

Inspection report for Robert le Kyng children's centre

Local authority	Swindon Borough Council
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Reporting inspector	Paul Edwards

Centre leader	Julianna Forrester
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Westcott Street Swindon SN1 5HS
Telephone number	01793 525830
Fax number	01793 328274
Email address	Julianna.forrester@barnardos.org.uk

Linked school if applicable	N/A
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.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector. Inspectors held meetings with the centre leader, the senior leadership team, staff, the chair of the advisory board, representatives from the local authority and many partner agencies, including a range of health service workers. They also met with parents and other users of the centre. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documentation, including evaluations of services, safeguarding policies and procedures, case studies, other records, development plans and the centre's annual review report.

Information about the centre

Robert le Kyng is a phase 1 children's centre, operated and managed by Barnardo's on behalf of Swindon Borough Council. Its reach covers approximately one square mile across Swindon Borough Council western ward and parts of the central ward. The centre, designated in March 2006, is located on the same site as a Headstarts Nursery and Robert le Kyng Primary School. The area serves a predominantly White, mainly British, community, although there are an increasing number of families from diverse ethnic groups, of which the largest is Indian. The centre's reach area has high levels of deprivation and a significant number of children live in workless households which claim out-of-work benefits. Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage provision with skills and abilities that are significantly below those expected for their age.

The centre leader is managed by an assistant director from Barnardo's and there is a partnership advisory board. The centre provides all elements of its core offer including family support, child and family health services and social services. The centre works closely with a number of agencies to bring linked services to the local community. This includes health services, training and work opportunities, outreach and family support. Day care is provided by the Headstarts Nursery and the centre has close links with a number of childminders and nursery providers to which it signposts parents. The accommodation comprises a reception area, consultation,

meeting and training rooms, a kitchen, office accommodation, a playroom and outside play and garden area. The centre has two satellite venues and access to a large hall on site. Some services are offered by other children’s centres to which families from Robert le Kyng have access.

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 families

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Robert le Kyng is a good children’s centre. The centre leader is very well organised and helps to provide a clear direction. There has been a very clear focus on developing the skills of staff to enable them to provide a wide range of services, enabling the centre to meet the needs of a large majority of families within the community. Staff spend considerable time within the community, identifying need and providing well-targeted support and guidance. Staff develop good relationships with families and are effective in encouraging those from its target groups to access its services. For example, the centre is engaging with the large majority of lone parents. It is reaching most of the pregnant teenagers and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities in its reach area but is also supporting many from outside its area. A number of parents commented to inspectors how they had been able to develop new interests and how their health and well-being had improved. A particular strength of the centre is the way in which it encourages adults to volunteer and how, as a result, a minority of these have moved into employment.

Safeguarding procedures are effective and ensure that children and their parents are safe at the centre and its satellites. The good links with its partners help to engage the traditionally hard to reach groups, helping them to make the most of the health services. Consequently, a large majority of families are developing a good understanding of how to keep themselves and their children healthy.

Outcomes for users are good. The centre ensures users are signposted to schools and colleges where they effectively develop literacy, numeracy and computer skills, through participation in accredited courses. The centre commissions courses for those learning English as an additional language and provides interpreting services for the minority who need support in accessing benefits. The centre is particularly

effective in providing good outcomes for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities through a range of activities and links with schools with enhanced resources units. The centre's provision is well matched to the needs of its users through a broad range of activities that are effectively targeted according to need. Careful assessments undertaken by health visitors identify those families who would most benefit from the services provided by the centre and sensitive approaches made by centre staff ensure the needs of these families are catered for well. Vulnerable families are well looked after.

