

Inspection report for Kingswood Neighbourhood Centre

Local authority	Northamptonshire
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
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.

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

The inspectors held meetings with staff, parents, community, health, education and social partners, volunteers and representatives from the trustee board and local authority.

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

Information about the centre

Kingswood Children's Centre is a phase two children's centre. It fulfils full core purpose by commissioning services for education; health and family support take place on site, in local venues and in the home. Of the nine super output areas in the reach area, three are within the 30% most deprived areas in the country with the remaining six being within the 70% most deprived areas. Most families are from White British backgrounds. Just under 20% are from Black or minority ethnic backgrounds. Most newcomers are Eastern Europeans. An estimated 927 children aged four and under live in the reach area. The social and economic position of families is mixed. About 37% children under five live in families that are dependent on workless benefits. Approximately 29% live with a single parent. The proportion of disabled children and those with special educational needs, or children who live with disabled parents is average. The proportion of teenage mothers and pregnant teenagers living in the reach area is high. About 455 fathers live in the reach area. Childcare is provided through childminders and Rhymetime private nursery.

Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are well below age-related expectations. The local authority has delegated the management of the centre to the adjacent Linwood Neighbourhood Centre who has delegated management to a trustee board and a partnership board comprising parents, partners and voluntary representatives.

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

Kingswood Children's Centre is satisfactory. Outcomes for children and families are satisfactory but improving. The centre is responding to the needs of the reach area in a more targeted way since specific data about the reach area have become available in the last year. Users enjoy a satisfactory range of services and groups. Services to promote healthy lifestyles are satisfactory but are only just starting to reduce the levels of obesity in Reception aged children and increase the proportion of mothers still breastfeeding at six to eight weeks. Children behave well because they are so engaged in activities. The centre staff make users feel welcome and so parents know that their views will be listened to and their suggestions taken on board when possible. The positive atmosphere gives them confidence to ask for help if they need it. Good support from Jobcentre services and the local college is helping a good number of teenage mothers, lone parents and those who are unemployed access training to support their return to work. A crèche cares for and gives their children positive learning experiences while they attend. Good support from the Citizens Advice Bureau has helped ensure that families receive the benefits to which they are entitled.

There is satisfactory capacity to improve. On her appointment two years ago, the centre manager quickly established a database to log information about the centre's work and gain an accurate view of its effectiveness. The information has been used since then to plan services and activities in a targeted way. The needs of all families who have asked for or been referred to the centre for specific support are met well. The centre manager has started to look at who is and is not attending groups and activities to evaluate whether the needs of all target groups living in the wider reach area are being met as well as they should. For example, few fathers of the 21.5% who are registered and only half of registered families living on workless benefits access the centre activities regularly. Improvement priorities are relevant and action plans focused, but do not include challenging targets that have measures against which the centre can evaluate effectiveness and monitor its success.

The children's centre teacher gives good support to local childminders, nurseries and

schools to improve children's communication skills. Schools report that children who have accessed the centre's groups and services are starting nursery with increased independence. These children are starting to make good progress in their personal development and communication skills. Many children who live in the reach area still start school below the levels expected for their age in these areas. An above average proportion do not take up their free nursery place at the age of three.

The local authority and board of trustees meet regularly to discuss the centre's effectiveness. First-hand data about outcomes for users have not been readily available until recently to help members ask the centre and its partners challenging questions about their work and to hold them to account.

Good promotion of equal opportunities ensures the most vulnerable families receive the services they need to improve their own and their children's well-being. Children with special educational needs and/or long term illnesses are supported well. A minibus is available to help anyone who needs transport to attend important appointments and centre and outreach groups. Good care, guidance and support are given to families experiencing change, challenge and difficulties in their lives. Assessments under the Common Assessment Framework ensure support from family support workers meet their specific needs well. Individual support in the home builds positive relationships and gives parents and their children the confidence to join in with groups and activities at the centre.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work closely with health partners to improve outcomes for families' health.
- Develop the analysis of attendance data to identify who is not engaging with the centre's activities and encourage greater engagement of groups across the wider community, including fathers and families dependent on benefits.
- Analyse the data rigorously to identify challenging and quantifiable improvement targets to evaluate effectiveness and measure success.
- Increase the challenge and support from the local authority and trustee board to ensure that the work of the centre's partners is as effective as possible.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Those parents who attend regular cooking activities use the recipes and menus to cook nutritious meals at home. Although above average, the rates of obesity among young children are falling. Despite a six-weekly visit by a dental hygienist, a higher proportion of children than average have dental cavities. The proportion of mothers initiating and sustaining breastfeeding and the higher-than-average rate of smoking remain areas of focus for the centre.

