

# Inspection report for Queens Park Children's Centre

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Local authority	Bournemouth Borough Council
Inspection number	365717
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Margaret Dickinson HMI

Centre governance	Barnardo's
Centre leader	Sarah Moore
Date of previous inspection	This is the centre's first inspection
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Jingle Bell House 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 representatives of the centre's advisory board, the local authority, partnership agencies, members of staff and users of the centre. 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

Queens Park Children's Centre is a phase two centre which was designated in April 2008. The local authority commissions Barnardo's, a charitable organisation, to manage the children's centre along with one other in the borough. Both share an advisory board. There is also a stakeholder group of professionals from key services which meets regularly.

The centre runs from a building outside its reach area. It shares a site with a pre-school, infant school and junior school, which are all managed independently of the children's centre. The centre provides the full core offer of services through the main site and its two satellite centres which are both located within its reach area. The area has 1,192 children under five. An off-site nursery provides day care. The proportion of children within the local area working at age-appropriate levels in the Early Years Foundation Stage is below the national average.

The three wards served by the centre have a divergent economic and social profile, with some parts that fall into the 20% most deprived wards in the country contrasted by others that are more advantaged. The proportion of workless households in the reach area is around average compared with the rest of the borough but the centre is seeing an increase in families from low income and workless homes and relying on benefits. The families in the reach area are predominantly of White British heritage. A small but increasing proportion are from a diverse range of minority ethnic groups, the most significant being Chinese. Attendance data provided by the centre indicate that English is spoken as an additional language to 21 different languages by users attending the centre.

### **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**

Queen’s Park Children’s Centre provides a good range of support and services for families and children in its reach area. These make a positive difference to the children, parents and carers who come into contact with the centre’s work, either through its outreach and family support or the variety of sessions that take place at its three sites.

Parents, carers and children much appreciate what the centre provides. For children, the well-planned and resourced activities promote clear enjoyment of learning and play. Parents particularly appreciate the crèche which enables them to attend the centre’s courses and sessions, safe in the knowledge that their children are in good hands. Parents appreciate the assistance they get across a range of services such as support in obtaining benefits, help with housing or being signposted to further education opportunities.

There is good attention to ensuring users’ safety in the centre. All necessary checks are undertaken on staff and are properly recorded. Security arrangements are appropriate. Equality and diversity are encouraged by the centre; respect for each other is a strong feature that is promoted well by all who work at the centre.

The centre uses its resources well and ensures a good balance between services that are universally available and those that are targeted to support families with particular needs. There are good partnerships with other agencies, particularly

health. This is a strength of the centre's work. The effective outreach and family support work is also a strong feature. The centre is successful in reaching some very vulnerable groups, including users of the women's refuge and other residential accommodation for single or expectant mothers which are located in the centre's reach area. It has also made successful strides in accessing harder to reach groups, for example, fathers. Two groups that have already been identified by the centre as less well represented are users from minority ethnic groups and disabled children. Two new roles have been set up to develop this work and this is appropriate.

Judged overall, the quality of leadership and management is good. The centre is highly regarded by its users who recognise the strong teamwork and commitment from staff. Many users spoke to inspectors about their trust and confidence in the centre's work and praised the extent to which staff listened to them, signposted them to sources of help, and were receptive to ideas and suggestions.

There is a clear vision for the centre resulting in successful outcomes. The centre has a consistent approach to evaluation and all sessions and courses are reviewed by users. Centre leaders and staff use this information well, to review provision and make any necessary adjustments. The local authority has worked successfully with health partners, over the last year, to agree a minimum set of data to support the centre's leadership in reviewing the impact of the centre's work on health outcomes. This is a positive development but still at an early stage. The advisory board plays a useful role offering advice and other support but it is not sufficiently involved in strategic decisions and parents and carers' are not sufficiently represented. Nevertheless, as a result of the overall good quality of the self-evaluation, coupled with other strengths in management and the effective relationships with other agencies, the centre's capacity to improve is good.

