

Inspection report for Storkway Children's Centre

Local authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	362978
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Linked school if applicable	
Linked early years and childcare, if 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.

An inspection of the registered childcare provision in the crèche was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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, senior leadership team, staff, and representatives from the local authority and partner agencies, including representatives from the health service, parents, carers and other users of the centre. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documentation, including key policies, the centre's operational plans and evaluations of services.

Information about the centre

Storkway is a purpose-built community-based centre run by the local authority. It provides the full core offer of childcare, early learning, health services and family support services. The centre serves an urban, multicultural community that experiences high levels of social and economic disadvantage and is identified as among the 30% most disadvantaged areas in the country. Almost half the families are from White backgrounds. The other half is represented by a very wide range of ethnic groups. There are 60 different languages spoken by users of the centre. Levels of unemployment are high. The centre has links with a wide range of partners including Greenwich Local Labour and Business, Jobcentre Plus and the local college. The advisory board provides governance for the centre. The day to day operational and budget management of the centre is provided by the local authority and the centre manager.

Full day care is provided on site in a 50-place nursery which is run by the Pre School Learning Alliance. This was last inspected in March 2009. There are also 24 childcare places provide in the on-site crèche.

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 users and the wider community

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

Storkway Children’s Centre is a well-established part of the local community that provides parents and users with a good range of services in a welcoming, attractive environment. Partnership working, particularly with health professionals and the on-site early learning and childcare providers, is strong. As a result there is a high proportion of parents, including the most vulnerable, accessing services that the centre offers. This is making a significant contribution to improving outcomes for users. Consequently outcomes are good.

The centre helps to break down barriers that might prevent families from getting access to the support they need by building trusting relationships with users and working closely with other agencies and specialists such as counsellors. Staff get to know individual families well and are sensitive to their varied needs, including those who are experiencing a crisis or hardship. Parents are positive about what the centre offers. They value the good guidance and support they are given and the opportunities provided to meet other parents. They are particularly positive about the availability of childcare, which enables them to undertake courses, improve their skills and develop new interests. As one user parent said, ‘I wouldn’t be able to do this course if I didn’t have somewhere safe I could leave my child.’

Users rightly feel the centre is a safe and secure place to be. The centre gives their safety and well-being a high priority and has good procedures in place to safeguard them. Satisfactory steps are taken to ensure users have equality of opportunity to access services and activities, although some users expressed disappointment that there are not always sufficient places for popular activities, such as Pilates, to enable them to continue to the next level. Cultural diversity is celebrated appropriately, for example through display, and there are information leaflets available in a range of languages for those who speak English as an additional language. However, information, activities and resources which reflect the full range of diversity are not

evident and how this is to be addressed is not included in the centre's improvement plan.

Leadership and management of the centre are satisfactory and the centre runs smoothly. High-quality resources and well-trained staff are used effectively and parents play an active part, through the parent forum, in the development of the centre's programme of activities. However, the centre's leaders do not have sufficient and robust performance data, or systematically analyse the views of all users, to accurately measure the impact of the centre's services on outcomes and plan for improvement. Consequently, although key strengths and weaknesses are understood, self-evaluation lacks rigour and the centre's team plan is not sufficiently detailed. Although priorities link to the local authority strategic plan, targets and quantifiable measures of success which are specific to the centre and linked to robust self-evaluation are not clearly identified. The governance of the centre is supportive but is not providing sufficient challenge to ensure planning and evaluation is robust. As a result of these weaknesses in aspects of strategic leadership, although outcomes and provision are good, the overall effectiveness of the centre and its demonstrable capacity for sustained improvement are satisfactory.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop a more systematic and robust approach to assessing needs and evaluating the impact of activities on improving outcomes for all groups of users.
- Ensure the plan for improvement identifies centre-specific targets and success measures so that governance is able to provide effective support and challenge.
- The local authority should strengthen leadership and governance by providing the centre with relevant information about its performance as well as support and challenge in how it is used to evaluate impact and plan improvement.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Results from the centre's surveys and inspectors discussions with users show that there are good levels of satisfaction with the centre's activities. A high proportion of children and their families are registering at the centre and benefitting from a range of services offered. This is having a positive impact on improving outcomes which are good. Users report that by attending activities at the centre they have increased confidence, improved self-belief and are making friends, particularly those who have felt isolated or are new to the area. Discussions indicate that the emotional well-being of new mothers suffering depression or beginning breastfeeding has improved because worries or concerns have been shared. One parent expanded on this saying that the centre had given her a 'lifeline' and she could not have coped without it. Lone fathers also note feeling less isolated. Parents have an improved understanding of healthy eating and are sharing this understanding with their children, for example

