

Inspection report for Kirkley Children's Centre

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| Local authority | Suffolk |
| Inspection number | 383981 |
| Inspection dates | 13–14 July 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | Susan Smith HMI |

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| Centre governance | The Local Authority |
| Centre leader | Judith Wright |
| Date of previous inspection | N/A |
| Centre address | Kirkley Street |
| | Lowestoft |
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| Linked school if applicable | N/A |
| Linked early years and childcare, if applicable | Ladybird Day Care 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.

An inspection of the registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 3 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, representatives from the local authority, health and social care staff, centre staff and parents. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Kirkley Children's Centre was designated in September 2005 and is run directly by the local authority. It is one of three centres serving the south Lowestoft community which operate joint management arrangements.

Lowestoft is a coastal town with high levels of social disadvantage and deprivation. The reach area has high levels of unemployment and teenage pregnancies and many incidences of domestic violence, drug dependency and alcohol issues. The local population is mostly White British with smaller percentages of minority ethnic groups including Asian, Portuguese and Eastern Europeans. The percentage of families where English is not the first language is increasing. The centre is the base for a team of health visitors, speech and language therapists and the children centre staff team. Other health professionals offer community services from the building. The centre provides the full core offer that includes a range of services such as childcare and learning, links to local health and employment services, family support and outreach, and support for local childminders.

Local childcare provision is provided by Ladybird Day Care Nursery, managed by Lowestoft College, which also shares the site, and which was inspected the day

before the children’s centre. Children enter early years provision with skills and knowledge generally below those expected for their age.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children’s centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for users and the wider community

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

Kirkley Children’s Centre provides an outstanding level of service and serves the needs of the local community exceptionally well. It is an excellent example of what can be achieved when different agencies share the same vision and thinking at strategic and operational levels. Consequently, partnership and multi-agency working is exemplary. Excellent relationships forged over time foster a strong sense of common purpose among the vast majority of providers and professionals involved in the centre.

The management arrangements of Kirkley are superb. The centre manager is inspirational and oversees the three children’s centres in the south Lowestoft area. These centres have a shared ethos which relates to the importance of helping parents to develop attachment with their children. Through this vision the centre engages extremely successfully with its users, including those from particularly vulnerable groups, and has an exceedingly positive impact on their lives and those of their children.

The staff team contains an excellent mix of expertise that is highly pertinent to the work of the children’s centre. All staff take great pride in the services they offer and they truly value the individual nature of each user with whom they work. Staff are highly motivated and thrive in a culture of self-evaluation which results in continuous improvement in the already high quality services. All staff based at the centre go out of their way to ensure that every telephone call or drop-in is managed sensitively.

Users receive outstanding care, guidance and support. Staff and users show consideration to each other and there is an atmosphere of mutual respect. Users report that they truly value the fact that all staff take time to listen and support them whenever needed. Staff are very effective at empowering users, the majority of

whom report significantly increased levels of confidence due to their contact with the centre. The centre has also succeeded in building resilience amongst users; particularly young parents, because after working with the centre for a while they develop their own support networks and meet regularly outside the centre as well.

Extensive evaluation is embedded throughout the centre's work at all levels to provide an exceptionally clear view of the impact of services. As a result, provision and outcomes are outstanding. Future development is planned meticulously, using all evaluation and data available to the centre, so that services continue to improve and reach further into the catchment area. The capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding.

The centre puts the highest priority on safeguarding children's welfare. The centre's designated person is exceptionally experienced and knowledgeable in current procedures and the centre employs exemplary inter-agency working to safeguard children's welfare. The centre is especially welcoming to all; inclusive attitudes and practice are infused throughout all aspects of its provision.

It is a testament to the success of the centre that many activities are highly attended. This is especially true at drop-in sessions such as 'Natural Wonders'. The centre is closely monitoring attendance numbers and is currently exploring a variety of strategies to ensure that the high numbers do not have a detrimental effect on the quality of service they are able to provide to the individual users.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Build on the successful, established strategies designed to support and encourage the community to access services, by exploring ways to ensure that the high quality of activities currently offered does not become diluted due to the increasing numbers of families using them.

How good are outcomes for users?

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The well-being of all users is given the highest priority. Services and groups have a very high rate of attendance by families and include an extremely high number of users who have not traditionally engaged with their services, such as young parents and fathers. The centre is currently carefully considering ways to ensure that the high quality of services is not adversely affected due to the increasingly high attendance rates, particularly at the drop-in sessions.

There is exceptionally good partnership working with health services to deliver an extensive range of universal and targeted services within the centre premises. Groups and services such as the Well Baby Clinic, Baby Café, baby massage and Midwives' antenatal and postnatal drop-in have a highly positive impact on health and well-being. Staff at the centre work closely with the specialised midwife and the

Family Nurse Partnership to ensure that vulnerable women who are pregnant, especially young parents, are provided with high levels of support. The 'B4 Babe' programme, an antenatal programme for young parents, offered by centre staff is acknowledged by other agencies as a model of good practice. All who participate in these programmes develop a greatly increased level of self-esteem and emotional well-being, and are very well prepared for when their baby arrives. As a result, more mothers are initiating breastfeeding, however, despite this, sustained breastfeeding has not yet increased to the same level. The centre actively promotes healthy eating by offering healthy snacks and is effective in encouraging users to try new fruits and vegetables. Children and parents and carers are actively involved in planting and caring for vegetables which increases their interest in healthy food.

