

Inspection report for Kingswood Children's Centre

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| Local authority | South Gloucestershire |
| Inspection number | 383978 |
| Inspection dates | 28 – 29 March 2012 |
| Reporting inspector | Joy Law HMI |

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| Centre leader | Nathan (Jim) Anderson |
| 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 |

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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 an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the local authority, centre staff, partner agencies and parents. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the centre's self-evaluation form, data provided by the local authority and the centre, documents and policies, and minutes of management meetings.

Information about the centre

Kingswood Children's Centre is based in South Gloucestershire and is located on a shared site with a community nursery and a community centre. It operates services from a multi-purpose room.

The centre was designated in September 2007 and serves a community that falls into the 50% most deprived areas nationally. The area is served by a number of local amenities such as community centres, health visitor base and housing association base. The large majority of early years provision is provided by the private and voluntary sector.

Kingswood Children's Centre serves 1,350 children aged under five years. The percentage of workless households and those dependent on benefits is below average at 21.6%. There are approximately 195 lone parents within the reach area. The children's centre serves a community of which the vast majority (90%) is White British, with the remaining population being from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds.

The centre provides a range of services including health and family support services, play and learning experiences for children and adults. The centre provides access to full-time early years provision and crèche provision to support families identified as in need of accessing services. The centre offers advice and guidance to parents on the

day-care and childminding facilities available within the local community. A large majority of children, on entry to early years provision, have skills, knowledge and abilities which are in line with those expected for their age.

The centre is governed directly by the local authority with a partnership advisory board. The advisory board is made up of a cross-section of professionals, including representatives from the voluntary sector and parents. It is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day running of the centre and its strategic development. The centre has a parents' forum.

The centre works in partnership with agencies to deliver new services or enrich existing ones. The centre's family room is used to run a variety of early years and family focused sessions. The centre also has established working relationships with other professional services to deliver a programme of universal and targeted services to meet the local community's needs.

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 is a satisfactory children's centre. For those who engage with the centre, it provides an inclusive and welcoming environment, and the dedication and commitment of staff ensure families feel supported and safe. Managers described the team as being 'amazing' and say 'they work so hard'. Comments from users such as, 'The centre is brilliant,' 'I feel welcomed,' and 'It's a good place to come,' are typical. However, not enough families, particularly the most isolated and vulnerable families living in the community, engage with the centre's services.

Governance is satisfactory and rapidly improving. Recent changes of leadership and accountability arrangements within the local authority have brought about significant operational changes which are starting to have a positive impact on the centre. Leaders have a clear vision of how to improve the centre's work. New and improved quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation systems have been implemented. Managers are now routinely monitoring and evaluating the work of the centre which

informs the development plan. Staff evaluate all activities, but the quality of this evaluation is inconsistent.

The centre has implemented good systems to increase the robustness of data gathering about services provided and user engagement, and these are beginning to give managers an increasingly accurate understanding of the community's needs. However, not all activities are recorded and the range of data currently available from all services are variable. For example, information from health services, employment agencies and benefits advice is not systematically made available to the centre. The centre supports families accessing other services, such as employment advice, adult learning and benefits advice; however, there is no reliable and organised system in place to track or monitor the outcomes for these families.

Effective multi-agency working, such as with the health visitor, social care team and the breastfeeding support network, is a particular strength and contributes well to improving outcomes for the most vulnerable families. Collectively, these organisations ensure that these most vulnerable families are given good care, and appropriate information and support are tailored to their individual needs. However, the partnership working with some other services, such as local schools, midwives, adult learning services and early years providers, are only adequate. This means that some vulnerable groups, such as lone parents and the unemployed, are not being reached or supported effectively. Consequently, the centre is improving the life chances and personal development of only some of the targeted groups of families.

Families identified as requiring support undergo timely and appropriate assessments of their needs. However, the centre does not routinely assess and identify individual learning and development needs of other users. Consequently, sessions to promote opportunities for adults to gain skills to improve their economic stability are not regularly provided for all families. Where training is provided by other agencies, this is not necessarily matched to need. Although the centre has successfully engaged some parents, such as breastfeeding peers, opportunities for parents to become volunteers are missed. Staff do not routinely encourage parents to consider engaging in voluntary work. Consequently, the take-up rates are low.

