

Inspection report for Kitts Green Shard End Children's Centre

Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	367826
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Reporting inspector	Harmesh Manghra HMI

Centre governance	Local authority
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Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school if applicable	Ridpool Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Priority Area Playgroups and Kitts Green Community Day 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 one of Her Majesty's Inspector and an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, senior management team, representatives of the advisory board, a range of agencies, parents and other users of the centre. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documentation.

Information about the centre

Kitts Green Shard End Children's Centre is based in Shard End, east Birmingham. It is one of the five centres based in the locality. The centre is located at the boundary of the south of the area. The ward is split by the river Cole. Public transport to get to the centre is not available for the residents in the north of the ward. Birmingham local authority has delegated the day-to-day running of the centre to Spurgeons, a children's charity; however it retains the overall responsibility for governance. The centre has its own advisory board which is made up of representatives from the local community, Birmingham local authority, parents, the Primary Care Trust, staff and the local nursery.

The majority of the families surrounding the reach of the centre are White British. According to the census of 2001, 8% of the population is from minority ethnic groups as compared with the city average of 30%. The area comprises of 17 super output areas of indicators of multiple deprivation, 12 of which fall within the top 10% in the country. The housing in the reach area is a mix of social and private housing, including a small number of tower blocks. Some 45% of the households in the reach area are claiming out-of-work benefits; teenage pregnancy rates are twice the rate in Birmingham and Shard End ranks fourth highest in the rankings of reported domestic violence. Obesity rates for children entering school are also high. Most children enter child care and early education with skills that are much lower than expected for their age.

Kitts Green Shard End Children’s Centre has evolved from a Sure Start centre that moved to a purpose-built building in 2006 in the grounds of Ridpool Primary School. The centre occupies a corner of the school site and has access to school compound through a secure gate and a secure outdoor area. The centre has a reach of 2187 and in May 2011 the centre was working with 50% of the families. In addition, 628 parents from three neighbouring children’s centres make use of facilities of Kitts Green and Shard End Children’s Centre. Some 28 staff, including the centre manager, provide services at this and the nearby Tame Valley Children’s Centre, which was inspected in June 2010.

The centre provides the full core offer. It offers a range of activities to include baby clinics, child development checks, breast-feeding support and special needs support. A number of support groups such as family support drop-in, housing advice, young parents’ group and child minders operate from the centre. On the site, Kitts Green Community Day Nursery provides childcare facilities. Priority area Playgroups run a playgroup in the centre five mornings a week. The centre is open for 48 weeks of the year from 8am until 5.30pm and provides free crèche facilities for parents.

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

Kitts Green Shard End Children’s Centre provides good support for children and families to help them achieve good outcomes for all aspects of the Every Child Matters agenda. Children who attend the Early Years Foundation Stage playgroup and crèche facilities make good progress in their learning and in their personal, social and emotional development as well as communications, language and literacy.

Parents and other users appreciate the warm and friendly welcome they receive when they visit the centre. The centre manager and all staff ensure that the building is a safe and secure environment for all users. Case study evidence indicates that families regularly turn to the centre for help in times of crisis. In the words of one parent, ‘The staff are there with you all the way.’

The quality and range of services including care, guidance and support are good. Many agencies provide their services from the centre but the take-up of courses and some services by parents is patchy and many of the current users do not make full use of what is available. Several parents have ceased attending the centre. Staff have a good knowledge and level of data for their part of the service which they use well to deliver the whole range of services. However, managers do not have a strategic overview of the overall performance of the centre against each of the services. They have not set specific targets to focus their attention to deal with key issues facing the reach area, such as improving breast-feeding and reducing teenage pregnancy at a faster rate. Similar managers have not vigorously pursued the possibility of facilitating literacy, numeracy and computer classes, as requested by parents, in conjunction with other partners.