by introducing more fruit into the diet at home. However, there is limited evidence of the impact on obesity levels. Data indicates that the centre has made a positive contribution to a reduction in the number of parents who have stopped or reduced smoking during pregnancy.

Parents have a better understanding of how to make their homes safer, for example by using a range of safety equipment that they have been introduced to at the centre. They also explain how they are able to treat minor injuries correctly and one parent described putting first aid training into action when their baby was choking. Fathers have enjoyed attending the dad's, lads and lassies group which has helped them to develop a wider range of strategies for managing their child's behaviour, reducing stress and anxiety for both parent and child. The centre is able to demonstrate clearly through case study examples that vulnerable children are helped to be kept safe through good multi-agency working and the use of the Common Assessment Framework. Support provided for parents with specific needs, such as those with alcohol addiction, has also helped to keep children safe.

Learning outcomes for children in the centre and crèche are good. Children and babies develop their physical, social and emotional skills well because of the good-quality resources available to them and opportunities to play together, for example when attending the baby clinic. Users say that they enjoy attending courses because they can make new friends and develop their skills and interests. Most feel able to contribute their views, particularly through the parent forum and at the end of a course, saying that the centre tries to respond if they make suggestions for improvement. They report feeling increasingly able to make a positive contribution to the centre and wider community by becoming volunteers in the crèche, by becoming breastfeeding advocates or members of the parent association when their child starts school. Numbers of parents gaining additional qualifications in childcare have been stable over a number of years and this is leading to some securing employment in the centre crèche or with other local providers. However, users said that they would like to develop other skills, such as using computers, to help them into future employment.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable 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	2
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2

The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment.	3
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How good is the provision?

2

The centre and its partners know their individual families well and use this understanding to provide a good range of well-integrated services which are matched effectively to their needs. This is enhanced by good information sharing between partners in health services, outreach work and other agencies and contributes to the good outcomes for children and their families. Joint home visits, for example with mental health workers, to those who have specific emotional needs, are used effectively to secure services from a range of relevant agencies, including housing, and engage these users and their families in centre-based activities. However, robust information about different groups from all partners which supports the centre's strategic assessment of need and planning of services is variable and not yet used systematically. Although user views are sought, the identification of their wider interests, skills and aspirations is not yet consistently informing the centre's programme development.

Well-attended baby clinics and good links with health visitors ensure that families are quickly made aware of the range of activities and learning opportunities available to them. Activities are advertised at the centre, by mail drops or emailed to those registered, although a few users said that they thought this could be improved. Activities are well attended and some are oversubscribed, such as Pilates and Dads, Lads and Lasses, so not all users who want to can attend. The centre leaders are looking at ways to address this. Regular taster sessions, such as 'decorate your own crockery' and flower arranging, are run to introduce users to new and enjoyable learning experiences. Good links with the local adult education college are developing these interests further through the provision of an accredited course in sewing machine skills and textiles. One attendee explained how this was helping financially because clothes could now be altered rather than having to buy new ones. However, opportunities to gain qualifications in literacy, numeracy and computer skills are not provided.

Users and their children are well cared for and provided with good-quality guidance and support from a wide range of partners and specialists, including the Family Information Service, Job Centre Plus, Citizens Advice Bureau, speech and language therapists and the oral hygiene team. Drop-in sessions are advertised and good-quality space is made available so that parents seeking advice can do so in privacy. Children with medical needs attending the crèche have medical care plans and services are adapted to meet the needs of parents and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those on the autistic spectrum. There are regular networking opportunities for childminders and access to good-quality toys, books and a sensory room, although the use of the sensory room is underdeveloped. Information leaflets and displays are readily available on a wide

range of health, financial and social matters, some in other languages for those who do not speak English as their first language, which signpost users to other providers where necessary.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	2
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Senior leaders across the centre, including in the early years and childcare provision, work well together as a team and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They have high expectations that their staff will act as good role models to the centre's users and are open to new ideas. The accommodation is well maintained, resources are of good quality and there are high levels of effectively deployed staff. As a result the centre provides good value for money and outcomes for the many users who attend are good.

