

Inspection report for Skegness Children's Centre

Local authority	Lincolnshire
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Skegness Infant School
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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, the deputy designated lead for safeguarding, centre staff, one headteacher of a local school, parents, key partners and National Health Service staff. They observed the centre's work and looked at activity sessions taking place at the centre and in one service user's home. They also examined a range of document and records, including the centre's development plan, policy documents, service user's evaluations of sessions, data reports and the centres safeguarding arrangements.

Information about the centre

Skegness Children's Centre is a phase one centre, established in 2006 and located on the site of the Skegness Infants School. The centre serves the political wards of St Clements, Scarbrough, Seacroft and Winthorpe along the east coast of Lincolnshire. The area has high numbers of families claiming income support and a range of other benefits. The main social issues affecting the area are unemployment, poor housing, very limited public transport and a large transient population. Health issues affecting the area include teenage pregnancy, childhood obesity and domestic violence. The proportion of the population with formal qualifications above level 2 is lower than the national average.

The population within the centre's reach area has changed significantly since the centre opened, as it has across all of the county of Lincolnshire. The local population is largely of White British heritage with a rising percentage of families from minority ethnic groups. An increasing number of families from European Economic Community countries have moved into the area, particularly from Eastern Europe.

The reach area comprises private housing, social housing and some rural areas. Much work is seasonal and related to leisure and tourism or agriculture. Many families have complex social needs which make them vulnerable. Accommodation is often linked to employment and many families live in mobile homes.

Family support and childcare are offered at the centre. Health visitors now run regular clinics from within the centre. At their entry to the early years provision the majority of children have social and development skills slightly lower than expected for their age. The centre offers a wide variety of groups and activities on site. At the time of the inspection 81% of families with children under five years of age in the reach area are registered with the centre.

A range of professionals are represented on the advisory board, including centre staff, a local headteacher, health professionals and representatives of the local council and charities.

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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

This outstanding children's centre provides high quality services, very effectively aimed at families who are vulnerable due to their circumstances. Teenage parents, lone parents, families experiencing domestic abuse and parents of children with disabilities or special educational needs receive excellent care, guidance and support. The centre has established high levels of mutual trust and respect and provides seamless working with multi agency partners across all services for children and adults. As a result, outcomes for children and families are improving and in many cases are better than those in other areas of the county.

The management, staff and governors of the centre have high ambitions for the local population and set very high service standards. They are well qualified and very experienced. They are well respected by their peers and are frequently asked to identify and share aspects of best practice. All staff understand the needs and interests of their community. This enables them to improve life chances by providing excellent access to the range of outstanding services.

Safeguarding arrangements are excellent. The centre meets and exceeds current government requirements. In addition, all staff have access to high quality training and make good use of their easy access to highly trained and experienced advanced

safeguarding practitioners. Exemplary working with partner agencies provides efficient and highly effective coordination to support vulnerable children and families. As a result, families feel very safe and well protected.

The centre embraces and celebrates equality and the growing diversity within the local area. The work of the centre is very well designed to be inclusive and attractive to the increasingly multi-cultural society of the area. Speakers of English as an additional language are very well supported. Many adults who have significant barriers to education and employment are very effectively supported into taking up learning opportunities and improving their employability. As a result, they are significantly improving their children's attitudes to learning and the world of work.

The availability, quality, sharing and use of resources are outstanding. One parent stated that 'the crèche is excellent and vital to my attendance'. Excellent use is made of the centre by partners to bring additional health services to families in the area. A partner observed 'the provision of Health Visitor clinics in the centre is very convenient for parents and lets them plan their time well'. Excellent use is made of the training room to host well-attended family learning sessions and parenting skills training. Staff knowledge and expertise is well shared through the excellent partnership working.

The centre has demonstrated improvements leading to considerably improved outcomes relative to parental and child starting points. The centre has an excellent capacity to further improve. It knows its strengths well and bases its improvements on very sound assessment and evaluation. The centre is highly responsive to comments from its users and partner organisations. The current advisory board broadly represents the profile of the local population. However, some members' attendance is erratic and the membership of parents of children with disabilities and those from minority ethnic heritages is insufficient. The centre also recognises that it needs to analyse further the available data and information that it collects and is already making improvements to more accurately compare its provision against local and national performance measures and set demanding targets for planned service improvements.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the accuracy of completed registrations and the collection of published data in order that the work of the centre can be monitored even more accurately and further improved through more precise target setting.
- Further improve the membership of the advisory board to ensure that all groups within the changing local population can contribute to the planning and monitoring of the planned services.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

Children in school reception classes are making outstanding progress. Those that have benefitted from the work of the centre are achieving higher points scores than those that have not. The scores are higher than the county average, particularly in

their Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED). Children benefit from excellent assessment practices, which are well recorded in their high quality family books. Activities are closely planned to meet the support needs of the children and their families. The outstanding advice, guidance and opportunities for children and their parents to play together help parents to develop a very good understanding of their children's development. Parents agree that 'the range of group activities is good because they help children and parents to socialise'.