The good support given to families from the family support workers and staff ensure that few children become subject to a child protection plan more than once. Mothers

who suffer from postnatal depression receive good support to help them manage their feelings and improve their self-esteem. There was a 30% increase last year in the number of families who received stair gates and fireguards. Users feel safe in the centre.

Children who attend the centre's activities make good progress in their speaking skills and start school more confident speakers than those who do not. The proportion of children in the Reception class who reach 78 points on the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile with six points in personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy has risen over the last two years due partially to targeted support from the centre's services. The gap between the lowest 20% and the rest is closing faster than the national rate. Over the last two years, 35 adults have completed a level 1 or 2 English and/or mathematics course.

Users make a good contribution to the centre and local community. Staff are always present at groups to answer questions and to listen to views and concerns. 'Centre Matters' held every two weeks gives those who use the centre good opportunity to share their views and to give staff feedback about groups and activities. As a result, users have a clear voice in the centre's evaluation and its decision making. They are represented on the trustee and partnership boards to give them a formal voice. Comments posted on the board in the entrance reflect users' confidence in expressing their views. As a result of increasing attendance and positive relationships, the number of users who volunteer in the centre and local community is growing.

Users' economic well-being is good. The proportion of teenage and young mothers who attend some kind of training or education course is high; 70% are in employment, education and training through groups and services held at Exeter Children's Centre. A good number of adults who speak English as an additional language attend courses to help them improve their English. Bilingual staff and the ability to access information in their home language ensure they receive clear guidance about local services and their own and their children's education.

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	3
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	2
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How good is the provision?

3

Outreach services and groups and activities that take place at the centre are satisfactory. The recently started 'MEND' and 'The Great Outdoors' groups give users who attend good opportunity to learn about healthy diets and how to lead active lives. Groups to promote improved family health are not yet resulting in long-term improvements. Activities held in the centre, nurseries and schools promote a consistent approach to developing children's early speaking skills and vocabulary. Children in Reception classes in three of the four local primary schools enjoy learning and having fun together in messy play sessions held in the centre and in their schools. 'I never heard him talk so much and show so much confidence,' one teacher wrote in a child's learning journey. Childminders are involved in training this year to support the children in their care. Most activities are fun and result in good engagement from the children and their adult carers who take part. Staff model positive behaviour management well in groups. Formal parenting skills courses are not held to support those who need more help in a targeted way.

Staff meet regularly to discuss children's progress and to plan resources and activities for messy play, water play, crèche and outdoor activities that build on previous learning satisfactorily. Before starting crèche, children are visited at home to assess their starting points and to plan for their needs. A 'PLOD' (Possible Lines of Development) plan developed with parents initially is put into place to monitor progress. Links to each area of learning are made, although not always in a focused enough way to inform staff how to target their interactions with children in all groups. Family support workers have been trained to complete assessments under the Common Assessment Framework. Subsequent assessments are detailed and relevant to the needs of individual families receiving support.

Support and guidance to promote healthy lifestyles are satisfactory but they are not yet having the desired long-term positive impact. Parents receive good advice about weaning and receive bottle-to-cup advice when attending clinics to have their babies weighed. In some groups, parents receive good advice about how to support their children's learning and development so that they can continue the support at home. For example, in baby massage, they are told how different positions can strengthen different muscles. In 'Rhymetime' and 'Look Who's Talking' activities, held as outreach and at the centre, parents receive clear support and guidance about how to improve their children's communication. In others, staff do not always explain how parents can encourage their children to talk about what they are doing and why.

