

Inspection report for Great Parks Children's Centre

Local authority	Torbay
Inspection number	366399
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Reporting inspector	Mark Lindfield HMI

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Susan Bradbury
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Kings and Queens Day Nursery

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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 centre staff, representatives from the local authority and from a range of other external organisations, health services, parents and carers.

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

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate

Information about the centre

Great Parks is a Phase 2 Children's Centre and was designated in 2004, having been originally a Sure Start Local Programme. The centre serves the Blatchcombe, Preston and Clifton with Maidenway wards in Paignton. Within the centre's reach area there are significant areas of social and economic disadvantage which rank in the 20% most deprived nationally. The proportion of residents within the local authority who are dependent on workless benefits is increasing. Within the Great Parks reach area, a higher than average proportion of residents in the Blatchcombe ward are dependent on workless benefits. The proportion of children living in poverty within the reach area is much higher than the local authority average. The proportion of teenage parents within the local authority is higher than nationally and is increasing from previous years. Most families are of White British heritage.

Childcare and Early Years Foundation Stage education is provided at the Great Parks site by Kings and Queens Nursery which was built from Neighbourhood Nursery capital money and has been open since June 2004. The nursery has 52 places and

takes children from birth to four years old. The nursery was inspected separately on 14 February 2011.

The governance of the centre is through Torbay Local Authority and is informed by a parents' and carers' advisory board. In conjunction with other agencies, the centre offers a range of universal and targeted services including adult education, health clinics and family support. These are provided at four venues within the reach area.

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 overall effectiveness of the centre is good. Outcomes for users of the centre are good overall. Parents and carers are appreciative of the support and information that they receive from the centre's services and activities. The support provided for young parents is a strength of the centre's work. They are helped to develop their skills well through a carefully planned and delivered programme which leads on to an accredited qualification and further training opportunities. Young parents improve their awareness of sexual health through the centre's partnerships with health services. Young parents report that they feel so much more informed and are reassured by the support of knowledgeable centre staff.

Parents and carers value the safe, secure and welcoming environment at the centre's various localities. Staff demonstrate a clear and comprehensive awareness of the settings' safeguarding policy. The centre's recruitment procedures are well organised to ensure that checks are made on all staff prior to their appointment and that partner agencies have completed appropriate checks on visiting professionals. Staff record and regularly update their involvement and contact with families where there are safeguarding concerns. The centre's use of the Common Assessment Framework and support for families is satisfactory and is helping to improve outcomes for some families. However, systems for analysing the effectiveness of this support are not fully embedded and consequently support for families does not consistently lead to improvements.

The centre provides a range of services and activities which ensure that adults and children achieve well and enjoy their involvement with the centre. Good quality activities are provided for users in a range of settings. Popular and well-attended 'stay and play' and 'music, rhythm and rhyme' sessions are held at different venues

and allow parents and users with limited transport to more easily access these sessions. Parents and carers regularly complete evaluations of activities and their levels of satisfaction and views are taken into account in the centre's planning. Where these evaluations focus on what children and adults have gained from attending the session they are used more effectively in order to plan activities that further develop users' skills and knowledge. A positive response was noted from members of the Early Years Support Team during the inspection of their intention to change evaluation sheets to focus on outcomes rather than the activity and resourcing.

Adult users have good access to training courses which are adapted in the light of their feedback and comments to meet their needs. The centre has worked in partnership with adult education to ensure that literacy courses are organised so that they provide an effective springboard to develop users' skills further. The centre celebrates the individual successes of users well and this encourages them to develop their skills and raises their self-esteem. Parents who speak English as an additional language are provided with a variety of courses pitched appropriately to meet their developing English language skills. Senior leaders are developing an overview of training opportunities and programmes to ensure users are aware of the opportunities to build on their early achievements, work towards accredited courses and improve their employment prospects. Parents and carers spoke of receiving financial advice and information from staff and help to access benefits. Users' economic well-being is satisfactory overall because the centre's partnerships with agencies to provide employment and careers advice are not developed sufficiently to meet the increasing needs of users in the area.

An enthusiastic community engagement coordinator works across the local authority and pursues ambitious strategies for groups of users who may be subject to discrimination. The centre's actions to promote equality and provide an inclusive service have resulted in increased engagement of minority ethnic groups, fathers, and gypsy, Roma and Traveller families. The centre has a good capacity to improve because the local authority makes effective use of data and information to regularly evaluate individual sessions and activities provided by the centre's staff. These evaluations are used to inform strategic plans for groups of children's centres and to ensure resources are deployed to minimise duplication of services across the local authority. However, this broad overview of strategic planning does not include specific actions aimed at targeting services to meet the needs of families in the most deprived area within the centre's reach.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Target services more closely at engaging a greater proportion of users from the most deprived area within the centre's reach.

