participation is especially high for those from the wide range of Black and Minority Ethnic families because they feel that centre staff understand their particular needs.
- Almost all families of children with disabilities and special educational needs receive excellent support from the centre. Highly skilled staff work closely with partners to ensure that the needs of children are identified early and that the views of families are fully considered.
- The centre is very effective at identifying lone parents in the area, and all who declare themselves to be bringing up a child alone are engaged regularly with the centre and benefit from very helpful

support.

- The early help team works very productively with partners to meet the needs of its most vulnerable families by working with them in their own homes and encouraging them successfully to take part in the centre's activities on a sustained basis.
- Almost all the families entitled to free education funding for their two-year-olds are registered with the centre. The centre has helped the majority to take up places in good and outstanding early years settings. There has been a severe shortage of places in the area, however, which has prevented some from obtaining places. A significant number of additional places are being created for September, which will enable most families to secure places for their children.

### The quality of practice and services

### Outstanding

- The centre provides a range of high quality services at the centre and in the community to support all families with their children's early learning and development, as well as those families it has prioritised for particular support.
- Activities such as 'Peers Early Education Partnership' and 'Stay and Play' enable highly skilled staff to help parents support their children's early learning, language and communication highly effectively. These sessions are very well resourced and attended, and provide opportunities for staff to demonstrate constructive play and language development.
- The very detailed children's records, or 'Learning Journeys', show that children make very good progress, often from low starting points, in all areas for their learning. Whilst outcomes at the end of the Reception Year are below average in the area, tracking of children shows that those who have attended the centre do significantly better than others.
- The centre is also a leader of early years practice in the area and works effectively with early years providers and the special needs team. This contributes to the excellent quality of services in the area and provision that meets the needs of all families.
- The centre's highly successful partnerships with health provide an excellent range of services to promote children's health and well-being. There is a seamless transition for families expecting children from National Childbirth Trust classes to the baby clinics provided by the health visitors at the centre, with the support of the knowledgeable centre staff.
- There is considerable evidence of the long-term impact of the comprehensive range of parenting programmes, especially for priority families. In their evaluations, parents report improvements in areas such as establishing routines for their children and managing behaviour, as well as learning lifeskills such as first aid. Parents also report that these courses have helped them deal more effectively with issues such as drug abuse and domestic violence.
- The centre works with its partners to provide a good range of adult education leading to qualifications, such as functional English and mathematics, and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Parents stick with these courses well and the success rate is high. Evaluations show they have a considerable impact on the well-being of families and improve parents' chances of getting a job and improving the economic stability of their families.
- Over time, the centre has been very successful in training volunteers and finding placements for them in the community. A number have gone on to find employment as a result, some in the centre itself. It also contributes to the wider community by offering placements for students.
- The centre is held in high regard by families and is at the heart of the community. It provides excellent levels of care, guidance and support, and plays a key role in promoting the cohesion of the local community.

### The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

### Outstanding

- The centre leader and his senior team are well established and greatly respected by partners and parents. They know the community extremely well and have the highest aspirations for families in the area. They have ensured that high quality services have been maintained since the previous

inspection, particularly for the families that need them most.

- Leaders support and develop staff exceptionally well. As a result, staff are highly qualified, well trained and enthusiastically committed to the centre's priorities. They are supported extremely well through regular and detailed supervision with senior leaders.
- The centre has a clear view of its strengths and areas for development, which are being reviewed in the light of the recent extension of its area. This is translated into timely plans for improvement and effective checking of performance to ensure it remains of high quality.
- The local authority monitors the work of the centre over the time using an appropriate 'light touch' approach in view of its continued strong performance over time.
- The Palfrey Community Association has great confidence in the leaders and has supported the centre well over the years. However, due to unfortunate circumstances, the Association and its partnership board have not met regularly over the past year. Systems to assure themselves that the centre's work remains of a high standard, and that data show they are reaching the priority families, are not established well enough.
- Excellent partnerships with a range of official and voluntary partners are a strength of the centre's work. As a result, staff are able to ensure that the right support for families is provided when they need it most.
- A high priority for the centre is to ensure that children are safe at all times. All policies and procedures are in place and evident in the everyday life of the centre. Its work with children subject to child protection plans, those identified as being in need and those who are looked after is highly effective. It leads to considerable improvements for families over time and a reduction in the risk of harm to children.
- The centre makes excellent use of its resources. The centre is warm and welcoming, and provides high-quality resources to support its work. It also makes the best use of staff and takes services out into the community so that it is easier for parents to take part in them.

**What inspection judgements mean**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
Grade 1	Outstanding	Practice consistently reflects the highest aspirations for children and their families and, as a result, inequalities are reducing rapidly and gaps are closing.
Grade 2	Good	Practice enables most children and their families to access good quality services that improve children's wellbeing and achieve the stated outcomes for families.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	Performance is not as good as it might reasonably be expected to be in one or more key areas.
Grade 4	Inadequate	The needs of children and families in its area are not being met and/or the leaders and managers are not providing sufficient challenge to bring about improvement to the quality of services.

**Children's centre details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	22306
<b>Local authority</b>	Walsall
<b>Inspection number</b>	464709
<b>Managed by</b>	The Palfrey Community Association on behalf of the local authority
<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	2,852
<b>Centre leader</b>	Mick Davies
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	7–8 July 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01922 642382
<b>Email address</b>	team@surestartpalfrey.co.uk

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