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	3

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

The data which the centre manager has compiled have been used to inform changes to the services and activities the centre runs. There is a good balance this year of services and groups that meet the specific needs of targeted children and their families and those that are open to all users. Until this year, there were gaps in the information made available from all partners and so it has been difficult for the centre to set challenging and quantifiable targets against which to evaluate effectiveness and to measure success. The omission of some data in the past has limited its ability to measure success against outcomes for all users.

Inclusion is at the heart of the centre's vision and diversity is embraced. As a result, all families are welcomed into the centre and services and groups adjusted to meet their needs. All users get on well together. Plans are in place for bilingual staff to go into local schools to help staff assess the starting points of children who speak English as an additional language. The centre goes out of its way to support families experiencing change, challenges and difficulties in their lives, ensuring that they can get to appointments or giving respite support in the home or at the centre.

The children's centre promotes itself at numerous local venues and events including parents' evenings at local primary schools. Partners promote and support the centre's activities and services but their close working with centre staff is yet to result in long-term improvements to outcomes for all users. The centre gives satisfactory value for money. Attendance at groups does not reflect the centre's high registration for some groups. For example, a good number of fathers attend Family Days with their partners and many are present when family support workers make home visits but few attend other groups and activities.

Governance is satisfactory. Partners report to the trustee board via the centre manager following partnership meetings. The local authority attends to ensure secure monitoring procedures.

Safeguarding is satisfactory. Suitability checks for all staff and volunteers are completed. All staff have received relevant training. Some procedures have not always been monitored regularly enough to ensure consistent implementation. Daily checks ensure users' safety while at the centre and risks are assessed for all offsite

visits. Users are told what to do in an emergency when attending the centre's activities. The centre has not received from its landlord via the trustee board until recently important paperwork about health and safety checks to help it monitor for itself the quality, relevance and effectiveness of procedures.

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	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	3
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	3
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

No other information was used to inform judgements made during the inspection.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Kingswood Neighbourhood Centre on 6–7 March 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you for telling us about your own and your children's experiences at the centre. It is clear that you and your children feel welcome and that you enjoy the activities offered. You told us that you and your children particularly enjoy

'Rhymetime', and messy play both inside and outdoors and that you value being able to attend baby clinics and appointments with Citizens Advice Bureau and Jobcentre services at the centre. Having staff available to talk to during all of the group times gives you good opportunity to ask questions about your children's development and to talk about any concerns. You also have a good opportunity to give your ideas and views about the sort of groups you would like the centre to hold. It always responds positively when it can.

The centre manager has made a good start in identifying what the centre does well and what it needs to improve next and has a clear plan about how to do this. The centre provides a satisfactory range of activities for you and your children to enjoy. Outcomes for you and your children are satisfactory. You receive clear guidance about feeding your families. Although levels of childhood obesity are above average in the reach area, all babies and children who access the centre are at or are working towards a healthy weight. Fewer mothers than average breastfeed their babies. While there has been some success to discourage smoking, especially during pregnancy, the number of smokers remains above average.

Procedures ensure your and your children's safety when at the centre. You all know how to keep yourselves and your children safe when out and about and when at home. Many of you attend training to give you the skills necessary for getting back to work if you choose. Good services are available to give you advice about employment and to help you receive the benefits to which you are entitled. Records indicate that groups such as 'Baby Rhymetime' and 'Look Who's Talking' and the good support given to nurseries and schools are helping your children to start to make good progress in their talking skills. However, many children who live in the area do not reach the levels expected for their age in their communication skills when they start in nursery. Those of you who are experiencing change, challenges and difficulties in your lives receive good support to help you get back on your feet.

We have asked the centre to work closely with health partners to support you all to lead healthy lifestyles. We have asked it to analyse attendance to evaluate whether the centre is reaching everyone who would benefit from the centre's activities and services. To support the centre in monitoring how well it is doing, we have asked it to set challenging improvement targets to measure the difference activities and services are making to you and your children's outcomes. We have asked the local authority and trustee board to use the data to support and challenge its partners to explain why they are or are not being successful.

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