- Develop partnerships with a variety of statutory, private and independent agencies to improve users' economic well-being through increased access to careers and employment advice.
- Develop staff evaluations of sessions and activities to more closely focus on the gains made by users in order to plan for the next steps in their learning.
- Embed systems for analysing the effectiveness of the centre's support where there are safeguarding concerns to ensure outcomes are improved consistently for families.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Good care is taken to ensure children within the Nursery have an awareness of healthy hygiene routines and children enjoy a variety of nutritious dinners. Cookery courses provide opportunities for adults and young children to prepare meals together and they enjoy selecting healthy ingredients to make pizzas. Adults report that these sessions help to broaden their understanding of healthy eating and balanced meals.

The centre provides specific support for users from across the local authority with postnatal depression through 'Breaking Free' sessions, which help to improve their emotional well-being. Parents attending these sessions find staff supportive and prepared to listen to their suggestions and this increases users' self-esteem. The centre is working with health partners to improve local perceptions of the value of breastfeeding and have recently trained volunteers to act as peer supporters to promote breastfeeding.

Parents and carers recognise the positive impact of 'stay and play' and 'music, rhythm and rhyme' sessions on their own learning and development. Baby massage sessions provided by the centre help parents to develop close relationships with their children. By attending the centre's services and activities, adults develop social networks and supportive friendships. Parents and carers demonstrate respect for staff and other users and show good levels of acceptance of each other. An active parent advisory group meets regularly and, in presenting their views and opinions, members make a positive contribution to the work of the centre. Their evaluations are used by the centre to make modifications and adaptations to sessions and activities. A parent sought out inspectors to let them know the positive impact of the training they had received in first aid, in helping to stop smoking and in improving their emotional well-being.

There are clear and comprehensive risk assessments for children in the nursery

setting and these are displayed prominently in each room. Users report that they feel safe at the various settings within the centre's reach area. Staff have responded to their comments to ensure their concerns are addressed. Home fire safety checks, completed by the fire service, have provided parents with a good understanding of improving the safety of their home environment and reducing risk. Family support workers help to reduce the risk of harm for some families.

The centre links well with adult education providers to ensure that users access training courses and develop their knowledge and skills in a range of areas. Parents and carers who speak English as an additional language make good progress in developing their understanding of English. Some users were helped to complete a job application with staff at the centre providing references to support their applications.

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, and their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	3
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

How good is the provision?

2

Nursery staff consider individual needs well as they gain a good understanding of children's starting points through positive relationships with parents and carers. Children in the nursery setting learn right from wrong as staff are consistent in their expectations and in how they respond to unacceptable behaviour by talking quietly and clearly to children about their behaviour. Similarly, staff leading sessions for adult users provide good role models. For example, in a 'Chatter Tots' session a trained speech therapist modelled positive interactions with children and the use of questions to help parents and carers develop their children's use of language and communication skills. A multi-agency group is involved in the support offered to two-year-olds and their parents and carers as part of the government's two-year-old funding scheme.

Staff identify need for additional support and share information sensitively and appropriately with other agencies to ensure children get the support they need to enable them to progress. Adults report that centre staff make them feel welcome and they are treated with respect. Parents and carers spoke about the support they have received from the centre at times of crisis. The Family Support Manager is working to complete an overhaul of all assessment systems and case recording to evaluate the effectiveness of the local authority's support for families facing challenging circumstances.

Adult users have access to courses, such as a range of courses for English for speakers of other languages, and these are attended by users from across the local authority. The centre is effective in celebrating and building on users' success. For example, users attending an 'ABC' literacy course over six weeks have all signed up to participate in a higher level course. Parents and carers who attend 'Treasure Basket' sessions with their young babies take pride and enjoyment in building up a portfolio of their observations of their child's development.

The centre has been successful in using outreach workers to target a number of different groups of users. A weekly group for fathers provides opportunities for them to develop their parenting skills and build relationships with their children. The local authority has helped the centre to provide specific sessions for families of offenders and has developed a steering group with partner agencies. The centre works with the Traveller Education Service and Health Visiting Partnership to ensure that Travellers have the opportunity to access services when they arrive in the local area.

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?

