

Inspection report for The Pride Children's Centre

Local authority	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	362505
Inspection dates	29-30 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Linda McLarty HMI

Centre governance	Local authority.
Centre leader	Alistair Scott
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Tiger Tots. EY357150 Kids in Bloom. EY337278

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents and carers, prospective parents and carers and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents and carers, prospective parents and carers 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 local authority representatives, centre leadership and management, partnership representatives, parents and carers and staff.

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

Information about the centre

The Pride Children's Centre is managed by the Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council. It serves a community which is in one of the 30% most disadvantaged wards in the country. Over 35% of all children in the Pride reach area live in households dependent upon workless benefits. The Pride is situated adjacent to the residential areas of Northwood and Southdene and the Knowsley Industrial Estate in Kirkby. The Pride is a Phase 1 centre which has been offering the full core offer since 31 December 2009. The centre manager took up post in 2008 and also manages two other local authority children's centres. Local authority leadership and governance is provided at strategic partnership, area board and advisory board levels, offering strategic management, direction and challenge to the centre. Almost all families are of White British heritage with fewer than one percent of families from black or minority ethnic groups. Polish families are the largest non-British group in the area.

The centre provides a base for a range of services on site including a public health midwife, maternity and family nurses, outreach and family services. The centre includes a private day nursery, which rents premises from the children's centre and is registered for 41 children under five years old, including 15 children under two. The Pride also offers childcare using Kids in Bloom day care services based in St. Joseph the Worker Primary School. These services were not inspected as part of this inspection and their most recent reports can be found on Ofsted's website. The children's centre also offers crèche provision for parents and carers accessing courses.

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

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

The Pride Children's Centre is improving all outcomes for users in its local community well and has a good capacity to improve outcomes even further. Since his appointment two years ago, the centre manager has improved the systems to assess local need and to show the impact of the services provided. It is not yet possible to assess the centre's progress towards the national indicators, or fully evidence the impact of the centre's work in its reach area.

Services are fully integrated and the extent to which the vision for the centre's service delivery is shared across partners is outstanding.

Local families, particularly those that need the most help, are offered bespoke services and activities that are sensitively adapted to encourage access, which promotes equality of opportunity well. Children and adults are given good opportunities to develop skills which help to equalise their life chances. Healthy lifestyles and enjoyment and achievement are promoted well. Parents and carers frequently told inspectors that the support provided by the centre staff is life-changing and describe the centre as a haven. Procedures for safeguarding and staying safe are outstanding. The use of the Common Assessment Framework tool is praised borough-wide as a model of good practice.

One reason that provision is good is because the centre managers know the area they serve very well. Sixty percent of the staff are Kirkby residents who bring insight from their local intelligence which enhances how well the centre knows the needs of its reach area.

Parents and carers, particularly those with complex needs, praise the quality of the care, guidance and support they receive and inspectors agree that this is outstanding. As one user reported, 'I don't know where I would be now without this centre.'

The leadership of the centre at all levels is outstanding. The centre manager also manages two other children's centres and, together with the deputy who has day-to-day operational responsibility for The Pride, they have built a very strong team with a shared determination and enthusiasm to improve the life chances of families in South Kirkby. Governance arrangements are robust, and the strategic, area and advisory boards act as a critical friend to the centre, holding it to account and challenging the leadership and management to improve the service. There are clear lines of accountability from borough through area to local level which continually sharpens the centre's focus on improving outcomes. However, centre leaders recognise that they cannot provide sufficiently local information to demonstrate accurately how their centre is making progress towards many of the national indicators. The extent to which users contribute to the decision making and governance of the centre is good and improving. The centre has been awarded Knowsley's 'Participation Standards Kite Mark award' for listening to and responding to what local residents want.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve outcomes, by:
 - improving the way the centre is able to demonstrate its achievements, including its progress against national indicators and use this information when planning provision to meet the national targets.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Outcomes for service users are good. The emotional and mental resilience of users is greatly improved by their engagement with the centre. Parents and carers, such as those who have suffered from stress-related or post-natal depression, are particularly well cared for. Local health professionals based at the centre, such as the public health midwife, maternity support and family nurses are an asset to families seeking easily accessible advice. Parents and carers praise the way centre staff work with other professionals in a holistic approach saying 'if you ask a question and they don't know, you know they'll find it out for you' and 'my child had many problems, but everything he needed was to be found here.'