Users of the centre are improving their health and key indicators for health in the area are improving from their very low start point. In some cases these are now better than the county averages. Child obesity rates at reception year have halved in the last year, although this remains above the county average. Sustained breast feeding rates have also increased significantly. All families are contacted at birth and the centre is used well by specialist practitioners in order to provide immediate and easily accessible health services.

The arrangements for families to stay safe are outstanding and very well promoted. The highly skilled family and parenting support ensures that potential harm or injury to children is minimised particularly within families who are considered most vulnerable. Centre staff have an excellent understanding of the Common Assessment Framework. Especially close and efficient working with partner agencies ensures a well-coordinated approach to meet the needs of vulnerable children. The needs of the small number of looked after children in the area are well understood and met. Promotion of good home safety practice is provided very well by family support workers who conduct home visits and provide useful safety equipment.

Parents make good contributions to the work and development of the centre, particularly through the frequently held coffee mornings and the 'Happy Kidz' parent forum. Their views are acted upon and used well to inform the centre development plan. The membership of the advisory board broadly reflects the local population and members of priority group families. Children's views are identified and recorded in their family books and used well to inform the planning of activities particularly the 'Messy Munchers' sessions.

The centre provides excellent opportunities for families to improve their economic well-being. A good proportion of those undertaking training achieve very useful qualifications. A few parents volunteer within the centre following appropriate training. The very good and highly effective signposting to the local Adult and Community Learning (ACL) provision ensures that high numbers of adults in the area accessed family learning programmes particularly in English for speakers of other languages, literacy and numeracy courses. The centre also offers and hosts a range of accredited and non-accredited courses in childcare to promote this as a career. A large number of adults receive very effective support in overcoming their barriers to education and employment.

Benefit and financial advice is readily available from centre staff and voluntary sector partners. One parent stated that 'they are always there and willing to give good advice'. However, direct support from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) staff is very limited.

Children have outstanding opportunities to gain independent learning skills which give them the ability to adopt a positive attitude to education. Local childminders and day nurseries report that many children attend as a result of advice given by the centre. A local headteacher recognised that the centre Early Years Foundation Stage teacher give children good support that 'helps them improve their self confidence' prior to their progression to the school reception class.

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	1
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	1
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	1

How good is the provision?

1

The centre provides an excellent range of services. Families in the area use the services provided on a regular basis and many rely on them very heavily. The needs of the local population, particularly those in the target groups are very well understood by the highly experienced, well qualified and trained staff. Assessment methods are very effective and outcomes are well recorded. However, a minority of families decline to declare their disability status or ethnicity.

Outreach work is very good. It is well-planned to promote increasing independence. This ensures that all family needs are met particularly for those who are most vulnerable and have difficulty in attending the centre. Centre staff strongly celebrate the parents achievement and participation in programmes and courses. Previous experience, learning and interests are very well identified and used well to signpost families to further learning. Assessment is used well to identify and plan very useful activities and further learning opportunities.

The highly effective individualised care, guidance and support provided to families are outstanding. The quality of support for families in crisis is excellent and much effort is put into preventing crises and reducing the impact of unavoidable events. One parent described the care they received as 'excellent and important to keep me coming into the centre'. The longstanding links with the local outstanding childminders and day nurseries are very strong. The centre offers outstanding crèche facilities for parents attending learning, development and support sessions. Parents speak very highly of the good access to financial and parenting support that they receive.

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	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

Governance of the centre is strong. The advisory board members are representative of the local community with a good mix of statutory bodies, parents and the voluntary sector. The centre recognises that the recruitment of a wider range of membership will further strengthen the effectiveness of the board, better match the changing local population and allow the board to more appropriately challenge the highly effective leadership and management team. All contracted services have a service level agreement which clearly identifies what is expected of the contractor and what will be provided by the centre.

