

Inspection report for Kingsfold Children's Centre

Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	365803
Inspection dates	11-12 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Chanan Tomlin

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Linda Clement
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Martinfield Penwortham Preston Lancashire PR1 9HJ
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Linked school	Kingsfold Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	N/a

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.

Inspectors held meetings with the local authority, centre staff, health professionals, voluntary and statutory partner organisations, the Chair of the Governing Body, the local headteacher, parents and carers. They observed the centre's work and visited families in their homes. They looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Kingsfold Primary School was inspected during the same week as the children's centre. The full school report is available from your centre or on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Information about the centre

Kingsfold Children's Centre opened in August 2007 as a Less Disadvantaged Area (LDA) Children's Centre. It is a phase 2 children's centre and provides the full core offer. The centre is located on the same site as Kingsfold Primary School and is positioned to the south of its reach area, in an area which is in one of the 30% most deprived areas of the country. The reach area is predominantly made up of White British families and there is a small mix of different minority ethnic groups. The immediate reach area has mixed housing that includes sheltered accommodation adjacent to the centre site, social housing, privately owned and rented properties. There is social housing close to the centre that has a high prevalence of anti-social behaviour, criminal damage and gang related crime.

Levels of worklessness in the area are relatively low as are the proportion of families on benefits. The proportion of children known to be eligible for free school meals and support for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is significantly higher than those found locally and nationally. Children's skills, knowledge and

understanding, on entering the Early Years Foundation Stage, are well below those found typically for their age.

The day-to-day running of the centre is managed by a centre coordinator and is overseen by a head of centre, who is also the headteacher of the school. The centre has a committee that consists of members of the school's governing body, parents and carers, health visitors, local authority and school representatives. It offers support for families with young children both at the centre and at home.

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

This is a good centre. Outreach workers from the centre develop good, positive relationships with the families they work with. During home visits, adults feel at ease and are receptive to the advice and guidance that they are offered. Outreach workers are very committed to the families that they support and often go beyond the call of duty. For example, one parent was particularly touched when he spoke of how his case worker dropped everything to support him upon the sudden loss of a loved one.

Children thoroughly enjoy home visits and quickly establish good relationships and bond well with outreach workers. These visits provide parents and carers with opportunities to gain useful information and support on how to care for their children through relaxed, happy interactions in a non-judgmental atmosphere. At the centre, staff facilitate sessions that effectively promote child development and parent/child bonding. However, some sessions should focus more on the development of children's literacy and numeracy skills in order to improve children's attainment levels when they join the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Staff at the centre offer advice and guidance on all aspects of child parenting. Users

acknowledge that staff have a wealth of knowledge with regard to many aspects of homemaking and general living. They are unobtrusive when they offer advice. As a result, users are undaunted when they need guidance and are always comfortable to approach centre staff when they need to. Much of the guidance that users receive is informal and this could be augmented through courses of adult education.

The centre has good capacity to improve. It has developed outstanding connections with external agencies and service providers; these partnerships are at the centre of a drive towards excellence. Systems are in place to identify how users feel about the centre and what it offers, although a parents' forum that contributes to the governance of the centre is still in its infancy. Staff act upon users' recommendations and provide activities that cater to their needs and preferences. They work together effectively to identify areas for improvement and this is reflected in realistic development planning that includes focussed self-evaluation to further improve services.

The centre has policies in place to ensure that users are safeguarded properly. Staff are well aware of procedures related to child protection and all have attended the required training. Fathers and male carers take part in activities at the centre and there are well-attended sessions for grandparents. This indicates that equality and diversity are very much part of the ethos of the centre. However, users of the centre do not have a strong awareness of different cultures and backgrounds.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve children's skills, knowledge and understanding in literacy and numeracy on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage through the development of sessions run at the centre.
- Provide more opportunities for adult education and explore ways to promote attendance in the evenings and/or weekends.
- Further develop users' awareness of other cultures and backgrounds.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Supporting children's health is the focus of all outreach activities and workers provide parents and carers with clear strategies and good quality advice that effectively promote healthy lifestyles. The centre has been a major contributing factor in lowering rates of obesity in young children in the area and has made good inroads into promoting breastfeeding amongst mothers that use the centre. The centre has a 'Breastfeeding Champion', a designated room for mothers to feed in private and furniture that has been specially chosen for the comfort of breastfeeding mums. Centre staff have also been instrumental in improving oral health in youngsters

and in lowering the rates of mothers smoking in pregnancy. Drinking water is always available and fresh fruit is offered during some sessions to effectively promote healthy eating.

The centre's policies and procedures ensure that children are safe and protected and staff rightly see safety as a priority. As a result, there is a 'no hot drink' policy in the building to minimise potential accidents. Workers give advice on home safety during home visits and safety devices are offered free of charge for targeted families. At the centre, there are plenty of informative leaflets and posters about safety. Road safety events are very popular and successfully highlight the dangers of crossing the road to young children. Parents and carers have requested that these are more frequent.

Activities at the centre are geared towards Early Years Foundation Stage principles, although this is not documented through individual assessments. Children make rapid progress after they start school because some have attended the centre, gained the necessary communication skills and the ability to work cooperatively in the activities provided. Centre staff take an active role in supporting children on child protection plans and those that are looked after. They are fully aware of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process and are integral in ensuring that children are supported well through this process.

The centre has a good range of sessions and activities that support child rearing and development. Parents and carers enjoy these activities and acquire the necessary skills to raise their children. Babies and toddlers enjoy their time in the centre and it is sometimes difficult to get them to leave at the end of sessions. Staff are extremely warm and supportive. They make all users feel very welcome and maintain a calm, relaxed atmosphere. For example, new mothers are able to access support very quickly, usually receiving a home visit within a week. Children at the centre behave well and are always carefully supervised by their parents, carers and staff.