The centre leader has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the centre and, together with staff, evaluates its work rigorously. Strengths are identified and areas for development clearly noted and addressed. This demonstrates that the centre has good capacity for further improvement. Despite efforts by the leadership, users' participation on the advisory board is too ad hoc and they have limited impact upon decisions taken by the board through this avenue. The leadership, advisory board and centre staff take on board users' views well, encouraging them to become involved in the centre's work through the users' forum which more than compensates for their lack of involvement on the advisory board. User satisfaction surveys and termly surveys provide the leadership with a good picture of the impact and effectiveness of its activities and services. It also undertakes an annual survey, although these data are not interrogated as rigorously to identify how the centre might target its services more effectively. Leaders make effective use of funding to target resources most effectively. Through good analysis of its own data and that provided by the local authority, the centre has a clear picture of which groups need to be targeted more effectively. For example, a specific focus on encouraging fathers and male carers has increased their involvement and participation considerably so that the proportion is reaching a higher proportion than is seen nationally.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Evaluate in depth the results of the annual surveys of users' views to ascertain clearly if there are aspects of provision or services that users would like to be included in the centre's programme.
- Increase the membership of the advisory board to include users of the centre and to develop their skills and expertise in providing advice and support to the centre.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

An opportunity for users to learn about healthy lifestyles provides them with a good understanding in this aspect. For example, many commented on how pleased they were to be able to take part in the cookery sessions, learning how to cook interesting recipes from different cultures on a limited budget. They commented too how it was helping their children to become more aware of healthy foods and appreciated the

opportunity to eat together with family members. Data show this is having a good impact upon the large majority of families. The borough council has encouraged its children's centres to focus on breastfeeding and this has been particularly successful at Robert le Kyng, with rates of breastfeeding increasing considerably. Centre staff take the opportunity to alert families to sustainable issues, by providing talks on a range of issues such as 'real nappies'. A wide programme of events helps to improve the physical and emotional well-being of mothers. A number commented on how the very popular baby massage sessions had helped them to bond with their child and help with their emotional development.

Women who have been, or likely to be, subject to domestic abuse are well supported, enabling them to improve the quality of life for themselves and their children. The centre has close links with the charitable service commissioned by the local authority to support these women. Centre workers and health staff put children's safety at the forefront of their work. They help families with accessing home safety equipment and survey responses indicate the effectiveness of first-aid courses for parents. There is careful monitoring of children who are on child protection plans and the well-coordinated interventions of professionals makes a positive impact.

Adults and children enjoy their involvement in the centre activities and they make good progress from their starting points. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities enjoy their own 'Stay and Play' sessions and their parents value the opportunities to talk with staff about how they can best support their child. Many staff have training in speech therapy and parents appreciate the ready availability of their expertise. The increasing number of fathers and male carers who attend the Saturday morning sessions is indicative of their enjoyment of the range of activities, such as the 'Wild Inspired Forest Trip'. The centre is very successful in engaging with young parents and their support for them is enhanced by a local authority wide programme. Children's early language skills are promoted well through 'Rhyme Time' sessions where parents are encouraged to participate in reading and singing activities from around the world.

Opportunities for users to help run activities through the centre's volunteering programme considerably enhance their opportunities for employment. Some have moved on to further study at university, others have entered employment and five are employed by the children's centre. The centre signposts users to literacy, numeracy and computer sessions held at schools and colleges and over a third are engaged in training or volunteering. Parents are very respectful of one another and those spoken to commented very positively on how they had developed friendships and learned about cultural differences and similarities. Those who attend the parents' forum believe their views are listened to and acted upon and they feel confident in approaching centre staff at any time. They like the opportunity to be able to leave their views on the board in the activity room with the knowledge that staff respond to their comments.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

The extent to which children, including those from target 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 children and parents, including those from target groups, 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 parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future, and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment.	2

How good is the provision?

2

The centre works effectively with the local authority to ensure its provision reflects the needs of its users. It has good assessment procedures to ensure all of its activities meet users' needs. The leadership makes good use of its knowledge of the local area and opportunities are taken to talk to users to ascertain their views. The centre makes effective use of the wealth of data collected by the local authority to determine its priorities. Consequently, there is clear evidence to show the centre is reaching an increasing number of users from all of its target groups, including those from minority ethnic groups. The centre has a strong commitment to providing an inclusive environment and removing barriers. Assessments undertaken with children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities enable early interventions to be implemented. Parents, whose children have a range of learning difficulties, commented on how well they had been supported, enabling their children to make good progress.