The centre is very warm, welcoming and inclusive. Good-quality displays and resources promote children's learning well. Staff provide a satisfactory range of activities which are linked to children's interests and support their social and emotional development and communication skills. Stay and Play sessions are well attended and appreciated by children and parents. Comments from parents, such as, 'It gives me and my daughter chance to meet new people and experience new things,' 'My child has developed confidence and social skills,' and 'They loved exploring the jelly and trying new fruit,' confirm the difference the centre is making to some families. However, while children enjoy the activities provided at these sessions, they are not always linked effectively to children's stages of development and learning. This is because staff do not routinely assess children's starting points and, therefore, do not ensure that what they provide meets children's needs. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's development diaries and are

developing an understanding of how children learn, although not all parents are engaged in contributing to these. The monthly Stay and Play sessions for fathers enable them to enjoy quality time playing together with their children and to take advantage of opportunities to improve their parenting skills. Fathers comment positively on how the centre has supported them with issues around potty training and speech delay, and how attending sessions has helped them understand more about what their children enjoy and how they learn.

Users are contributing towards shaping the centre's services through representation on the advisory board, the parents' forum, parental satisfaction surveys and suggestion boxes. Children's views are obtained through their engagement during sessions. Where users make requests for services, the centre strives to meet these where appropriate. Users feel listened to, valued and respected.

Although the number of users currently engaging with the services is low, managers can clearly demonstrate a trend in improvement over the past two years. For example, the range of events taking place has increased from 11 in 2010 to 29 in 2012, with attendance at these having more than doubled. At the same time, the number of users accessing services has increased by over a third. The recently introduced quality assurance systems, such as the annual conversation and quarterly reporting, have resulted in the centre's self-evaluation accurately reflecting areas for development. These are clearly linked to the improvement and delivery plan. Resources are allocated according to the identified priority and therefore are more accurately being targeted at the most vulnerable groups. Consequently, the centre currently has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the number of families engaging with the centre's services, particularly the most isolated and vulnerable families living in the community.
- Increase the level of engagement with partner agencies, such as midwives, adult learning services, headteachers and early years providers.
- Increase the robustness of tracking, monitoring and evaluation of services through obtaining accurate and up-to-date information from all sources, particularly partner agencies.
- Improve users' and community involvement within the centre and promote sustainability by for example increasing the number of volunteers who currently work at the centre.
- Increase the number of parents who access training and employment by:
 - undertaking routine assessments of adults' needs
 - providing training and development opportunities that are matched accurately to need.

How good are outcomes for families?

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The health and well-being of families are satisfactory overall. Parents and children are developing a satisfactory awareness of how to lead healthy lifestyles. They enjoy physical activities as they take part in sessions such as tree planting and Buggy Walks. Children accessing sessions in the centre eat varied, well-balanced snacks and adults learn how to prepare nutritious meals on a budget through the Cook and Eat sessions and the Cookery Bag project. However, obesity in Reception-aged children is higher than the national average and the uptake of mothers breastfeeding their babies is lower than the national average, although improving.

The effective partnership working with the health visitor and breastfeeding coordinator ensures that parents have access to a range of postnatal services and information, such as breastfeeding, baby massage, weaning and feeding routines. Parents value these sessions. The centre has recently started to receive live birth information which means that staff are able to offer early support to families in need of help. However, midwives are not currently engaging with the centre and therefore no antenatal support is available at the centre to support those who are most likely not to attend health appointments.

Good multi-agency working ensures the arrangements for safeguarding and child protection are effective and are given high priority. Common Assessment Framework procedures are implemented when appropriate and ensure that the vulnerable families known to the centre, such as those with looked after children and children with disabilities, are supported well.

Parents are supported in making their homes safe and attend training in paediatric first aid to help them gain the necessary skills in the event of their children having an accident. The setting engages with the local fire prevention services to help raise children's and families' awareness of safety in the home and their communities. Parents say they feel safe at the centre. Parents experiencing domestic violence, isolation, or depression, report positively on how the centre has improved their confidence, self-esteem and social skills. Others report on how their parenting skills have improved and how they have made positive relationships.

