

Inspection report for Kingsthorpe Children's Centre

Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	383459
Inspection dates	29 February – 1 March 2012
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Centre leader	Jane Serbyn
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Kingsthorpe Grove Primary School URN 121943
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

The inspection of this Sure Start children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

An inspection of the co-located/partner primary school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation. The inspectors held meetings with the acting head of the children's centre, two family support workers, a health visitor, an educational psychologist, several groups of parents and carers, the Chair of the Governance Board and a representative of the local authority.

Information about the centre

Kingsthorpe Children's Centre is situated in a mixed neighbourhood with areas of significant disadvantage. This centre covers urban areas, attracting a diverse range of families to it. The majority of the families who live in the surrounding area are from White British backgrounds. A significant proportion of families are from minority ethnic groups, with a considerable number from Asian, African, Western and Eastern European families. A few users are at the early stages of learning to speak English. The area around the centre has considerable levels of unemployment, families in receipt of benefits and workless households.

The centre was designated in the March 2008 and opened in April of the same year. Since then, it has operated as an integrated centre from five sites in the local area. In partnership with Kingsthorpe Grove Primary and Greenoaks Primary, The Good Shepherd Catholic Primary and All Saints CE VA Primary School, it is able to meet its core purpose because it provides health services, early education and family support. Most children enter early years provision with skills that are lower than those expected for their age.

The centre is led by the deputy headteacher of Kingsthorpe Grove Primary School and she is supported by the centre teacher who is part of the senior leadership team. A governance board manages the centre and it reports to Kingsthorpe Grove Primary School governing body and Northampton Local Authority. It includes representatives from Kingsthorpe Grove Primary School, a local school, parents and staff from the centre.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

Kingsthorpe Children's Centre provides satisfactorily for children and families. Parents, carers and children are welcomed successfully because staff involve them quickly in centre activities. Resources are used thoughtfully and so a sound range of services is available. Users value the sessions where, for example, children learn to socialise as well as sing rhymes as a group. Occasionally, one or two users from different backgrounds are not encouraged regularly into the centre. This is because they are not routinely surveyed to find out their needs.

A considerable strength is the care which dedicated staff offer all users who come to the centre. This is because strong relationships have been built up between centre staff and users. Parents really appreciate the way that their personal needs are met through individualised support from staff. For example, one parent commented, 'I would recommend the centre because staff give good advice and you can ask them anything.' Parents are kept safe successfully at the centre and they say it is a secure place to bring their children. This is because safeguarding is given a high priority.

The centre places a clear emphasis on learning through practical activities. Parents and children take part effectively in 'Stay and Play' sessions where they learn to communicate successfully. Occasionally, children's next steps targets are not created with parents' involvement. This means parents are not totally clear about how to help their children develop key skills. Baby sessions allow children to investigate different materials using their senses, such as when they play with shredded paper. Children behave well at the centre because staff guide parents thoughtfully. Good partnerships between staff and other agencies mean that users receive useful levels

of guidance. Healthy lifestyles are adopted satisfactorily and users' well-being is supported considerably because of staff expertise.

The centre manager, centre teacher and governance body have a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and areas of development for the centre. A new, strong senior leadership team is working thoughtfully with dedicated staff to use self-evaluation to steer improvements. Recent developments include the provision of outdoor learning in a local woodland area. The centre has created a suitable development plan to improve outcomes for users but it does not always measure its impact in detail over time. For example, the recording of children's and adult users' achievements is not always rigorous. This means that occasionally it is not easy to track the amount of progress that they make while attending the centre. Sound provision and outcomes, together with effective developments demonstrate the centre's satisfactory capacity for continued improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Make sure that an annual survey is used more successfully to establish all users' needs so that a wider range of target groups are encouraged to attend the centre.
- Ensure that adult users' successes and children's achievements are recorded in detail from their starting points so that the impact of the centre can be evaluated more rigorously.
- Develop the use of targets for children's next steps, making sure that parents are involved in their creation.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Children like to come to the centre and so they achieve satisfactorily. They enjoy learning because they are involved effectively by many practical activities. For instance, they and their parents learn how to make pizzas adding savoury toppings successfully because of the good use of staff know-how in cookery. Children's basic skills in language development are promoted well by staff. This means that they are prepared suitably to start school. Their physical development improves effectively due to high expectations of staff and use of the outside area. However, children's progress in key areas of learning is not tracked consistently over the time while they attend the children's centre and so the centre does not rigorously record their achievement.

Users feel relaxed at the centre because of the calm and friendly relationships established between them and the staff. A few adult users contribute their views effectively through the parent forum, and extra courses have been put on because of

their ideas. Some parents gained employment after completing further training at the centre. This is because they developed their skills to prepare them for work effectively. Sessions run by knowledgeable staff help parents to manage their finances and get out of debt more efficiently. The centre does not consistently collect information over several years about training completed by adult users where they gain extra qualifications, for example, in information and communication technology, literacy and numeracy. This means that the centre does not record sufficient data to judge impact on adult users' achievement.

Healthy lifestyles are promoted satisfactorily through a variety of methods; for example, many babies' gains in weight are watched rigorously at clinics held regularly at the centre by health specialists. Some users learn successfully about the importance of breastfeeding because of specialist input and staff awareness. In this area, the proportion of young children who are breast-fed for six to eight weeks is average. Obesity levels in children in Reception Year of school are above the local average. However, the centre has started to run 'Fun and Fitness' and 'Boogie Babies' sessions to address this issue.

The centre leaders and all staff place a great deal of importance on users' safety, including those who are most vulnerable. As a result of high levels of devotion among staff, users' welfare inside and outside the centre is promoted carefully. A considerable number of fathers have completed first aid courses at the centre. Reasonable numbers of children, including those who are looked after, are supported through the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) because the centre works well, in partnership with other agencies. This has led to a few CAFs being removed.

