

# Inspection report for Lincoln Abbey

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<b>Local authority</b>	Lincolnshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	383989
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<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joanne Smith HMI

<b>Centre leader</b>	Mary Moorman
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
<b>Centre address</b>	The Baptist Church Croft Street Lincoln Lincolnshire LN2 5AX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01522 569511
<b>Fax number</b>	01522 569511
<b>Email address</b>	mary.moorman@lincolnshire.gov.uk

<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Not applicable
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	253690 County Hospital Daycare

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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**361**

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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 children's centre practitioner, parents and carers, Lincoln Baptist Church and representatives from the local authority, the advisory board, commissioned service providers and partner agencies.

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

## Information about the centre

Lincoln Abbey Children's Centre is a phase two centre that was designated in 2007 as a virtual centre. In response to the needs of the community, work to establish a local base was started in 2010. In July 2011 the children's centre base opened in Lincoln Baptist Church in leased accommodation. The children's centre has its own entrance to the building, dedicated rooms and outdoor play space specifically for its use. Abbey Pre-School is accommodated in the children's centre and community groups are offered by the Baptist Church in the church accommodation.

The local authority is responsible for the governance of the centre. The children's centre practitioner is responsible for service delivery across the reach area for this centre; she also has responsibility for three other children's centres in the locality. The centre's core purpose encompasses services delivered from the centre by the children's centre team and partners include health services, family support, parent and child activities, targeted support for vulnerable families and family learning. Services are also delivered from other local venues, such as the school and neighbourhood centre.

The centre is located in a densely populated area close to Lincoln city centre. The large majority of the population served by the centre is White British. There is a rapidly growing Eastern European community in the area. Much of the housing stock is private rental property and social housing, some of which is high rise flats, with a

small proportion of privately owned houses. The centre serves an area in the top 20% most disadvantaged areas in the country. Worklessness in the area is high. Many children in the area served by the centre live in households dependent on workless benefits. Children enter Early Years Foundation Stage provision across the area with skills, knowledge and abilities that are lower than those typically found nationally.

## 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

Abbey Children's Centre is quickly establishing itself at the heart of the community. Since moving into its base at Lincoln Baptist Church in July 2011 having been a virtual centre since 2007, the number of families registered with and using the centre has risen rapidly. Engagement of registered families is also good, however, some groups, such as fathers and male carers are not regularly or routinely using the centre. As a result the centre has good capacity to sustain future improvement. Working with children and families whose circumstances may make them vulnerable is the main priority for the centre's work. Safeguarding practice is exemplary. Excellent multi-agency working is evident and highly effective in supporting families. For example, parents at risk of having children taken into the care of the local authority are very well supported to develop their parenting skills, consequently they are able to continue to live as a family unit in their own home.

The range of provision offered through the centre and the quality of care, guidance and support for families are outstanding. A crucial factor in this is the exceptional level of partnership working across statutory partners, commissioned services, Lincoln Baptist Church and the neighbourhood team. The multi-agency working and cross agency service delivery is having a significant impact on centre users. Outcomes for families in the area are good and in some respects they are outstanding. Health and children's development and progress are two of the key priorities for the centre. The extremely well focussed programme of service delivery in these areas is promoting some exceptional outcomes for children, especially in the reduction of childhood obesity rates.

Parents have many opportunities to comment on the centre's services. There is also an excellent parental representation on the centre's advisory board, including a parent taking on the role of chair. The centre is managed and monitored using robust systems of accountability that trace from the children's centre practitioner through to the local authority lead for children's centres. Service level agreements and memoranda of understanding are well constructed, with key performance indicators and review processes built in and monitored regularly. Data provided by the local authority are used well by the children's centre practitioner, however, some data are not provided at a local enough level or are not as accurate as they need to be. Their usefulness to the centre, therefore, in terms of monitoring its work with families whose circumstances may make them hard to reach are limited.

Children's learning and development are improving rapidly and the Early Years Foundation Stage scores for children have improved significantly over the last three year period. Adults and children clearly enjoy the learning experiences on offer to them and engage very well with them. Very young children are enthralled by animated story telling by a practitioner, while parents appreciate the ideas they are given for play activities in the home. Adult learning is delivered in a number of ways and at a range of venues. There is a strong focus on re-engaging adults with learning activity. This is thoughtfully managed using practical learning experiences, such as nail art. The centre can demonstrate some success in adults developing and progressing onto accredited college courses. These families are from the centre's main priority group of those whose children are subject to a child protection plan, a child in need plan or have a team around the child plan. In an area of high unemployment the centre signposts adults to learning and development opportunities and Jobcentre Plus services. Regular opportunities are offered to users to evaluate the services on offer at the centre and their immediate impact on their family. The centre does not, however, have an overview of the long term outcome of their input as they do not monitor adults' progress or the impact of courses on all users' lives.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Increase the levels of engagement by those groups whose circumstances may make them harder to reach, in particular male carers.
- Improve systems to monitor and track adult learners' progress and development and the impact of universal services on the lives of families.
- The local authority should:
  - improve the accuracy of the data provided to the centre, with particular reference to them being locally relevant.