Children are making satisfactory progress in their learning and development. The gap between the outcomes for the most vulnerable groups and others is narrowing, although the significant improvement in the numbers of children achieving 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2011 has resulted in the gap slightly widening. Children develop social skills as they learn how to play well together. Both parents and children enjoy participating in activities together. Parents comment on the difference the centre has made to their confidence and achievements as well as their children's progress, development and behaviour. Visits to the local library have increased parents' confidence in sharing books and reading with their children. Staff provide strong role models that support children's positive behaviour, and a culture of respect is evident throughout the centre.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

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| 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 | 3 |
| 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?

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Parents expressed appreciation for the support they receive and the positive changes that have resulted for their children and themselves. Case studies show how staff support them through difficult times and how their lives would be very different without the centre's help. Comments from parents confirm that they value the opportunities to play and spend time with their children and that, for some, the centre has been their escape route and they would not know what they would do without the centre. Parents also appreciate having the opportunity to attend adult sessions, such as the Peers Early Education Programme, knowing that their children are well cared for in the centre's crèche.

The centre satisfactorily supports children's learning. The overall assessment of users' needs and the tracking of progress are of variable quality. Analysis of data and information is improving and consequently the centre has increased the range of services provided to meet some areas of need. For example, Stay and Play Plus sessions successfully support vulnerable families identified as needing to improve their confidence and parenting skills whilst developing children's independence and readiness for learning. The 'Out of the blue' and Time 4 Young Mums sessions successfully support teenage and young mothers in their transition into motherhood. Consequently, the centre is improving the life chances and personal development of some of the targeted groups of families. The centre's services are promoted in various ways, such as through the health visitor and attendance at school coffee mornings and parent evenings. However, staff commented that there are many families, particularly the most isolated, who are unaware of what the centre offers and how it can help them, and that they need to do more to promote the centre's services so that more families engage.

The centre has some success in engaging adults with activities aimed at improving

their skills and employability, although this is limited. Parents talked positively about how they have improved their parenting skills and are now more able to support their children’s learning. Some parents have successfully moved into employment and voluntary work, although the numbers are low. Parents are signposted for advice and support to enable them to access services, such as housing benefits, health services and childcare provision. The lack of robust tracking systems means the centre is unable to confirm exactly how many have accessed these services.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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| 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

Leaders are supportive and have a strong commitment to the centre and to the ongoing development of its role in the community. The advisory group is made up of a cross-section of members representing a range of interests, such as local authority, the health service, and parents. The advisory group’s accountability arrangements are clear. All members have received training and are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities and are actively involved in promoting the provision. Regular and effective supervision supports the professional development of staff well. Staff reported how they had been successfully encouraged and supported in accessing training to improve their skills and knowledge. As a result, the team are well motivated and skilled.

The centre’s safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. The vetting of staff is secure, and staff are appropriately trained. The centre’s staff are aware of key safeguarding policies and are vigilant in identifying and responding to any potential dangers that families may encounter. Information is shared appropriately with the relevant agencies. Effective multi-agency working ensures that vulnerable families are well supported and, therefore, children are kept safe.

The inclusion of all children and their families is central to the centre’s vision; equality is promoted, diversity celebrated and discrimination tackled. This is clearly demonstrated through the attractive displays, posters, focus groups and events that take place. All vulnerable groups are accessing the centres services to some degree; however, the centre is aware that they are not reaching enough families. Children and families with disabilities are supported through the joint working with portage delivering Meet and Play sessions.