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	3
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	3
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	3

How good is the provision?

3

The centre understands its users' needs satisfactorily due to staff's local knowledge. It provides a sound range of in-house and outreach services and activities, matched

to the needs of users. Some adult users and children special educational needs and/or disabilities work with the centre regularly due to the positive attitudes of all staff. A 'Dad's Football Club' ensures that working parents and carers can enjoy active sessions, during the evenings, at the centre with their children. However, the centre does not fully engage with all its users and target groups. Occasionally, a few families from minority ethnic backgrounds are not encouraged successfully enough to work with the centre.

Over the last three years many parents and carers have completed courses to help those who speak English as an additional language due to effective partnerships with providers. The toy library allows users who speak any language to borrow suitable materials and so learning activities are promoted thoughtfully. 'Stay and Play' sessions allow children to satisfactorily explore a variety of materials in well-equipped indoor areas. 'Tiny Time' baby stay and play sessions allow younger children and babies to learn to socialise successfully with others. Occasionally, not all staff use national guidance of children's developmental stages fully to record the next steps for individual children who attend the centre. One or two parents said they would like to be involved more in setting targets with the staff for their children.

All parents who spoke to the inspectors were grateful for the centre and said it is having a positive impact on their families. For example, one parent explained: 'I do not know what I would have done if I had not had the centre.' Through the 'Twice as Nice' group, users who have twins find it valuable to be able to socialise and seek advice easily from staff. Those who have experienced domestic abuse have thoughtful support from the centre. A recent session on dental health meant that a health expert could provide users with guidance on how to reduce tooth decay.

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	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

A new senior leadership team has been operational for nine months. It has established a productive team with a shared commitment to improve the centre's impact on families in the community. Satisfactory leadership and management with effective provision and sound outcomes for users mean value for money is satisfactory. Resources and services are used appropriately. However, not all users' views are sought in detail through an annual survey and so they do not influence service provision for specific groups. Governance and accountability arrangements are satisfactory. Self-evaluation is used suitably by the centre to create an

improvement plan but not all targets are specific and measurable. This means that centre leaders do not always gather evidence fully to show what impact it has on users.

Partnership working is a significant strength of the centre's work and is good. For example, some members of staff and adult users have received assistance from an educational psychologist due to strong partnerships with health experts. This means that the numbers of users who report they have improved their behaviour management skills has increased significantly. Multi-agency working is constructive and partners carefully identify those families and children who are at considerable risk. Information is shared intelligently because training ensures staff utilise systems diligently to help users, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Parents and carers can find out about all the different opportunities for early education and schools through strong partnerships with providers in the area. Childminders' planning and assessments are carefully developed because of good support from the centre teacher.

The centre's child protection policy and safeguarding arrangements are good. All staff have been trained at the appropriate level in child protection procedures. Many staff have first aid qualifications to assist children in the early years. The centre is clean, and health and safety issues are dealt with efficiently, although, users are not regularly involved in discussing and recording risk assessments before they go out on trips. The centre keeps detailed records about staff which contain valuable information on, for example, their references from previous employers. Records indicate that all staff working at the centre have been subject to an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check.

The centre promotes equality and diversity and tackles discrimination satisfactorily. It thoughtfully develops children's and parents' awareness of their fascinating community. Special sessions mean that users learn about different cultures effectively; for example, recently they learnt about African drumming because of imaginative use of resources. This means that adult and younger users learn successfully to respect each others' backgrounds and lifestyles.

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	3
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	3
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	3

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	3

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

The inspectors took into account the inspection findings for the linked provision at Kingsthorpe Grove Primary School which took place at the same time as the children's centre inspection. The inspection judged provision and outcomes for the Early Years Foundation Stage as satisfactory.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Kingsthorpe Children's Centre on 29 February – 1 March 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you for helping us to find out about your children's centre. We enjoyed having the opportunity of talking to so many of you.

You told us that you and your children really value the centre. You said the staff are approachable and that they form positive relationships with you. We heard that you like the music and baby massage sessions where your children can explore all sorts of materials and activities, as well as learn how to socialise effectively. You all like trying healthy activities, such as football, cricket and bouncy castle sessions during the school holidays because staff are suitably trained to provide enjoyable activities.

Your children make sound progress in their learning and behave well at the centre. This helps to prepare your children suitably for the next stage of their education. 'Messy Stay and Play' sessions are thoughtfully resourced and so, for example, your children learn to paint and work with malleable materials effectively. You learn productively about the benefits of managing behaviour calmly due to well informed staff who give you useful information and advice.

You told us that you and your children are cared for well by staff and the inspection evidence confirms your view. Several of you told us how staff guide you thoughtfully

when you ask for advice on a wide range of topics, such as breastfeeding. The staff work closely with other agencies to make sure that you make contact with the best source of help and support. The centre works well with other health and educational providers in the area and so that you receive good levels of guidance for your own and your family's lives.

The centre welcomes people from all backgrounds and treats everyone suitably equally and fairly. Your centre leaders and staff have thoughtful ideas about ways to improve the centre but it does not always get all of you to complete an annual survey. We have asked the centre to conduct an annual survey so that it understands what all of you like and dislike, and then use the information to encourage even more of your community to come to the centre regularly.

We have asked the centre manager and senior staff to look at how they can make things even better. One of our recommendations is for staff to record your achievements and those of your children even more carefully than they do now. In this way, the centre can show how effective it has been in supporting you and your families. You told us you would like to be more involved in deciding the next steps that your child can work towards so we have asked the centre to do this.

It was a pleasure to meet you and your children. We hope that you continue to enjoy your time at Kingsthorpe Children's Centre.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.