Adults say they feel very safe when they are at the centre. As a result of the very good relationships between centre staff, children, parents and carers, users have the confidence to speak out about any issues that concern them at home, in the centre or the local community. Children who are the subject of a child protection plan and those involved with the Common Assessment Framework process benefit from exemplary procedures to improve their safety and well-being.

Parents, carers and children clearly enjoy their activities and experiences at the centre and have fun learning together. Their understanding of how their children develop is greatly enhanced by the advice, support and guidance given by centre staff. The rich and varied range of high-quality activities such as 'Natural Wonders', 'Jo Jingles Music Group', 'Sounds Together' and the young parents' drop-in sessions make an outstanding contribution to children's development in their early years. Children are happy and confident in their interactions with adults. A rapidly increasing number are achieving 78 or more points on the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and six or more points in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development. The good early years' provision means that children are well prepared when they move to school or other early years' settings.

A strong focus is placed on developing children's language and communication skills. This is illustrated by the centre being the first in Suffolk to gain Every Child a Talker (ECAT) accreditation. Interesting resources are placed in the reception area to stimulate children's natural curiosity and encourage parents and carers to talk to their children while they wait to enter nursery activities sessions or appointments with professionals. Speech and language therapists based in the centre visit the drop-in activity sessions so that parents can have access to them informally as well as through targeted support. These activities make a strong and effective contribution to improving the communication skills of children who attend the centre and other early years' settings.

Positive relationships are wholly integrated throughout the centre. Staff are exemplary role models and all users and staff demonstrate the highest level of care, consideration and respect for one another. This creates a nurturing and enabling environment where families feel highly valued. Compassion and kindness are

endemic throughout the centre, and are demonstrated by management, frontline staff and partners. Users are routinely engaged in the management of the centre.

Information, advice and guidance available to users on a range of issues such as support for health and well-being issues, housing, benefits and accessing employment and training are of high quality. Access to services is facilitated by clear and effective signposting. Although the proportion of parents who move into employment is low, this is largely because there are very few job opportunities open to them in the area at present. Nonetheless, there are some excellent individual cases of parents being helped into accredited training and employment.

Parents and carers are active members of the advisory board and represent users' views very well at strategic level. Many users progress to train as community parents, delivering services and supporting their peers at the centre. Users' evaluation of groups and services is extremely thorough and has a demonstrable impact on the delivery of services, including changes to services, in order to better meet users' need.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

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| The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles | 1 |
| The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them | 1 |
| The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development | 1 |
| The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre | 1 |
| The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training | 1 |

How good is the provision?

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The provision of the centre is outstanding in all aspects. The premises provide a spacious and extremely well-resourced environment which is used to capacity. Services provided by the centre are intrinsically linked to ensure seamless transition between one agency and another. For families facing complex difficulties, the assessment of need and follow-up multi-agency support is excellent. The use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is embedded in the culture of the centre and ensures that a tailored package of support is put in place. This leads to timely, high quality multi-agency support when it is needed and that is reviewed and developed as necessary. In addition, staff have a very clear understanding of the needs of the

families who may not meet the threshold for this method of assessment and ensure that systems are in place to monitor and support these families.

The range of services is superb and is determined by extensive needs' analyses and improvement in outcomes for users. The centre manager makes excellent and purposeful use of evaluation, consultation and outreach to monitor the appropriateness of services to ensure they are always pertinent to need. There is a wealth of data which gives detailed information about the reach area. This is used exceptionally well by the centre management team to determine the extent of the engagement of the community.

The quality of care, guidance and support is excellent. The centre provides a haven to which families readily turn in times of crisis for practical and emotional support. The extremely high level of support empowers users to change their lives for the better, and many become sufficiently self-assured to focus on making life better for their children. The quality of outreach work is exemplary. Working with families in their homes is an established strategy which is used very effectively by staff who engage with families exceptionally well, because all contact is completely tailored to individual needs.

A key strength of the centre is the use of video interaction guidance (VIG). This highly effective programme explores effective moments of interaction between a parent and their child through collaborative video review. Parents and carers are empowered to set their own goals and targets and assess their own progress. They report how powerful this approach has been in helping them understand how to interact with their children to support their progress. It has made them realise, often for the first time in their lives, that they are doing something well. As one father put it, 'It made me realise that I'm okay and now I'm proud to be a father'.

The personal development coordinator is very successful in promoting high aspirations by skilfully working with users to develop their own detailed personal development portfolios (PDP). This empowers parents and carers to achieve qualifications and resume education, undertake training or enter employment. Achievement is valued and celebrated; users flourish in this positive environment and are very proud of their success. This is very well illustrated by comments made by one of many users 'I have all my achievements in my PDP and I love showing it off'.