The centre is making satisfactory use of resources overall. Sessions are provided across the cluster centres to ensure services are not duplicated. The limited space available within the centre restricts the services provided; nevertheless, staff make good use of the family room and adapt the provision well to deliver a range of services. However, the centre does not maximise use of other available resources, such as schools and community venues. Leaders are aware that to improve sustainability and economic independence for the centre and families, more effort is required by all staff and partner agencies to encourage, support and recruit volunteers to run groups within the centre and community. The range of services currently provided has a satisfactory impact on outcomes for users. Consequently, the service provides satisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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| 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 | 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

None.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Kingswood Children's Centre on 28 and 29 March 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We talked with some of you, your children, staff, and a wide range of partners and members of the local authority linked to the centre. We observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documents and concluded that the centre provides a satisfactory range of services that are mostly tailored to meet your particular needs. The centre is an inclusive and welcoming place which is run by dedicated adults who want to serve you well. You speak highly of the centre as being a place where you feel safe, secure, supported, included and listened to. You comment on the difference that the centre has made to your confidence and achievements as well as your children's progress, development and behaviour. Comments such as, 'The centre is brilliant,' 'I feel welcomed,' and, 'It's a good place to come,' are typical of the views you communicated to us.

You and your children are developing a satisfactory awareness of how to lead healthy lifestyles. Children enjoy physical activities as they take part in sessions such as tree planting and Buggy Walks. You learn how to prepare nutritious meals on a budget through the Cook and Eat sessions and the Cookery Bag project. However, obesity in Reception-aged children remains a concern. You are supported in making your homes safe and attend training in paediatric first aid to help you gain the necessary skills in the event of your children having an accident. Those of you who are feeling isolated or finding it hard to cope report positively on how the centre has improved your confidence, self-esteem and social skills. Others of you report on how your parenting skills have improved and how you have made positive relationships.

Good-quality displays and resources promote children's learning well. Staff provide a satisfactory range of activities which are linked to children's interests and support their social and emotional development, and communication skills. Stay and Play sessions are well attended and appreciated by you and your children. Comments such as, 'It gives me and my daughter chance to meet new people and experience new things,' 'My child has developed confidence and social skills,' and, 'They loved exploring the jelly and trying new fruit,' confirm some of the benefits you gain from attending the centre.

Some aspects of the centre's work are stronger than others. For example, effective multi-agency working, such as with the health visitor, local support team, breastfeeding support group and outreach workers, is a particular strength and contributes well to improving outcomes and supporting those of you whose circumstances make you vulnerable. However, the partnership working with some services, such as local schools, midwives, adult learning services and early years providers, is not as strong as it could be. Therefore, we have asked the centre leaders to increase the level of engagement with these partner agencies.

Leaders have implemented new systems to monitor, evaluate and improve the work of the centre. They evaluate all activities, but the quality of these evaluations is inconsistent. For example, they do not always ask you what you have learnt and the difference the sessions have made to you and your children. We have found that the range of services currently provided does not meet the needs of all families living in the community. As a result, many families, particularly the most isolated and vulnerable, are not accessing the centre's services. Therefore, we have asked the centre leaders to increase the numbers of these families engaging with the centre's services.

The centre supports families accessing other services, such as employment advice, adult learning and benefits advice, however, there is no reliable and systematic system in place to check the outcomes for these families. Therefore, we have asked the centre leaders to track, monitor and evaluate the services through obtaining accurate and up-to-date information from all sources, particularly partner agencies.

We know that the centre is good at responding to those of you who have been identified as in need of help and that staff undertake timely and appropriate assessments. However, the centre does not routinely assess and identify individual learning and development needs of other users. Consequently, sessions to promote opportunities for adults to gain skills to improve their economic stability are not regularly provided for all families. Where training is provided by other agencies, this is not necessarily matched to need. Therefore, we have asked the centre leaders to improve the way in which they find out what you need, and use this information where appropriate, to target resources more effectively to your needs.

The centre has successfully supported a small number of volunteers, such as the breastfeeding peer supporters and members of the advisory board. Those of you who engage in voluntary work told us how much you enjoyed it and the difference it has made to your lives. However, staff do not routinely encourage others of you to consider engaging in voluntary work and, therefore, too few of you are given the opportunity to develop new skills. We have, therefore, asked leaders to increase the involvement of community volunteers in the work of the centre to develop a feeling of ownership and engagement.

We would like to thank everyone who came to speak to us. We thoroughly enjoyed spending time at your centre, and we wish you and your families the best for the future.

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