The centre's self-evaluation is carefully considered and accurate. Senior leaders and the advisory board have an accurate view of the strengths and areas for development. The managers are working to improve the provision although the local authority has not set specific targets for Spurgeons. The centre meets its statutory responsibilities for the promotion of equality and diversity. The centre has made considerable improvements to the lives of many of the families from the deprived neighbourhoods. All different user groups are well represented in the centre and they achieve equally well.

Leaders have used their experience of the inspection of Tame Valley Children's Centre as a basis for reviewing and improving the provision at this centre. They have improved the collection and analysis of data and reach levels; improved the recording and achievement of all outcomes; raised the quality of provision; and improved the impact of leadership and management. They have effectively managed various changes to the staffing of the centre. Inspectors judged the centre to have good capacity to make sustained improvements.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Further increase the reach of the centre to attract greater numbers of users into the service through:
 - more clearly targeting of groups not currently participating
 - more sensitive and rigorous follow-up of families who have ceased attending
 - providing induction to the centre to make users aware of the full range of facilities and services.

- Work in close consultation with the local authority and other partners to extend the scope and reach of services to meet the identified needs of service users.

- Make better use of data at the centre and strategic level against which the managers can manage staff performance efficiently by setting individual targets

for staff and to give robust evidence of outcomes and secure improvements at a faster pace.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Parents develop a good understanding of the overall health issues facing them and their children including emotional, physical and mental well-being. They have fully understood the message of healthy eating and increasing physical exercise through 'Yummy Mummies' programme. Children have learnt to enjoy healthy snacks such as free fruit in the centre. Many parents report they have changed their shopping and eating habits by including fresh fruits and vegetables in their daily diet. 'Cook and Taste' courses introduce parents to cooking methods and ingredients from different cultures. Skills gained during food hygiene and first-aid courses are useful to the parents in their daily life and encourage them to lead healthier life styles. Immunisation of children is high, compared to national level, to protect them from diseases. Parents learn the art of baby massage to form a stronger bond and trusting relationship with their children. They enjoy learning about child development and behaviour to improve their skills and interactions with their children. The centre has been less successful at promoting breastfeeding, contraception and sexual health for teenage parents, avoiding obesity and tackling low birth weight.

Parents and children feel well protected and safe in the centre. Parents become more aware of the risks to their children at home and during outdoor play. This helps them to take appropriate steps to reduce the risk of harm to children through early identification and prevention. Most home safety assessments are invariably followed up with the installation of equipment. The centre is working effectively with multiple agencies to support all children subject to child protection plans and the Common Assessment Framework procedure. The centre has been particularly successful in raising parents' awareness of domestic violence through the 'Freedom' programme, helping parents to adopt strategies to protect themselves and their children.

Parents make a sound contribution to the centre's decision-making processes on both a formal and informal basis during their visits to the centre and through the advisory board. Children and their parents attending the centre enjoy their learning and make rapid progress. Through attendance at the 'Stay and Play' sessions, a substantial number of parents have gradually moved to building up their children's personal, social and emotional development as well as communication, language and literacy skills. Some parents, including hard-to-reach groups such as lone parents, disabled carers and young parents, are offered one-to-one support. Other partners, including the local childminders' group, also contribute to the Early Years Foundation Stage by assessing children's progress and achievement accordingly.

Highly effective parenting courses such as 'Incredible Years' and 'Triple P' have had a positive impact on improving children's behaviour and confidence. Parents enjoy and achieve accredited and non-accredited courses, such as Community Matters, digital photography, food hygiene and first aid.