## **What does the centre need to do to improve further?**

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Ensure that the information to be provided by the local authority and health services is used effectively to review the impact of the centre's work and to inform how services need to be adapted to improve outcomes further.
- Encourage more children with disabilities and more users from minority ethnic groups to engage with the centre's services.
- Strengthen the role of the advisory board, building awareness of the need for accountability and challenge, and ensure stronger representation of parents and carers on the board.

## How good are outcomes for users?

2
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Outcomes are good and improving for the majority of users. One reported, 'The centre is an extension of my family. It has made such a big difference to my life.'

The centre makes a good contribution to supporting children and their families. There are good partnerships with other agencies such as health. Users appreciate the opportunity to access midwifery services on site and this leads to many coming into contact with the centre's wider services. Joint training, regular network meetings and initiatives where centre staff work in conjunction with other partners have had a beneficial impact for many users. Good examples are the joint working associated with the 'PEEP' (early learning intervention) and 'Parenting Puzzle' programmes and the 'Baby Sensory' sessions, which many users report have improved family relationships and children's behaviour.

There is also considerable success in supporting vulnerable families in cases where there is risk of injury or harm. Parents and carers from vulnerable and disadvantaged groups have been encouraged to attend a series of personal development courses which they have found valuable. The outcomes for many are improved mental and emotional health, less isolation and greater confidence. Support workers are sensitive to barriers which may result in parents' reluctance to come to the centre. Outcomes are positive as a result of home visits or accompanying parents to an initial session or appointment.

The safety of children and their families is supported well by use of the Common Assessment Framework and child protection plans with appropriate referrals made when necessary. Staff also provide good support for families to develop awareness of how to keep safe at home. Users become quickly aware of safe practices, for example, in the crèche and 'Stay and Play' sessions. As a result, those who attend the centre and its satellite venues feel safe and confident.

'Stay and Play' sessions are very well attended and the take-up has necessitated extra sessions being organised. Children very much enjoy these and other sessions which make a strong contribution to their personal and social development.

Sessions supporting parents and carers with their parenting skills are valued and enjoyed by users and evidence points to the centre's work giving parents and carers useful strategies to help them manage their children's behaviour at home. Users have been helped by cookery sessions which encourage them to broaden their skills and introduce a wider range of healthy foods at home.

Good use is made of the volunteering scheme to encourage parents and carers to broaden their skills. In some cases, this has led to volunteers undertaking further training and finding employment. The centre supports parents well with advice on housing and benefits and appropriately signposts parents to other services when help is required with employment and education services. Users report that this has been

very helpful.

Parents' and carers' views are welcomed and their suggestions considered. This has led to developing the garden area to provide a more attractive outside space, setting up trips and amending timings of sessions to make it easier for parents and carers to attend. Although there is parental representation on the advisory board, its impact on the strategic direction of the centre is limited because there are too few parents and carers on the board.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How good is the provision?**

<b>2</b>
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The centre assesses the needs of users very well and staff work closely with other professionals and other partners in this regard. Good use is made of the views and evaluations of users to shape services. On courses, the centre works effectively to assess parents' and carers' needs and involves them fully in the process. Parents set their own targets and review their progress against these at each meeting and at the end of a course. Staff are alert to the need to signpost parents to sources of help that fall outside the centre's direct work, such as help with further education. The centre provides good opportunities for babies, children and parents to play and learn and have fun together. The crèche is a welcoming, calm environment where children are settled and happy.

There is a strong commitment to taking the centre's services out to those who would not otherwise access them. For example, the centre has actively, and successfully, pursued various options to establish a satellite centre in the Charminster area in order to engage more users in this part of its reach. The importance of the centre's satellite centres and other outreach is considerable. One partner who works closely with the centre commented, 'Without such facilities, mums would be fearful and isolated' and a resident using one of the satellites undertaking a personal development course observed, 'This course has put a different perspective on things.'