Healthy lifestyles are promoted well through initiatives, such as the healthy cooking sessions, with crèche facilities provided to encourage participation. Baby massage and 'Bosom buddies' sessions help mothers share breastfeeding and child rearing tips, make friends, feel less isolated and learn valuable parenting skills. Staff repeatedly encourage children to eat fresh fruit throughout the day to promote healthy eating and free toothbrushes encourage dental hygiene.

Parents and carers encourage one another to attend the greatly valued behaviour management courses. Victims of domestic abuse are extremely well supported by

centre staff and the 'Freedom' course offers sensitive advice which attendees have found liberating. Case studies show excellent evidence that some attendees recovered their self-esteem and the confidence to improve the quality of their lives. The centre's work helps adult users and their children to stay extremely safe.

It is difficult for the centre to evidence its success in meeting national indicators, such as raising the take up of immunisation, breastfeeding initiation rates, reducing the rates of teenage pregnancy or smoking. This is because the centre's systems to monitor the impact of its work are still being developed.

Parents and carers told inspectors that the centre raised their self-esteem and gave them confidence to attend courses which helped them into paid employment. Help with childcare and housing needs by centre staff and their partner agencies have helped turn their lives around. Staff regularly go 'above and beyond the call of duty' as one parent told inspectors, texting parents and carers who looked particularly sad, showing genuine care whilst building up confidence, resilience and independence. Social care partners use the centre for sensitive meetings such as supervised access because it offers a safe, attractive and welcoming environment.

Children's communication skills are strengthened by the work of speech therapists, the artist in residence who promotes communication through creativity and the focus on language development in the two-year-old children's pilot scheme. Children are now better prepared for learning when they enter the local nurseries and schools, although they made less than expected progress in personal and social skills because of the focus upon speech and language. The manager, artist in residence and the children worked together to produce and publish three books which are much loved by the children and used well to encourage early literacy skills and self-confidence.

Users life chances are improved by attendance on courses which improve their employability, such as 'English for Speakers of Other Languages', literacy and numeracy, or which improve their confidence and life skills, such as family cookery. Two parents recently gained paid employment as a direct result of the centre's input. Information is readily available to direct parents and carers to sources of help and support from Jobcentre Plus and training courses. This further improves how users contribute to the community, for example, two parents have been trained as breastfeeding mentors in the 'bosom buddies' scheme; a few parents and carers are represented on the advisory board and a few are now confident enough to do voluntary work in the centre.

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	1
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	2

How good is the provision?

2

As soon as they enter the immaculate grounds, usually to a cheerful welcome by the on-site maintenance man, centre users are made to feel welcome and special by receptionists and staff. Staff evaluate the impact of individual services and activities and help parents and carers to see how their responses before and after activities indicate their personal growth.

Observations and the recent inspection reports identify that childcare commissioned by the centre is good and children attending the centre's childcare provision make good progress in their receiver schools. Childcare offered within the centre's crèche and in parent and toddler drop-in sessions at 'Little Adventurers' is of good quality and staff model play skills well to adults and their children.

Vulnerable families, for example, those with children who have a child protection plan or who have children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported through procedures such as the Common Assessment framework (CAF). The Pride is viewed as a model of good practice for the quality of diagnosis and accuracy of recording of their CAF forms, and for the regular reviews and use of multi-agency service monitoring meetings where professionals jointly discuss more complex CAF referrals to ensure that they are doing all they can to meet the needs of the families involved. The care, guidance and support for users are outstanding. The extremely safe and nurturing environment created in the centre is fostering significant improvements in the well-being of users. All staff are trained to identify when parents and carers and children may need additional support and often use this knowledge to alert family support staff.

Some very effective multi-agency work, such as with the mental health, counselling, benefits advice and debt counselling services, combined with the carefully integrated services provided by the centre, ensures that the needs of vulnerable families are assessed and met extremely well.

The centre has very thorough outreach procedures for supporting families in crisis which speedily direct families to the appropriate agencies to release the necessary support.