Children learn to socialise and behave well in groups thus gaining valuable skills in developing relationships and positive behaviour. Parents, including young parents, overcome their social isolation as they meet other parents who face similar barriers. Children are developing good skills for the future. Jobcentre Plus and a local recruitment firm specialising in working with long-term unemployed people provide extensive information on vacancies and useful guidance to parents in making job 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, 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 staff make good use of a broad range of information that the centre gains from various agencies and professionals to formulate a personalised action plan of interventions and support for families. This has improved in recent months as a result of the centre's review of its work. The assessment of each family's needs starts at the first point of contact and covers the whole range of indicators including health, debt, safeguarding, domestic violence, isolation and mental health. Families with children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully involved in the thorough assessments and offered guidance and support to ensure that their children make good progress. The centre holds regular 'Team Around the Child' meetings to provide integrated and timely support packages. All parents who spoke to inspectors were positive about the centre and the impact different services have had on their families. Work with vulnerable adults is good. Parents typically report that, 'The staff go an extra mile to support their families.'

The centre promotes a good range of purposeful learning and development to benefit its users. Staff have sharpened their expertise through useful training and focus their support on improving children's competency across the Early Years Foundation Stage. For example, the improved focus on developing communication,

language and literacy in 'Stay and Play' sessions has led to children achieving on par with the rest of Birmingham children. Parents record the children's achievements in journals and can measure the progress made by their child. The outcomes from the family support measures are excellent particularly in reducing the levels of repeat incidents of domestic violence, often exceeding the targets. The range of learning available to parents is narrow. Retention on various courses is low. Some courses that develop a good level of skills and knowledge among the parents are not accredited. A small number of parents have accessed and achieved short accredited qualifications in topics such as food hygiene and first aid. However, qualifications to improve their employment opportunities in literacy, numeracy and computer studies are not available and the centre has not done enough to provide these in conjunction with its partners.

The quality and range of provision for users is good and comprehensive children. Various partner agencies provide a range of service such as health, early years, social services, employment, and housing support from the centre and from community venues such as the Shard End Library. The centre has improved the registration of new births in partnership with the health service. Job Centre Plus has been most effective at reaching those parents on out-of-work benefits to make them aware of vacancies and support them into employment. Programmes to combat domestic violence through courses and support have also been very effective. The centre has provided twilight and Saturday sessions to engage parents who work and, in particular, fathers. Trips to various cultural events and venues have been a welcome addition to broaden parents' and children's horizons. The centre has engaged with some 42% of the known teenage parents in the reach area and established good support and awareness programme. However, awareness of sexual health, contraception and prevention of pregnancy at younger age is not sufficiently promoted.

The quality of care and support for families is good overall and excellent for those under stress. Staff have detailed knowledge of the families they work with and take prompt and highly effective action to protect children and adults. Signposting to various other services is appropriate. A good range of leaflets is available in the centre and many users encourage their neighbours and friends to attend the centre.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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	3
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

Leadership and management at all levels in the centre are good. The centre manager and the staff are well qualified and highly professional in their approach. They are passionate about their work and enthusiastic in their approach. Team working is excellent. The centre runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and the well-being of all users is high priority. There is a common purpose among all staff and key partners to improve outcomes for children. The roles and responsibilities of all staff are clear. The centre manager has minimised the impact of vacancies, sickness and other absences by updating the skills of all staff through careful shadowing and peer support. Staff are effectively supervised and their performance management is satisfactory. At present, staff performance is measured against overall centre performance not against individual targets. The lines of accountability are clear for all staff. The centre manager uses the best practice from within the local authority and Spurgeons. The recent annual conversation with the local authority was highly analytical and accurate at identifying all aspects of the centre's performance. The local authority has well considered and ambitious plans to improve the management and strategic impact of the centre's role, although many of the targets are not formally set.

The centre has a well-established culture of considering the risks and safeguarding users. All staff have high awareness of child protection and safeguarding and they carefully raise parents' awareness. Centre staff are trained in the Common Assessment Framework process and have received child protection training. The centre meets all the requirements regarding the safe recruitment of staff and records are well maintained. All staff have been subject to an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. The centre diligently records CRB and other checks undertaken by partner agencies for staff working at the centre. Protocols and practices for referrals are well known and a high priority across the work of the centre.