A very strong and successful community parent programme has resulted in many users developing confidence and the skills needed to return to work; they are very well trained and fully supported by the 'First step to play' worker.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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| The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users | 1 |
| The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, | 1 |

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| development and enjoyment for all users | |
| The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community | 1 |
| The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community | 1 |

How effective are the leadership and management?

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The centre manager is extremely tenacious, forward thinking and passionate about improving the outcomes for children and their families in the reach area. This infectious enthusiasm feeds down to all levels of service delivery and as a result the work of the centre is highly respected by professionals, parents and carers.

Excellent professional supervision and management arrangements are in place to monitor the performance of staff and ensure ongoing professional development. Staff are gainfully deployed across the cluster of centres so that the best possible use is made of individual skills and areas of interest and expertise. Initiatives such as the recruitment of a male fathers' inclusion worker have significantly increased the engagements with fathers within the centre. Families of children with a disability benefit from the excellent partnership working and individual care which is offered to all families.

The centre gives a high priority to safeguarding and undertakes risk assessments and health and safety checks routinely. Users' safety and well-being is protected by the robust and consistently implemented policies, procedures and practice adopted by the centre. Protocols and practice for making referrals and sharing information between agencies are very comprehensive. Intervention happens at the earliest stage and the multi-professional team work very effectively together to prevent families slipping into even greater needs. There are effective procedures within the centre to ensure all staff and volunteers have appropriate safeguarding checks and these are kept up to date. Training of all staff, particularly in relation to child protection is a considerable strength.

The centre manager has extremely robust systems for gathering a wide range of information from staff and partners and interpreting this into data and evidence. All staff and partners are committed to evaluation and reflective practice and convincingly provide evidence to hold them accountable and to demonstrate the impact of the services and activities on outcomes. All have a strong understanding of the targets for improvement and what needs to be done to achieve these.

Governance arrangements are well established. The advisory board serves all three centres in the South Lowestoft cluster and has good representation from partner agencies and parents. The advisory board is chaired by a parent and she speaks very highly of the support she has received both as a user of services and in her role as chair. 'My confidence has been boosted. I would never have believed that I could chair a meeting and that people would listen to me.

The centre manager provides regular feedback to the local authority and advisory board, who challenge the centre with rigour. As a result, all those involved have a strong handle on the performance of the centre and its financial position.

Resource planning is very well established, responsive to changing needs and takes very good account of the need to ensure services are sustainable. The centre utilises the available resources to full effect to ensure excellent value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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| The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood | 1 |
| The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community | 1 |
| The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community | 1 |
| The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults | 1 |
| The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities | 1 |
| The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide | 1 |
| The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision | 1 |

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

The inspection of Ladybird Day Care Nursery was carried out on 12 July 2011 and judged to be good. Findings from this inspection have contributed to the children's centre report and judgements on outcomes for users and the effectiveness of provision.

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 Kirkley Children's Centre on 13–14 July 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to contribute towards the inspection. We really enjoyed meeting with you. We noted there was a really lively and busy atmosphere in all centre activities and it was really pleasing to see both adults and children clearly enjoying themselves and having excellent relationships with the centre staff.

The centre is very good at making sure that children and families are safe when at the setting, and children are protected extremely well.

The centre also provides excellent resources, including high quality staff, to help your children enjoy their learning through play and so develop their full potential. They also help you to support your children's learning and development at home by providing services which help you bond with your children, such as baby massage.

We noted that increasing numbers of families are attending the drop-in sessions. We have asked the centre to monitor attendance levels and, if needed, take action to ensure that the high-quality service being given to you is not adversely affected due to this.

It is wonderful to read the case studies and to hear from you how much your lives, and those of your children, have been changed by your contact with the centre. We have found that the reason you can be so confident in the centre is because of how exceptionally well the team of professionals work together to make sure you receive the help you need from the right people.

All staff understand deeply the needs of your local community. They and the centre manager are wholly committed to providing you with services that will help you and your children.

We noticed that you make an excellent contribution to the running of the centre. You are well represented on the advisory board and through the parents' choice group. Staff regularly seek your views about the quality of the services they offer. Staff and managers listen to, and value, your ideas.

You told us you have also been helped to learn new skills and achieve qualifications. Many of you are actively involved in volunteering within the centre and supporting other families in the community. These experiences and the other activities provided by the centre help you to develop confidence and give you skills to help you find work.

We were impressed with the range of services the centre offers and how it works so closely with other agencies to find the information and give you the guidance you need. We found that the centre was extremely well managed. All staff demonstrate strong commitment and high levels of passion and dedication in the way in which they care about you, support you and your children, and provide you with the very best.

We would like to thank everyone who came to speak with us. It was a privilege to be able to talk to you. Your honesty and openness helped us immensely during the inspection. We are very grateful for your help and we wish each of you every success for the future.

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