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	1
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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	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

Outstanding leadership and management at all levels has forged a strong staff team with a shared drive to improve the life chances of the families they serve and has created outstanding partnership arrangements.

Governance is outstanding. The local authority, area partnership and advisory boards hold the children's centre to account rigorously and have challenged the centre about issues such as how well they reach the most disadvantaged families in Kirkby Central ward, where 100% of all families were described as living in poverty. Subsequently, the leadership refocused its activity and can now demonstrate that it has registered 93% of all Kirkby Central residents.

The 'golden thread' of accountability links the performance management of individual staff to the aims and targets of the centre, which derive from area and local authority targets. The staff team collaborate in self-evaluation and in devising the service plan and their performance is measured against how well they promote the improvement targets. This fosters a shared sense of purpose and responsibility exceptionally well.

The centre offers good value for money because outcomes for its users are good. The centre can demonstrate its success on an individual and activity basis because of regular evaluations by users and centre staff. The centre is less able to demonstrate how well it is promoting the national indicator targets for the Every Child Matters outcomes because sometimes the data available is too broad to indicate the impact of the work of individual centres. It is also less able to show progress over time at centre level.

The inclusion and equality of opportunity of all children and families is good, and informed by a very good awareness of the most vulnerable communities within the reach area. Partnership working supports this well. For example, the health nursery nurse accurately identified the needs of a group of Polish parents who meet monthly and are increasingly being integrated into other groups. The leaders and managers correctly identify that in the predominantly White British population they have to try even harder to raise residents' awareness of the wider culture and community.

Safeguarding is outstanding and excellent recording ensures children and families who give cause for concern are well monitored. Presently, all policies and procedures are in place to safeguard users and are reviewed annually. Staff training is up-to -

date and appropriate for staff roles and responsibilities and the required checks are made to ensure safe recruitment. The use of the common assessment framework tool is praised borough-wide as a model of good practice.

Partnership is outstanding, driven by the leadership's commitment to collaborative working. This multi-agency approach to identifying and meeting needs works exceptionally well to support information sharing and preventative work. Parents' and carers' views are sought, valued and often used to reshape provision, although some parents and carers would prefer more flexibility in the times when the centre is available.

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood	1
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	1
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	2
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 evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	1
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	1
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	1

Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

Inspectors looked at the centre's self-evaluation form, data provided by the local authority and the centre, documents and policies, minutes of the advisory board and inspection outcomes for the commissioned childcare, and the inspection reports of receiver schools with Early Years Foundation Stage children in the centre's reach area. Discussions were held with the local authority, centre staff, partner agencies and parents.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Pride Children's Centre on 29 and 30 September 2010.
We judged the centre as good overall.

Centre users are now much more able to stay safe and healthy and to provide for their families. You told us how you are becoming better parents and carers and sometimes gaining voluntary or full time work because of the skills you learnt at the centre. The childcare and crèche arrangements help children who use the centre's services to make good progress when they enter school, especially in their speech and language skills.

Centre staff are outstanding at promoting the safety and well-being of all who use the centre, providing outstanding care, guidance and support. The centre is also outstanding at working with other agencies to help the most vulnerable children.

You repeatedly informed us that the staff have raised your confidence and self-esteem. We agree that staff are highly skilled at making sure that you access the right services to improve your life chances. You also like the welcoming atmosphere in the centre and the fact that there is always someone to help when you need advice. Those of you who have felt isolated and alone with your problems have made friends as a result of the centre's work. The management responds well to your needs, for example, providing a venue for the Saturday meetings of the fathers' group.

The centre and its partner agencies provide a good range of services. For example, there are courses on how to manage children's behaviour, or recognise and deal with domestic abuse. The centre manager and deputy and other senior staff check regularly that the sessions they provide are bringing about improvement.

The information gathered to provide evidence of how well the centre is working towards its own and national targets' is sometimes not at a sufficiently detailed level. This makes it difficult for the centre's leaders and managers to prove how effective The Pride's services are.

We have asked the centre to make more effective use of information to show its achievements, including the progress it makes towards meeting the national targets. This will help the leadership to know where best to focus their efforts to raise the life chances of local residents.

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