Regular meetings of the stakeholders' group bring together members of key services, to share information and identify needs. This close partnership working helps to identify where work needs to be focused. For example, it recently raised the need for more support relating to domestic violence and the need for sessions for young mothers in the Westbourne area. The centre has shown good quality care and support by responding quickly to both these identified needs.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

<b>2</b>
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The centre is well led; day-to-day management is efficient. There is a clear vision for the direction that the centre takes. Barnardo's senior management provide effective challenge for the centre leader and action plans are appropriately focused and evaluated. Staff at all levels are clear about their roles and responsibilities, and are keen to do well and provide good support for users. The centre is a place where staff reflect on their practice and it is not taken for granted that the centre gets things right.

The advisory board is kept informed of the centre's work through the centre leader and is used appropriately as a sounding board to offer advice and support. Its role in holding the centre accountable for its work is less well developed and representation from parents and carers is limited. The local authority has been proactive in facilitating improved information from health services to support the centre's evaluation. It set the centre a target to expand its registrations over last year which it far exceeded.

Resources are very efficiently used. This is best reflected in the close partnership working between centre staff and agencies which ensures that support is well targeted. However, it also can be seen in simpler but no less important ways. For example, the time of the Under 2s' session was amended in response to parents' requests to fit in with the routines of both mothers and children, thus enabling more to attend.

Safeguarding is given good priority and arrangements for the vetting of staff adhere



closely to requirements. All staff undertake mandatory training in safeguarding. In the wider community, the centre is successful in providing support for vulnerable families, thus contributing to their safety.

Diversity is respected and the understanding of people from different backgrounds is encouraged. The centre offers good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

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

None

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Queens Park Children's Centre on 16 and 17 March 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We were pleased to be able to speak to many of you during our visit and I would like to thank in particular those of you who came into the centre specifically to meet with an inspector. Alongside your comments, we also looked at the evaluations parents and carers had written following courses and sessions as well as a range of documentation and evidence provided by the centre. These showed us that you clearly value the work that the centre does and find that it supports you and your children in many ways and makes a big difference to your lives.

We found that the centre makes sure there is a good balance between the services that are open to everyone and those that are specifically targeted to help parents and carers who have particular needs. Staff at the centre are alert to family circumstances and draw upon a range of strategies to help. They are good at knowing which courses and sessions would be helpful for people in different circumstances. They also know how to get information that is not necessarily available at the centre, for example help with benefits, housing support or further training and qualifications.

The sessions that are available to support children's learning and play are good. The crèche is a very valuable service which helps many of you to attend sessions and courses on your own, safe in the knowledge that your child or baby is being looked after well.

The outreach and family support work is a clear strength of the centre. Staff provide very good support for individual families. Many of you spoke of how staff go out of their way to go the extra mile. Some parents and carers, for example, feel uncertain about coming to the centre for the first time, and family support workers offer encouragement or go with parents on the first occasion to introduce them to the centre's work. Good relationships exist with the various residential housing settings in the centre's designated area and this means the centre staff really help mums who are encountering particularly difficult and challenging circumstances.

The centre is well run and staff work together well as a team. They are keen to make sure the centre provides support for all the groups represented in the area and good work has been done recently to involve more fathers, for example. The centre is working now to encourage groups that it knows do not come to the centre as much and two members of staff have new roles to help with this. We have asked the centre to continue to encourage these two groups.

The centre has a good system for checking how useful the sessions, courses and services are in meeting parents' and carers' needs. A lot of this comes from the evaluations users fill in at the end of courses or sessions and from informal discussions. These are valuable ways of finding out whether the centre is getting things right. More formal methods for evaluating the success of services are

developing based on better data which your local authority and health services are starting to provide. We are encouraging the centre to make best use of this new information so that it can improve services even more.

The advisory board offers good support and keeps in touch with what is going on at the centre. Members also have a role in challenging the centre's work, for example, by asking questions to help the centre leader set new targets and priorities. This function needs to be developed and there are not many parents and carers on the board. We have asked centre management to work with you to improve the work of the board and make it easier for some of you to become members.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).