

Inspection report for Spilsby Children's Centre

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| Local authority | Lincolnshire |
| Inspection number | 365846 |
| Inspection dates | 8–9 February 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | Godfrey Bancroft AI |

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| Centre governance | Lincolnshire Local Authority |
| Centre leader | Coralie Armstrong |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Centre address | Woodlands Avenue |
| | Spilsby |
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| Linked school if applicable | Spilsby Primary School |
| Linked early years and childcare, if applicable | Buttons Nursery |

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.

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 two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre's staff, parents and carers, representatives of the local authority and partnership organisations, including the children's centre teacher, the partnership speech and language therapist, the headteacher of a local primary school, the senior early years officer for the Pre-School Learning Alliance and the Homestart organiser.

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

Information about the centre

The centre was designated as a phase two Sure Start children's centre in January 2008. It operates under the auspices of the local authority and provides children's centre services in the Spilsby area of Lincolnshire. The centre works in partnership with education, health and specialist family support services. It offers full core provision. Services are provided at a variety of different sites in the area through a multi-agency approach aimed at supporting families in the reach area. The centre leader (principal practitioner) also manages the children's centre in Alford and coordinates provision for children and young people in the 0–19 age range across the area.

The area served by the centre is ranked among the 20% most deprived in the country. Data show the reach area has above average levels of economic and social disadvantage, including high levels of unemployment and many families on benefits. Within the reach area, there are 631 children from birth to five years. The population is mainly White British with only a very small number coming from minority ethnic groups. Evidence indicates that children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are lower than that expected for their age.

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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

Spilsby is an outstanding children's centre. It operates at the very heart of the community. Parents, carers and partner providers are full of praise for the quality of its work.

All involved benefit greatly from the inspirational leadership provided by the principal practitioner. This leadership, linked with the high-quality governance and support provided by the Children's Services Partnership, means that even during challenging times all concerned are well motivated and enabled to give their best. Relationships, at all levels, are exceptionally well developed and the various partner providers, who contribute to the centre's work, are coordinated very effectively. As a result, those who need the centre's support are identified at an early stage and programmes to meet their needs quickly put in place. The centre also provides a wide range of very enjoyable and well-attended activities, presenting a happy and vibrant environment at all its venues. Newcomers are welcomed and quickly make friends. The mutual support that parents and carers provide for each other is an outstanding feature. Everyone feels valued, and equality and diversity are celebrated, raising the confidence and self-esteem of users in many ways. They are enabled to feel comfortable in their role as parents or carers, in contributing to their community and, in many cases, preparing for their return to the world of work.

Arrangements to safeguard children, parents and carers, including those who because of their circumstances might at times be vulnerable, are outstanding. The centre's response to helping those who have particular needs and are facing challenges in their lives is prompt and effective. As one parent commented, representing the views of many, 'I don't know where I would be without the centre, they are brilliant.'

The centre evaluates the impact of its performance at all levels. Parents, carers and partner providers are involved fully in the evaluation process. Their views are valued and they contribute very effectively to shaping the work of the centre. However,

some of the data, used to compare the performance of the centre with the national picture, are not always readily accessible. This makes fully evaluating some areas of the centre's performance difficult. The centre demonstrates an excellent capacity to sustain improvements in the future. This is evident in the dramatic way it has raised participation levels in the three years since it opened.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work closely with the local authority and other partners to gather and analyse information that will enable the centre to compare its performance with national information.

How good are outcomes for users?

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The centre makes an excellent contribution to promoting the physical, mental and emotional health of users and their children. Healthy lifestyles are promoted very effectively by, for example, the well-attended food nutrition courses. Staff are also swift to respond to the needs of any users who might at times be vulnerable, raising their self-esteem and helping in any way they can. Similarly, high-quality procedures and well-coordinated responses help to ensure that children are safe and protected, at home and when they visit the centre. High-quality outreach work and meticulously planned responses to needs result in strong and effective provision for those children who have a child protection plan and for those who are subject to the Common Assessment Framework processes.

Inspectors discussed the work of the centre with a significant number of parents and carers. Without exception, they commented on the help the centre provides and how much they enjoy the activities. This enjoyment is underpinned by an excellent range of activities and courses that enable children and their parents and carers to achieve very well, both educationally, vocationally and in their personal and social development. Even the youngest children quickly become enthusiastic learners, making rapid progress in all areas of their development. Because children are invariably absorbed in the activities on offer, which capture their interest, their behaviour is exemplary. Users are consulted at every stage about the work of the centre and are able to influence its development. All activities are evaluated through discussion and by more formal methods, such as completing questionnaires. Parents and carers also provide an influential presence on the centre's advisory board.

The centre enables children to acquire practical and social skills that will set them in good stead for the future. The success of this is illustrated by the way in which children are prepared very well for the next stages of learning and in their steadily improving progress when they enter the Early Years Foundation Stage. As a result of the centre's work, many parents and carers are similarly successful. An excellent range of training courses lays the foundation for finding employment. Unemployment in the area is high, but the centre gives access to computers so that users can identify employment opportunities. It also gives references and provides guidance on

making job applications. Success in this respect is celebrated and shared, providing inspiration for others.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

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| The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles | 1 |
| 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 | 1 |
| The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre | 1 |
| The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training | 1 |

How good is the provision?