2

The centre's arrangements for governance and accountability are clear. Staff are well supported and supervision is completed regularly with common agenda items across all staff. Supervision includes monitoring of individual case files where appropriate to ensure that concerns are recorded appropriately and regular contact with families is maintained. All staff working in the centre receive suitable safeguarding training. The centre has taken care to ensure that members of staff working with adults with drugs and alcohol dependency and in cases of domestic violence have a clear understanding of what action to take in the event of a safeguarding issue. In

partnership with social services the centre is developing its systems to share information on the frequency and effectiveness of its work to support families and reduce the risk of harm for children.

The local authority closely monitors the centre's activities and uses the centre's data to assess and evaluate take-up rates and the proportion of specific groups of users that attend sessions. This information is used to promote the inclusion of minority ethnic groups. Senior leaders and the local authority's evaluations of its services inform the priorities set out in the strategic plan for the area. Systems to evaluate the longer-term impact of the provision are improving outcomes for children and adults who use the centre and are increasingly effective. There is evidence that evaluation has resulted in changes to the provision which is increasingly successful in meeting the needs of a range of users. The local authority gathers a range of data to monitor the effectiveness of individual services and activities well, although these do not currently include services provided exclusively by the local authority or health partners. These evaluations and analysis are used to inform the local children's centres' annual conversations with the local authority and lead directly into strategic planning for Paignton and Brixham. However, these strategic plans for the wider area lack a specific focus on reaching the most deprived areas within the local community.

Provision or services offered by the centre are well used at a variety of locations. Users state that provision or support are generally well aligned to their needs and contribute to improving outcomes. Children with delays in their development of language and communication are supported through access to speech and language therapists. Staff are effectively deployed across the local authority to minimise duplication of services and consequently the centre provides good value for money. The parents' advisory group are actively involved in evaluating the work of the centre. They act as representatives for all users and their views are fed directly into staff meetings and are used to adapt services and activities.

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	2
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	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	3

The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	2
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

An inspection of Kings and Queens Day Nursery registered early years and childcare provision was carried out on 14 February 2011 shortly before the inspection of the centre under section 3 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report's findings have informed judgements made in the inspection of Great Parks Children's Centre. The report for Kings and Queens Day Nursery is available separately on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Great Parks Children's Centre on 2 and 3 March 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

During our visit we looked at the centre's plans and documents and talked with members of the centre's staff and representatives from the local authority. We held meetings with representatives of many of the professional groups working in partnership with the centre to provide the activities and sessions you attend. We talked to many of you as you took part in activities and you described the difference that the centre is making to you and the lives of your families.

Young parents told us how they are helped to develop their skills through well-organised activities and a planned programme of training. They reported that the centre staff help them to feel more knowledgeable and provide them with reassurance and valuable support. Many of you described the welcoming approach and the care taken by staff at all of the different venues to help you to stay safe. The centre completes checks on all staff before they start work to make sure that they are suitable to work with children and adults. They make sure that they keep a record of the support and contact with families facing difficult and challenging

circumstances so that they are helped to improve their lives. We have asked senior leaders at the centre to look carefully at the type of support and activities which are most helpful to families so that they can provide more of this in the future.

The centre provides a number of different activities which you find enjoyable. These popular activities, such as 'stay and play' and 'music and rhyme' sessions, are held at different venues around the area and this helps you to attend activities near to your home. Your views and thoughts about the centre are often asked for and we found examples where these had been used to improve services. We found that evaluations work better when they ask for your views on what you or your child gained from the session. These were used well in some sessions to plan activities which helped you to build on what you had learnt. We have asked the centre to gather this information more often and use this to plan the next steps in your learning.

You have good opportunities to learn and develop your skills and knowledge through adult learning courses. We noticed that the centre encourages you to take on these new challenges and is quick to celebrate your successes. This helps you to feel more confident about yourselves and helps you to gain certificates and qualifications.

The local authority has been successful in developing services and activities for a number of different groups of adults. They provide good opportunities for adults to learn English. They have encouraged fathers to attend weekly sessions and to play and learn alongside their children. They have provided good support for families from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds. The local authority and senior leaders look closely at each activity that the centre staff put on. They monitor the numbers attending each session to decide how best to provide the services that you want. They have developed plans to make sure that these services are used by a wide range of adults across Torbay, Paignton and Brixham. We have asked them to make sure that they are reaching families within the Great Parks area where there is most need of their support.

We would like to thank those of you who gave up your time to talk to us and to those of you who made a special effort to track us down during the inspection and tell us your views. We noticed that you are well represented by a group of parents and carers and hope that you will continue to let these parents and carers know what you think of the centre and its work so that they can help to further improve the activities and sessions.

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