

# Inspection report for Kingfisher Children's Centre

---

<b>Local authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	367822
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 February 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Clive Dunn

<b>Centre leader</b>	Sarah Adams
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Centre address</b>	Kingfisher Community Primary School Kingfisher Drive Walderslade Chatham ME5 7NX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 335850
<b>Fax number</b>	01634 869700
<b>Email address</b>	office@kingfisher.medway.sch.uk

<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Kingfisher Community Primary School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Abacus Children's Nursery EY331809

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.

---

**Report published:** March 2012



The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100080](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100080).

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

No.100080

© Crown copyright 2011



## 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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre leader, the headteacher of the linked school, representatives of the local authority, members of the centre's advisory board and the school's governing body, front-line staff, representatives of partner organisations including health, and families who use the centre.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Kingfisher Children's Centre is a phase two centre, designated in 2008. It operates from within Kingfisher Primary School, sharing a large reception area, but with its own dedicated accommodation including a family room, midwife's room, a small meeting room, outside area and an information point with internet access. The school's governing body manages the centre on behalf of the local authority. The headteacher has overall responsibility for the centre's strategic management, although the centre also has its own leader responsible for day-to-day organisation and management. An advisory board and parents' forum also contribute to the governance structure.

The centre serves a diverse catchment area. The locality includes areas that are among the 30% most deprived in the country, including above-average proportions of families in receipt of benefits and children living in households that are dependent on workless benefits, although due to the variation between wards, overall area-averages sometimes mask this. Most families in the area are of White British heritage. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills at levels much lower than typically expected for their age.

The centre is open from 8.00am to 6.00pm, Monday to Friday throughout the year, except for Bank Holidays. In addition, it opens one Saturday per month for sessions

for fathers, and for other occasional weekend activities. The centre offers services either directly or through signposting to other providers and links with partner agencies. Services include health and family advice and support, and children, adult and family learning. Jobcentre Plus provides information, including vacancy lists, for the centre and an adviser conducts interviews at another centre in the locality. A private provider manages the Abacus Nursery on site, which provides childcare and has links with the centre, but was not part of this inspection.

## 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

Kingfisher Children’s Centre meets the needs of families in the area it serves well. The reflective approach of leaders, their high expectations and detailed knowledge of the local context have helped establish the centre as an important part of the community. Families value highly the difference it makes to their lives. ‘I owe it all to the Children’s Centre’ was a comment made by one parent, a view representative of countless others.

Year-on-year, many more families have engaged with the centre. This rise in numbers has increasingly gained momentum so that now the majority of families in the reach area participate in activities. Thoughtful strategic decisions regarding service delivery, with a very clear rationale always established for starting or stopping a service, have helped fuel this rise. A shifting balance between universal and targeted services, grounded in careful analysis of families’ needs, has improved outcomes and secured the centre’s success in improving outcomes for target groups including lone parents, families from workless households and teenage mothers.

A significant strength of Kingfisher is its very effective promotion of children’s learning and development. A strong focus on priorities identified by the centre, including the development of children’s speech and language, results in children’s rapid progress. Careful tracking shows that children build effectively on these vital skills once they enter full-time education. Adults also achieve well in their educational and personal development, for example through well-structured volunteer and National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) programmes.

Centre leaders utilise the increasing amount of data provided by the local authority, in partnership with other agencies, as they becomes available. Although fully in place now, some data do not go back far enough to enable the centre to demonstrate its impact over time, for example in increasing rates of breastfeeding. The figures the centre has relating to breastfeeding are not fully reliable. The centre evaluates well how its services have improved the lives of families, including increasing the engagement of lone parents, teenage mothers, fathers, and children and parents with disabilities. Overall evaluations and improvement plans, however, do not always pinpoint any variation in the outcomes for each target group.

Nonetheless, the centre's self-evaluation is accurate, focuses on the impact of its services, and wherever possible uses measurable indicators to demonstrate this. Supported by effective governance, leaders have secured good-quality provision which meets the needs of the community well. All of this, together with sustained and improving trends in outcomes, reflects the centre's good capacity to continue this improvement into the future.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Use the good links that exist between the centre, health services and the local authority to ensure that data relating to breastfeeding are reliable and accurate.
- Refine the centre's good use of data to evaluate its services by pinpointing any variations in outcomes between target groups across each individual area.
- Use this analysis to sharpen and prioritise written plans for improvement.

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

<b>2</b>
----------

The centre's thorough evaluations of activities and services illustrate rapid gains in children's learning and development. This prepares children very effectively for school, enhanced through the Transition Project, which enables children to start full time immediately in Reception classes. Careful tracking shows that many children significantly narrow the gap from low starting points to age-appropriate levels by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The proportion reaching a good stage of development has moved from below the national average to above, with most recent figures at 63%. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest has reduced significantly and is now much narrower than the national average.