## How good are outcomes for families?

2
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Extremely strong partnerships with health partners are used to deliver very well targeted work. This has led to an excellent reduction in obesity levels in children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage which following a 16% reduction, are well below national and local averages. In addition, breastfeeding rates are well above national averages with 47% of mothers still breastfeeding six to eight weeks after the birth of their baby. Most families in the area engage well with health services and take up rates for immunisations for children prior to their pre-school booster immunisations are excellent.

Parents have an ever increasing understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, including taking up regular exercise. A significant outcome of this understanding was the change to one of the groups offered at the centre. Although parents enjoyed the Friday 'chat and chill' sessions, parents on the advisory board were aware of the concerns that childhood obesity rates were almost double the national rates. They shared this information with other parents and as a group they requested a change of focus to a more physically active session. The centre's response to this was prompt and there is now a 'Physical Kids' session. Parents enjoy the play and learning sessions at the centre and engage well with the discussions in groups about subjects such as weaning and keeping children safe in the home. They take full advantage of opportunities to feedback on how useful they find activities and many comment that they have developed their confidence levels and parenting skills.

Parents are well represented on the advisory board of the centre and a small number of parents are members of the constituted parents group. However, there is little representation on these groups of those whose circumstances may make them hard to reach, such as teenage parents or male carers. Children in the area served by the centre make excellent progress in their skills and abilities and children who have used centre services enter school Early Years Foundation Stage with slightly higher levels of skill than their peers. Disabled children and their families are extremely well supported to attend the 'Kids Crèche'. Parents appreciate the cohesive working model that means health professionals, such as physiotherapists, attend giving immediate hands on advice and support to them.

Family Support Workers are highly skilled in their work with families who need intensive support and guidance. The excellent use of the prevention strategies and engagement with the Common Assessment Framework by all partners has a very positive impact on children's safety through families developing an excellent understanding of how to keep their children safe and well. The result of this is that the number of children subject to child protection plans and child in need plans is reducing significantly. Children behave extremely well in the centre and they and their parents understand and follow safety rules very 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>1</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>1</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?

**1**

The centre delivers an excellent range of services for families with a wide range of partners. This has been built on and developed from what had been delivered in many outreach venues prior to moving into the base at the Baptist Church. The children's centre practitioner is effective in her analysis of the data she is provided with to prioritise the centre's work. However, some information is inaccurate or uses approximations which mean she does not have a true picture of the reach area and, in some cases, the number of families whose circumstances may make them harder to reach. The centre is highly effective in assessing the needs of individuals and families. This leads to families receiving comprehensive and highly relevant support packages that are effective in meeting their needs and aiding their development. For example, a family referred to the centre for support in managing children's behaviour will receive a full assessment of their needs. This may result in them being signposted to additional money management sessions or receiving counselling to support their emotional well being.

The centre has a wealth of high quality information available to users in the form of displays and leaflets. A very high proportion of the information leaflets have been translated into the main languages used by the minority ethnic groups in the community. The centre is engaging a large proportion of its registered users and these figures are increasing month on month. Families whose children are subject to child protection, child in need or team around the child plans are the centre's main priority group and they are engaging very well with the centre's work.

Adult learning opportunities are actively promoted in the centre and at other venues, such as the college. However, the centre does not track or monitor the outcomes of adult learners and is therefore unclear of the impact these services have on families. Free crèches are offered to parents to support their attendance and encourage them back into learning. Activity sessions are used effectively to deliver key messages to

users in well thought through ways. Staff who facilitate the teenage parents group have received training about delivering birth control information so that this can be discussed with young parents in an environment where they feel secure and comfortable.

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>1</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>1</b>

## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

**2**

Leadership and management of the centre are good at all levels. There are high levels of motivation to move the centre forward and drive improvement for local families. This is demonstrated in the determination shown by senior leaders to establish a base for the children's centre to act as a focal point for local families. The centre has good systems to routinely ask parents about the impact an activity or course is having on their family. Systematic long term evaluation is done with priority families to establish what the long term impact of the centre's work with them has been. This process is not followed with other families, leaving the centre less clear on the long term impact of activities they have accessed.