Users have very good relationships with staff and see them as caring and supportive whilst not being obtrusive. One mother said of staff that 'they are fantastic; the centre is balanced, we can go to them for anything and there is never any awkwardness!' They feel that they are taken seriously when they make suggestions. Although they seldom, if ever find reason to complain, users agree that a forum for user input should be part of the governance of the centre. The centre is not open in the evenings or on weekends and does not provide adult education to support future educational development. However, staff are very knowledgeable and work well together to provide the best possible advice. As a result, users value their input with regard to issues relating to economic stability and housing. Often, staff help users make significant changes that lead to their independence and self-sufficiency.

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have	2
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healthy lifestyles	
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	3

How good is the provision?

2

The centre is effective in the ways that it assesses the needs of children and their parents and carers. This is carried out through systems to encourage them to voice their opinions, informal discussion and a 'parents' forum' that has recently been established. Staff recognise the need to draw in potential users that are hard to reach. The centre is publicised wherever possible and staff are considering even more effective ways of raising the centre's profile within the community.

The centre is small, as are its resources and staff numbers. Specifically because of this, it is extremely warm and inviting. Arts and Crafts, 'messy-play', story and 'sing-a-long' sessions are very well attended. There is a good supply of books and toys that can be borrowed so that parents and carers can support their children's language development at home. The centre has two outdoor play areas that are well-equipped with a good variety of toys, apparatus and resources that encourage exploration and adventure. One of these areas has open access from the building and many children head straight for the outdoors as soon as they arrive. The sensory room contributes effectively to child development. It is a major feature of the centre of which staff are rightfully proud.

Group sessions for grandparents and carers are especially popular. Fathers and male carers say they feel welcome at sessions and some attend regularly, although there are no activities specifically for men. Outreach workers workload is near to capacity, they develop strong relationships with families and are on hand when users are in crisis. The centre has excellent links with Jobcentre Plus and follows up users' progress after they are signposted to it. Staff are seen as caring individuals that want the best for the families in the area; they are approachable and are often the main, viable link between families and the statutory services.

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	2
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

Safeguarding arrangements are good with all policies in place and very effective arrangements for the safe recruitment of staff. Staff work closely with families both in the centre and at home. As a result, they gain clear insight into the needs of users and are well-placed to identify the need for early intervention. For example, the centre supports children's speech and language development well through identifying potential difficulties and guiding parents and carers before genuine problems ensue. Outreach workers and centre staff have developed outstanding relationships with other agencies. Both statutory and voluntary agencies signpost users swiftly and effectively. Every member of staff is keenly aware of the support available and they ensure that users receive appropriate assistance through minor difficulties to major upheavals.

The centre is effective in the ways that it promotes equality and diversity. The 'Little Lions' group supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the centre is well-equipped to accommodate users with physical disabilities. All members of the community feel welcome at the centre. There are books and resources that are informative about other cultures and the centre is exploring ways of promoting multi-cultural awareness through activities and events.

The effectiveness of the governance and accountability of the centre is good. Leaders make good use of resources and the centre provides good value for money. Clear lines of management ensure that the centre runs smoothly and that the needs of users are met well. Staff enjoy good relationships and often seek each other's advice and encouragement. The centre is satisfactory in the way that it evaluates the services provided and the impact on families within in its reach. It is devising appropriate systems to evaluate its effectiveness through a more robust evaluation process in order to further improve its services.

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	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	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	2

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

Inspectors discussed findings regarding the Early Years Foundation Stage and safeguarding with the inspectors that carried out the inspection of Kingsfold Primary School on 10-11 May 2011.

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 Kingsfold Children's Centre on 11-12 May 2011. We judged the centre to be good overall. Much of our time at the centre was spent observing sessions and speaking to centre staff. We also spoke to representatives of agencies connected to your centre about the work that it does and how it signposts families to relevant

agencies. Most important of all, we attended home visits and had long discussions with those of you that use the centre on a regular basis. We greatly appreciated the opportunity to speak to you, because this, more than anything else gave us a keen insight into the workings of the centre.

As you know, the main aim of your centre is to support families with young children. The centre does this well through a good range of activities and a warm welcoming atmosphere. You have told us that the staff are particularly, caring, warm and unobtrusive. We agree with this and are sure that this is the main reason that the centre is so effective in catering to your needs. The centre supports parents and carers through all of the stages of early child rearing; from before birth until children are well into the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is effective in the ways that it promotes health during pregnancy, breastfeeding and child development. Centre staff also work hard to help you ensure that you provide a safe environment for your children.

We feel that the centre is run well and that the good relationships that exist between the staff ensure that you are guided and signposted well. We were especially impressed with the relationships that exist between centre staff and the many agencies that are attached to it. Staff at the centre know exactly which services are available and how to access them. As a result, they are well placed to support you whenever you need assistance.

We have identified a few areas that the centre could improve on. Children that join the Early Years Foundation Stage of the adjoining school, enter with skills, knowledge and understanding below those expected for their age. We, therefore, feel that the centre should explore more ways of promoting literacy and numeracy through the sessions and activities that it offers. The centre is good in the ways that it helps you promote your children's development but does not provide education that can help you, as adults, achieve economic stability and improve your competencies and confidence. We feel that the centre should look into ways of filling this need.

You are often asked for your opinions and your requests are always taken into consideration. It is important that your input becomes a formal part of the decision making at the centre and this should be in the form of an active forum of users as part of the governing body of the centre. We also feel that, being that most of the users of the centre are of White British origin, it would be helpful if the centre organised activities and events to promote multi-cultural awareness. Thank you again for your help and talking to us so openly.

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