Opportunities for families to learn together support parents' development well. As one evaluation stated, 'Every time I visit there is an idea implemented which I take home.' The centre's focus on developing fathers' understanding of the importance of interaction and play has been very successful. A large majority of fathers engage with the centre, many through the very popular weekend Dads Days, effectively supporting their own development and enabling them to network among themselves.

Parents who attend specific courses, such as Toddler and Tantrum Toolkit and Triple P, the large majority of whom are from target groups, such as lone or teenage

parents, unanimously report improvements in areas such as parent-child relationships and effective behaviour management strategies. Progression rates for those who access the centre's NVQ programmes, delivered in partnership with an independent training company, are good. Well-attended swimming and first-aid courses not only enable parents to develop valuable skills, but also effectively increase their ability to keep themselves and their children safe.

Leaders recognise that the centre does not always follow up the outcomes when families are directed to other adult learning or job-seeking activities, including Jobcentre Plus, to evaluate fully the impact of this and ensure it has met the family's needs. That said, leaders are able to demonstrate that over a third of families using the centre are engaged in activities that promote their economic and social well-being. The majority of families identified as most in need of these activities access them, particularly those from workless households, which develops their personal or social skills and confidence, as well as job application and interview skills.

A large majority of families in the area engage well with health services. Immunisation rates are above average and dental health indicators at age five are better than typically seen. The data the centre receives about breastfeeding contain some anomalies; for example, the percentages of mothers who sustain breastfeeding at six to eight weeks are sometimes higher than initiation figures. Evidence clearly demonstrates the centre's positive impact on increasing rates, with 80% of attendees reporting sessions had either helped them to start or sustain breastfeeding. 'Bosom Buddies has been a great sense of support to me', was how one parent put it, reflective of other plentiful and extremely positive feedback, including the valued contribution of volunteer breastfeeding supporters.

Activities which promote healthy living are popular and influence parents' attitudes and habits well. 'The centre provides healthy snacks for my child, which when I see her eat them makes it easier for me to choose healthy snacks at home', was how one parent put it. This is reflective of the large majority who report a greater awareness about their child's health and feel more confident about making their home healthier as a result. Obesity rates in the reach area are falling and are now close to average.

Trained staff are proactive in the use of Common Assessment Framework procedures where they identify more complex issues that require involvement of other professionals to secure improvements in children's well-being. The centre contributes well to integrated packages of support for looked after children or those subject to child protection plans. Thorough record keeping demonstrates improvements in the lives of these children, for example improved emotional well-being, better hygiene or safer living conditions, with a good level of impact in the majority of cases. Centre evaluations show that a rising proportion of families identified as most in need of support show greater awareness of how to ensure the safety of their families.

Families respond positively to the centre's high expectations and conduct themselves well. Most readily express their overwhelmingly positive views and are confident to

make suggestions. The centre warmly encourages this through a good variety of formal and informal methods, ranging from involvement in the governance of the centre to the Kingfisher Facebook page. Clear progression of opportunities in the well-organised volunteering programme supports parents' personal development well.

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>2</b>

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

**2**

Families place a high value on the personalised care they receive from the centre, with much-repeated comments, for example, 'My family and I would be lost without these services.' Families see the centre as a safe haven to turn to in times of crisis and feel confident in the effective support they receive when they do. In a letter to inspectors, one parent wrote of a staff member, 'One lady I shall never be able to thank enough, due to doing one thing that no-one in my life ever has, and that is listen.'

The good range of guidance and support for families accessing universal services has a positive impact. For example, advice around the sugar content of different foods and good teeth-cleaning habits, progressing to support with teeth cleaning when required, or the timely information regarding childhood immunisations, are having a good impact on raising families' awareness and improving their health. Close partnership working with health enables the centre to target families that have not been immunised, thus increasing rates.

On-site midwifery services assist the centre's good outreach to prospective mothers, including pregnant teenagers. Since it opened, one baby was actually born in the centre, though data about live births in the area only started to arrive at the centre in the week of the inspection. Leaders are rightly keen to use these data to target their outreach to families not currently engaged, further enhancing already good and improving participation rates. These are being steadily increased because the centre

provides services that meet the needs of different target groups well.

Surveys of participants show that well-structured parenting programmes enable parents, including lone parents, fathers and teenage parents, to develop their skills well. Individual programmes of work are negotiated well with adult learners, particularly those engaged with the NVQ or volunteer programmes. The centre values families' varied achievements highly, awarding and presenting certificates where appropriate.