The advisory board is well supported by partners and parents. This mix of local and professional knowledge was used very well to support the local pre-school. It was not sustainable where it was based to maintain fees at an affordable level. The centre was aware that the pre-school was a much needed local amenity, not least because there were concerns around the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scores. The centre used its move into the Baptist Church to support the pre-school to move to a better environment and directed resources to support and develop the management committee and staff.

Partnerships are extremely strong and are effective in enabling the centre to target its early intervention and prevention work to those who are most in need. Excellent use is made of resources through jointly managing activities with the school, voluntary organisations and the neighbourhood team, giving outstanding value for money. The centre has a good approach to promoting equality and diversity for families in the area. Inclusion of and engagement with all hard to reach groups in the area served by the centre is a high priority. There has been a steady increase in the engagement of these groups, including children and parents with disabilities, with the exception of male carers whose engagement with the centre remains very low despite the large majority of them registering with the centre. In response to the growing Eastern European community an International Group has been established

at the centre. This group is used very effectively to include families from minority ethnic groups in the centre. Over time attendance at the International Group has declined and attendance at universal groups by families from minority ethnic groups has increased. The data provided to the centre by the local authority are not always accurate enough or broken down to a local level to enable the centre have the clearest picture possible of its success and engagement levels.

Systems to ensure the suitability of all those who work with families are extremely robust and the centre is exemplary in following current policy. Safeguarding is an extremely high priority and is a standing item on all meeting agendas. The referral process is clear and weekly allocation meetings mean that swift action is taken to assess families' needs and start work with them. Vulnerable families are extremely well supported by the family support team who work all year round to ensure that visits take place, even on Christmas day. Case files are regularly scrutinised by senior managers to ensure that plans are being actioned and followed promptly and appropriately by case holders. The model of service delivery at the centre is through commissioning services. Staff and volunteers working for these services and the local authority all access the same high quality safeguarding training. All workers are very clear about their role and responsibility with regard to safeguarding and protecting children and vulnerable adults. Parents are made aware of the centre's role in reporting any concerns about a child's welfare from the outset of any support package.

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>1</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>1</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>1</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**

The progress children make in the designated childcare setting County Hospital Daycare URN 253690 was considered when making judgements about children's enjoyment and achievement.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Lincoln Abbey Children's Centre on 21 and 22 March 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

When we were inspecting the centre we took the opportunity to talk to some of you. Without exception you told us how much you enjoyed using the centre and how it had helped you. This demonstrated to us how much you value the centre.

We know the centre has only had a base in your area since July 2011. We found that since that time the number of families who have registered with the centre and use the centre has increased. However, we know that some groups, such as fathers and male carers do not use the centre as often as they could do. We have asked the centre to improve on this so that as many people as possible in the area can benefit from the centre's work as much as those who already use it do.

The centre provides an extremely good range of activities and courses that match the needs of families in the area very well. They are also good at using the information they have about the area, such as how well young children are progressing in their development. However, some of the information they receive from the local authority is not accurate or it is not specifically about your local area. This means that the centre practitioner does not have the clearest picture possible of how well the centre is doing in its work. We have asked the local authority to improve the information it provides to the centre.

The centre has excellent relationships with the partners it works with in your area to deliver services to you. This means that you receive high quality support packages when you need them. In addition the centre is working hard to produce good quality information for you. Much of the information is translated into languages spoken by families who have moved into the area from other countries.

The way the centre uses its resources is outstanding. There is a good understanding of the issues affecting your area and they successfully target their work to help you

to improve in those areas. As a result the number of children who are obese has reduced very quickly to a very low level and the number of women who continue to breastfeed their babies has increased. We were also pleased to see that children are making good progress in their development and many of them now reach the levels they might be expected to when they leave Reception Year in school.

We were pleased that so many of you are members of the advisory board and have the opportunity to contribute to the centre's development. There are many opportunities for you to learn and play with your children and to access learning for your own development. We know that you have lots of opportunities to tell the centre how useful an activity has been to you when you have just finished it. We have asked the centre to improve how well it monitors progress adults make in the learning and development and how well you are using what you have learned on courses a few months after finishing them. This way the centre will have an even better picture of how well it is doing, who it is working with and what is working well.

We would like to thank everyone who came to speak with us. It was a privilege to be able to talk with you. Your openness helped us immensely during the inspection. We thoroughly enjoyed spending time in your centre and we wish you and your families the very best for the future.

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