The self evaluation process is fully inclusive of the views of service users and partners and soundly based on evidence. An appropriate level of summarised data is used to manage the services. More detailed regional and national data had not been routinely made available to the advisory board in order to monitor and challenge centre management. The centre has identified this as an area requiring development and has undertaken some very useful recent improvements. The current evaluation report is an accurate account of the performance of the centre. Development planning is very good, it is closely linked to self-evaluation and actions are carefully monitored. However, improvement targets are not sufficiently measureable.

The promotion of equality and diversity including for disabled children and disabled parents is outstanding. The centre is well used by the priority target groups and the staff and volunteers represent cultural diversity. Excellent support is provided for those families where English is an additional language. Parents commented that 'the centre is an important part of the community and really helpful to me in becoming a better parent'. Data demonstrates that the achievement gaps between different groups in Skegness are narrowing significantly. Representatives from the 'Happy Kidz' group have learned basic Polish in order to offer a welcome to these families and a 'Polish stay and play' session was delivered to promote engagement with the centre. Children with disabilities are well-catered for and parents greatly appreciate the individualised support and provision of appropriate equipment to support children in their activities.

The arrangements for safeguarding are outstanding and significantly benefit from close working with other relevant agencies. All legislative requirements are met and many exceeded. Staff and volunteers are well supervised and have access to high levels of training and support. Strong policies and procedures ensure that staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children and vulnerable adults. The excellent multi-agency working with clear protocols promotes the highly efficient sharing of

information about the most vulnerable children including those involved in the Common Assessment Framework process and those on child protection plans. Risk assessment procedures are conducted for all activities in the centre and the arrangements for joint supervision of child protection cases is an example of good practice.

The centre provides excellent value for money. Resources within the centre are of high quality. Staff resources are used exceptionally well to target services to those at most disadvantage and are supported by extensive, reliable partnership working and the good use of a small number of volunteers. Longstanding excellent partnership working is very focused on supporting families and children and is highly appreciated by all parties. The professional and voluntary services understand the vision and aims of the centre and support a seamless approach to the services for the benefit of users. As one partner said 'we are all here to help families have a better life'.

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	1
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	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
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	1
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

Published school report:

Skegness Infants School October 2009, which judged the provision to be good.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Skegness Children's Centre on 7–8 March 2012. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

We would like to thank the many of you who spoke to us. You told us that the work of the centre is highly valued, is changing lives and improving the chances of your children and families and we agree with you. Your children are making outstanding progress relative to their starting points. You receive excellent guidance and support in parenting skills and this is enabling your children to continue to do well when they start school. Children who have attended the children's centre do better at school than those who do not. Their Early Years Foundation points are higher and in many cases higher than that for the County as a whole. The centre provides you with very good access to highly specialised services and many of you told us you would not use these services if they were not provided locally at the centre. You highly value and trust the information, advice and guidance that you are receiving particularly those of you who are new to the area and do not speak English as your first language.

You have access to very high quality resources and you use them to the best advantage of your children, the availability and use of the training room for family learning sessions is one example. The centre staff have excellent knowledge and experiences and they use these to best advantage in order to provide you with the services and activities that you want and need. The centre provides good outreach work and home visiting for those who have difficulty in attending the centre or do not have enough confidence to do so.

Many of you attend the coffee mornings, 'Happy Kidz' events and complete family questionnaires. Please continue to do this as it gives the staff at the centre excellent opportunities to hear your views and to make the services even better. Centre users are well represented at the strategic board level who are also making sure that services meet your needs. The centre does a particularly good job in offering parents opportunities to gain useful qualifications and overcome their barriers to learning and employment. A high percentage of those of you who take relevant accredited courses succeed. These improve future employability and self esteem. The centre also provides excellent support for the development of parenting skills.

The centre is very successful at safeguarding the families who use the centre. Their arrangements for this are strong and their partnership working with other agencies is highly effective at reducing the numbers of children who are at risk of harm in the area. The centre is giving very good advice and guidance to improve safety in the home and improve child safety through improved parenting skills.

We have asked the centre to make two improvements. Firstly we have asked the centre to improve the amount of detail in the registrations that are completed by those that use the centre. The analysis of all of this information will enable the centre to better target the services it provides for you and measure their impact. You can help them to achieve this by accurately completing the registration forms if you have not already done so. Secondly we have asked the centre to broaden the

membership of the advisory board so that a wider range of parents and partners offer oversight to the quality and impact of services which are on offer.

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