A carefully planned combination of high-quality universal and targeted services contributes to children's learning and development exceptionally well. A highly successful two-year-old pilot project, working in partnership with Abacus Nursery to provide funded provision alongside additional targeted support, led to exceptional progress, often enabling children to reach age-related expectations from low starting points. A clear focus on speech and language development, identified as a priority in partnership with the school, has also had a significant impact. With effective support from a speech and language therapist, who leads some therapy sessions directly, the centre has enabled staff to improve the effectiveness of this provision in other activities.

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**

Clear and well-understood governance structures support the work of the centre well. The good level of challenge, which both the advisory board and governing body bring to centre leaders, combines well with their own high expectations to drive a good pace of improvement. Staff and leaders at different levels are ambitious and committed, though partners and frontline staff are not always completely clear about current specific priorities. This is partly because the centre's written plans cover all aspects of its work and do not highlight clearly the most important key priorities leaders have identified.

Families contribute well to the governance of the centre. For example, the advisory board includes parent representatives and has a parent chairperson. The parents' forum strikes an effective balance between giving parents opportunities to make requests and operating more strategically through exploring issues or finding solutions to questions or problems posed by the centre. Beyond this, the majority of families are involved in shaping and evaluating services through contributing to the



regular surveys as well as the more informal feedback written on post-it notes, which parents are encouraged to leave at the end of activities. Families' satisfaction levels with the centre's provision are high.

Leaders manage resources, including time, accommodation, and practical and human resources, in a considered manner to ensure families' needs are well met. They evaluate the impact of different activities and their value for money in terms of the difference they make to families' health, safety, learning and development and this correctly influences decisions about service delivery. Leaders recognise effective partnership working as vital to the centre's continued sustainability and are very proactive in building these links. 'The centre leader is very supportive – we work together', was how one partner put it, a view repeatedly expressed by others.

The centre promotes equality of opportunity well. The centre is successfully making a difference to the lives of families in its target groups, including those identified as most in need of support. For example, it successfully includes both disabled children and/or those with additional needs, as well as disabled parents, enabling them to benefit from its services. Clear procedures exist for tackling discrimination but there have been no recorded incidents.

In the reception area, a prominently displayed safeguarding statement reflects the priority given to the centre's good systems to protect families. Comprehensive records of background checks relating to staff and volunteers are kept in a single central register and safer-recruitment procedures are followed meticulously. Thorough record keeping relating to the safeguarding of individuals illustrates the centre's proactive approach to working with other agencies to protect children, including through common assessment and child protection procedures. Vital support for victims of domestic violence is available and well used, including through the Freedom Programme.

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

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance, *Complaining about inspections*, which is available from our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Kingfisher Children’s Centre on 15–16 February 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

During the inspection, we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre’s plans and documents, and talked with staff, the local authority, representatives of the centre’s partners, members of the advisory board and some of you.

You told us that you value highly the good-quality care, guidance and support the centre gives you. You appreciate the warm, friendly welcome from staff for you and your children when you attend. We heard and read many stories from you and the staff about how much the centre has made a difference to your lives.

We were particularly pleased to see how well the centre promotes your children’s development. A good variety of activities prepares them exceptionally well for school. Your involvement in these sessions also helps you to understand more about how your children are developing and how you can help with this at home. Dads should feel proud of their involvement in this – we were impressed to see how well attended Dads Days are. It was also good to hear how much some of you have benefited from courses like Toddler and Tantrum Toolkit and Triple P. Many of you are also doing very well with the volunteering and NVQ programmes.

Together with the centre, you are improving the health of your families well. Childhood immunisation rates are good and you are successfully making sure your children’s teeth stay healthy, helping to get them into good habits. Lots of you said how much the centre supports you in adopting healthy eating habits, which helps to make sure that your children are at a healthy weight as they start school. The centre safeguards you well and helps many of you to protect your families better, including through the swimming and first-aid courses.

It was very encouraging to see that most of you feel confident to tell the centre your views and make requests about things you would like the centre to do. This is very important because it helps the centre to make sure it is meeting your needs. We were impressed that a parent chairs the centre's advisory board, where lots of the partner organisations and agencies which work with the centre meet together. Of course, the centre cannot provide everything itself and so it works really well with other organisations to make sure it can offer you a good range of services. The parents' forum is also doing a good job.

Those responsible for running the centre and all of the staff are keen to keep making the centre even better for you. When we visited, we agreed together what the right next steps for the centre are. Most importantly, we have asked the centre to make better use of information about how the lives of families in the area are changing and improving to identify precisely what difference the centre is making. This will help it to make services even better for you. Part of this is to make sure that the data are accurate, particularly the numbers of mums who are breastfeeding.

Your views were an important part of our inspection. Thank you to each of you who spared the time to speak to us and share your thoughts and feedback – we really valued your contributions. We hope you will continue to support the centre.

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