Staff have appropriate professional supervision and good opportunities for relevant training, including in how to keep children safe. All the relevant checks are carried out and records kept, ensuring the suitability of staff who work with children. Risk assessments are thorough and, as a consequence, the site is very secure and users feel safe. The centre places a high priority on early intervention to prevent and reduce risk to vulnerable children and adults. As a consequence, there are strong relationships and effective procedures for working with a range of agencies to support those families at risk, for example those who have experienced domestic violence.

Although there are some strengths, leadership and management and their demonstrable capacity to improve are satisfactory overall. This is because of weaknesses in the use of data and monitoring information to assess the wider needs of users and evaluate the impact of the centre's work on the outcomes for all groups who access services or are hard to reach. This is reflected in the quality of the centre's team plan for improvement which lacks precise, centre-specific targets, including any to identify how the centre will promote equality of opportunity and celebrate diversity well. How the success of the planned actions will be measured is not quantified. Lines of accountability between the centre's leadership team and the advisory board are mostly understood; they are less clear regarding decision making

beyond the level of the advisory board. These weaknesses limit the effectiveness of the centre's governance to provide sufficient challenge and hold leaders to account for the impact of their work on improving outcomes and provision.

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 extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	3
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	3
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community 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

The inspection of the childcare provision in the crèche carried out on 21 September 2010 judged it to be good. Findings from this inspection have contributed to the children's centre report and judgements on outcomes for users and the effectiveness of provision.

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Summary for centre users

Your children's was inspected on 22 and 23 September 2010. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

The centre is an attractive and safe place to be for parents and their children. Users feel welcome and value the good range of resources, information and activities that are on offer to them. There are high levels of satisfaction with the centre, which parents report is making a difference to their lives. They particularly value the crèche facilities, which means they can attend courses or other sessions that are taking place confident that their children are being cared for well.

There are good opportunities to learn new skills and gain some qualifications, for example in childcare. Some users would like to see even more on offer, such as computer courses, which would be helpful to them when returning to work or looking for jobs. Parents have the opportunity to become volunteers and in some cases this has led to employment.

Various taster sessions help parents to meet new people and develop new interests. Some activities are so popular that they are oversubscribed, such as Pilates and the dads, lads and lassies group. The centre is looking at what can be done about this. Parents are able to contribute their ideas and make suggestions about what services and activities they would like through the parent forum.

Information about what is on offer at the centre is advertised at the centre, by email and post, but some parents feel this could be improved. The centre works well with lots of different organisations and gives support to families who need it in their homes. Good advice and support is available through drop-in sessions about a range of issues such as managing money, dealing with debt, housing and health issues. There are also useful leaflets, information sheets and displays in the centre to help parents.

Staff work well together and make sure everything is well organised and runs smoothly. They are friendly and build good relationships with families, so parents feel well supported, more confident and know where to go for advice when they need it.

The group which is responsible for advising the centre about how to improve is made up of a wide range of people, including representatives from the local authority. They meet regularly to discuss how the centre is doing. However, this group is not yet challenging leaders about how the centre is making a difference and what else needs to be done to help it become more effective. Also, the centre does not yet have enough information about what is working well and why. Nor does it have enough information about what more needs to be done to meet the needs of all users, including those who may not yet come to the centre. This lack of information means that how the centre is planning to develop is not clear or detailed enough yet. As a result the centre's effectiveness overall is satisfactory.

The good services offered by the centre are making a difference to those families who use it. In order for it to become even more effective and improve further, we have asked the centre's leaders to do three things. First, we have asked centre leaders to improve how they measure the difference they are making to all the families who use their services or who else might benefit from them. Second, we have asked the centre leaders to include more detail in their action plan about what they are going to improve and how they are going to know whether they have been as successful as possible. Third, we have asked the local authority to provide the leaders with more information about the centre's performance and help them to use it well, so they know what is making a difference and what else needs to be done.

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