The centre is making good use of venues within the reach area to enable users to access the most popular activities closer to their home and to help them avoid busy roads and railway crossings. Activities are held on Saturdays to benefit fathers who cannot attend midweek. The centre provides access to a wide range of services to provide help with debt advice, benefits entitlement, Jobcentre Plus and access to courses. Staff have an excellent awareness of the services available to users and parents are very appreciative of the friendly advice and guidance provided. Outreach services are well organised and effective. Workers undertake initial assessments and programmes of support are agreed with families. Case studies give a clear indication of the effectiveness programmes supporting the most vulnerable families.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The centre is held to account effectively, and challenging targets are set by senior staff from Barnardo's and through monitoring by the local authority. Line management arrangements are clear and understood. Staff training and appraisal systems are fully embedded and make a good contribution to the services the centre is able to offer. The advisory board meets regularly, but users are reluctant to serve on the board. However, the users' forum compensates through its regular meetings and through opportunities to respond to the evaluations and surveys. The centre's self-evaluation provides the leadership with an accurate assessment of its effectiveness and the steps it needs to take to ensure further improvement. In-depth case studies provide senior leaders with a good understanding of the impact of services and valuable information for future planning.

The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures ensures all users are kept safe. All those employed at the centre and volunteers are checked to ensure their suitability to work with children and vulnerable adults. There are also clear protocols in place to ensure that those working with partner organisation are thoroughly vetted. Multi-agency working is effective in ensuring children and adults are fully protected. Training is rigorous for all staff and they have an excellent awareness of their roles and responsibilities when dealing with child protection issues. Risk assessments are undertaken regularly and systematically so that children and families are safe when moving round premises. Staff are fully alert to signs of domestic abuse and timely interventions made.

Day-to-day management of the centre is effective. Users appreciate the approachability of all staff and feel they are provided with good advice. The centre listens to its users through their participation in the parents' forum and activities are introduced and located according to their needs. Consequently, outcomes are good, demonstrating good value for money. The local authority provides the centre with a good amount of data which supplements effectively that gathered by the centre. Whilst much of this data is used to plan further activities, the centre has not yet carried out a sufficiently detailed review of the annual survey of users.

The inclusion of all children and families, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is promoted effectively. Barriers to access are being lowered and this is ensuring the centre is increasingly reaching more of its most

vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups. There are strong and productive partnerships with organisations such as Swindon Sure Start Partnership, Speech and Language Therapy Team, Citizens' Advice Centre and Family Group Conferencing. These organisations help the centre to effectively deliver its wide range of services. Resources are well managed across each of its sites and staff adapt well to deliver a complete programme, resulting in good outcomes.

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 effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	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 partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area 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

None.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Robert le King centre on 21 and 22 September 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

I would like to thank all of you who took the time to talk to my colleague and me and who let us know what you thought about the centre. The discussions helped us to understand how well you regard the centre and what you value most.

The staff at the centre work well together to ensure its success. The satisfaction surveys and discussions we had with you make it very clear that you enjoy all of the activities and that your needs are met successfully by the centre. Many of you commented upon the effect the centre was making to your lives and its effectiveness in helping you during difficult periods of your life.

The centre provides you with good care, guidance and support for you and your children. Staff are usually able to provide you with good advice and to point you to someone who can help you. The centre's effective support workers and links to other groups provide you with the information and knowledge that you need to overcome the difficult challenges you face. Staff are skilful in giving you advice to ensure you receive the benefits to which you are entitled. They also help you with your training needs and with gaining skills that will help you into employment. It was good to meet those of you who have moved into employment as a result of the help and guidance given by the centre.

Being healthy is a particular priority for the centre and we were delighted to see your children really enjoying the healthy snacks and that you enjoy learning to cook recipes from different cultures. You and your children benefit from the parenting, breastfeeding support and first-aid courses amongst others.

The senior staff at the centre, Barnardo's and the local authority lead and manage the centre well. Your views are listened to and the centre staff work hard to provide you with a good range of activities that are interesting and exciting for all of you. We know that you really appreciate this because we saw how well you treat staff and fellow users with great respect. Activities such as the 'Rhyme Time' and 'Stay and Play' provide your children with an important introduction to learning.

The centre knows its community well. It has gathered a great deal of information to show how well it is doing. We have asked the centre to look in more detail at the annual survey users complete to get a clearer picture of other activities you might like provided. We have also asked the centre to encourage users to contribute to the running of the centre by becoming members of the advisory board.

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