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Children and their families, their backgrounds and the challenges they face are well known to the centre staff. The assessment of needs is accurate and the programmes of support resulting from assessments address users' needs very effectively. In this respect, the contribution of outreach workers, such as preventative workers, and the partnerships they operate are exemplary. Children's learning is promoted exceptionally well. This is largely attributable to the excellent work of the children's centre teacher who provides high-quality guidance and support for the centre's various partners, such as schools, independent nursery groups and childminders.

The activities and courses offered by the centre, including those that lead to formal qualifications are well chosen to meet individual needs and area priorities. They also make a significant contribution to the learning and enjoyment of adults. The views of users are listened to when planning the centre's programme, and this is greatly appreciated by parents and carers. Many of the centre's users are somewhat isolated, with many living in outlying villages. For many, transport links are infrequent and often difficult to access. Even so, the centre manages to include everyone through its outreach work and by holding activities at a wide range of venues around the reach area.

The care, guidance and support provided by the centre are also exemplary. Users express great confidence in the ability of the centre to respond promptly to their needs. At times of crisis, they know the centre will be there for them. High-quality and carefully monitored and supported childcare is available. Many parents participate in activities alongside their children, giving a strong feeling of community and mutual support.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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| The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users | 1 |
| The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users | 1 |
| The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community | 1 |
| 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?

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Very effective teamwork and cooperation between partner providers is a significant feature of the centre's work. Leaders at all levels, but especially the centre's principal practitioner, have high aspirations and expectations. Everyone works together, supporting each other. The governance of the centre, provided by the Children's Services Partnership under the auspices of the local authority, does an excellent job in holding the centre to account for the quality of its work. Targets are set and evaluated rigorously that reflect the centre's commitment to continued improvement and the key areas targeted for development. Users are involved well at all levels in evaluating the work of the centre, and their views are valued. The centre makes good use of the available data to compare its performance with other centres and against national expectations. However, some of the data it needs to make comparisons with the national picture are not always readily available or as easy to access as they should be.

The work of the centre in ensuring that all users are fully involved, including children and adults who have disabilities, is a prominent feature. The slightest instance of discrimination is taken seriously and tackled instantly. The centre involves the most disadvantaged users very well in all its activities, and there is clear evidence that it is successfully narrowing the gap for this group of users.

Safeguarding arrangements, including those for child protection and the procedures to ensure that employees and volunteers who have contact with children and vulnerable adults are suitable, are exemplary. Procedures are founded on those provided by the local authority which were judged to be outstanding by a recent Ofsted inspection (July 2010). The procedures are clearly understood, applied by all and work very effectively in practice. At all levels, the work of the various agencies that contribute to safeguarding is exceptional.

A high-quality feature of the centre's work is its liaison with partner providers to ensure the best possible outcomes for users. This includes forging exceptionally effective working relationships with statutory, private, voluntary and independent

providers. The support provided for the nearby independent Buttons Nursery and the Come and Play Playgroup, which operates at the town's Christian Fellowship Hall, provide a fine example of this cooperation. The centre uses its available resources wisely for the benefit of the community. For example, it often funds activities and resources for partnership groups, such as day nurseries. The use and impact of resources, whether human or material, is monitored closely by centre managers, ensuring excellent 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 | 1 |
| The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community | 2 |
| The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community | 1 |
| The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults | 1 |
| The extent to which 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

The findings from the report of the recent inspection of Spilsby Primary School were considered.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is

available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the Spilsby Children's Centre on 8–9 February 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

We would like to thank you for your contribution to this inspection. We are particularly grateful to those of you who gave your time to tell us about your experiences at Spilsby Children's Centre and how much you enjoy and value the activities, advice and support provided by the centre for you and your children.

Spilsby is a children's centre at which everyone matters and is clearly valued. We soon became aware that the centre's staff and users all benefit greatly from the excellent leadership of your principal practitioner. The support and guidance provided by the Children's Services Partnership also help the centre to operate smoothly. Above all, we were impressed by the welcome everyone receives when they visit the centre or any of the places where the centre's staff work. During these challenging times, it is gratifying to see that morale remains high and staff continue to do their best to support everyone who uses the centre.

All the various groups and organisations who work on behalf of the centre support each other well and complement each other's work. They are quick to identify your needs and provide excellent support in helping to meet the challenges you face. We think the centre provides you with a wide range of very enjoyable and well-attended activities. We know from your comments that you agree and are very pleased with what the centre provides on your behalf. Those of you who are new are made to feel welcome, settle in quickly and soon make friends. Parents and carers can be proud of the part they play in the centre's activities. Your attendance record at groups and courses is excellent. You also make an outstanding contribution through volunteering, gaining qualifications and helping each other whenever you can. This helps everyone to become more confident as parents and to make their contribution to the community. We also recognise that, at the present time, employment is hard to find. Even so, the centre does its best to help you to gain qualifications and to prepare for the world of work.

Arrangements to ensure that you and your children are safe feature strongly. The centre is also excellent at listening to your views and, wherever possible, responding to your needs. Amongst many comments praising the work of the centre, one parent said, 'I love coming to the centre and really appreciate the help they give. The staff are always cheerful and make you feel that you matter.'

The centre's managers and staff are always looking for ways to make things even better. They evaluate the impact of their work with great care and are always keen to listen to your views and to act on your suggestions. As part of helping managers

to improve the centre further, we have asked them to look closely at how they use the available statistical information to measure the centre's performance against that of others across the country. Even so, we think the centre demonstrates an excellent capacity to continue to improve in the future. This is shown in many ways, not least by the remarkable rise in participation levels since the centre opened three years ago.

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