Partnerships between professionals, agencies and outreach organisations are sound and securely support the most vulnerable families. Staff are committed to promoting the inclusion of all families within the reach area. The centre has accurate information on the users from different groups and their outcomes. All groups, including children with disabilities, are making equal progress and achieving equal outcomes. Although parents from different groups meet and share their experiences at a personal level, the centre does not sufficiently promote the community to foster greater understanding between all groups.

Resources are good overall but computer facilities are limited. The centre provides good value for money as it has made a strong contribution to improve sustainable outcomes for parents and children.

The centre evaluates its work well and uses the findings to improve its performance.

Staff gain feedback from users and partners, conduct satisfaction surveys and evaluate each others' work. The sharing of good practice is satisfactory. Satisfaction levels among users and partners are very high.

Parents become active members of the children centre community and offer their suggestions and comments to improve services. Members of the advisory board are fully committed to improving outcomes for children and families. The board is well established with high numbers of parent representatives. The working relationships are positive and attendance at meetings is very high. Reports are informative and written in plain English to ensure they are accessible to all parents. A diverse group of parent ambassadors are undergoing induction and are very keen to play their part in developing the children's centre services even further.

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	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	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

As part of the evidence, the inspectors considered the Ofsted reports of Ridpool Primary School and of Kitts Green Community Day Nursery conducted in the past 12 months.

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 Kitts Green Shard End Children Centre on 7–8 June 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you for contributing to the inspection. Your open and honest comments were invaluable to the inspectors in making judgments about the strengths and areas for improvement. The centre is safe and secure and easily accessible for most of you. You feel very comfortable learning in the safe knowledge that your children are well looked after. Many of you have benefited significantly from the help and support you have been given to improve your children's well-being. However, not all families who could benefit are making full use of the facilities.

The centre is making a valuable contribution to children's and parents' well-being and learning. You have told us that your children make a positive start to their childhood through greater opportunities to learn and develop better behaviour. Inspectors agreed that your children are well prepared for their next steps into Nursery. Most of the children make good progress in their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Those of you who have used the services of the centre over a longer period are proud to talk about the enjoyment and achievement of your sons and daughters in their schools. You have also confirmed the tremendous growth in the self-confidence of your children and improvements in your own self-esteem. Many unemployed users have benefited from the good quality advice and support available at the centre to help them look for work. All of you highly appreciate the availability of the range of services in your neighbourhood. Parents are making a positive contribution to the life of their community through raising their aspirations for themselves and their children. The programmes on combating domestic violence and reducing teenage pregnancy rates have been successful. However, the scale of the problems remains high in the area.

The staff and managers are well qualified and work extremely hard as a team to provide a broad range of services in your community. The care, guidance and support provided for families is good. The vast majority of you have enormous respect and regard for the professionalism of the centre staff. You have told us how you value the support from the staff and some of you say you regard the centre as your 'second home'. The range of programmes and advice is good and is highly valued by you. However, you would like the centre to provide classes in literacy, numeracy and computing either at the centre or in your neighbourhood. The programmes provided are developed in consultation with parents and many of you have made a commitment to become parent ambassadors and advisory board members to encourage more parents to attend and share the benefits. Many of you described your experiences at the centre as 'life changing'.

All staff at the centre understands the needs of the local families very well. They work very effectively with a range of agencies to meet the needs of the families. Managers have good systems to ensure that their team members are doing a good job and continue to improve the quality of their services in consultation with you.

Inspectors believe that the centre has a good record of improving the service and strong capacity to improve the services even further.

We have asked the centre to make three improvements. First, the centre should extend the service to a greater number of people through: parent ambassadors introducing parents to the full range of services the centre offers; and clearly targeting families to deal with specific aspects such as reducing domestic violence, teenage pregnancy and increasing the level of breastfeeding. Second, the centre should work closely with the local authority and other partners to extend the scope and reach of services to meet the identified needs of service users. Finally, the centre should improve its use of data to analyse the take up of services by parents and set targets for improvements in all its services.

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