

Inspection report for Kingston Town Children's Centre

Local authority	Royal Borough of Kingston
Inspection number	383517
Inspection dates	6–7 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Michael Kubiak HMI

Centre leader	Emily Newton/Esther White
Date of previous inspection	This is the centre's first inspection
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Linked school if applicable	King Athelstan Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	YMCA King Athelstan EY389934

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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.

An inspection of the partner primary school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. 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 representatives from partner agencies, the local authority, the centre's governing sub-committee, and frontline staff. They also spoke to parents and carers formally and informally. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centre's self-evaluation, service development documents and reports compiled by the centre.

Information about the centre

Kingston Town Children's Centre is a Phase 2 centre which was designated in 2008. It is based on the site of King Athelstan Primary School. Also on the site is YMCA King Athelstan, which provides out-of-school care. The centre opens all year round on weekdays from 8.30am to 4.30pm. It is also open some Saturday mornings and at other times by negotiation. Space at the centre includes a reception area, office, health room, consultation room, play room and training room. There are two kitchen areas. There is a large outdoor area to which children have access. The building is fully wheelchair-accessible.

A children's centre sub-committee is responsible for the work of the centre. This is part of, and reports to, the school's governing body. The school's headteacher has overall responsibility for the centre, with day-to-day management the responsibility of the centre manager.

There is a small staff team which is employed by the local authority, with some staff working across the children's centre and school. The centre runs services directly on the premises. In addition, it commissions some services from local private and voluntary organisations.

The local population in the reach area consists of 61% White British families and 39% from other ethnic groups, with a greater proportion of Asian families. The centre's catchment area is mixed in terms of deprivation. The number of children under five living in workless households and those in receipt of Working Family Tax Credit are both below the national averages however a number of families attend the centre who live in the neighbouring reach area which has high levels of deprivation. Most children enter early years provision with a range of skills and abilities typically below average for their age. At the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, around 81% of children achieve at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage, which is slightly below average, with communication, language and literacy the weaker area.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

Kingston Town Children's Centre is making a satisfactory contribution to improving outcomes for families. It has some good features, management and staff, who work effectively together to meet the needs of the majority of families who access the centre. They have worked hard to establish an accessible and well-respected centre. Groups run at the centre are well attended.

The safeguarding of all who use the centre is a priority and, as a result, families report that they feel safe there. Safer recruitment procedures are good. A range of effective policies in relation to safeguarding have been adopted. However, some need updating to be specific to the centre. The outreach work is having a positive impact on improving outcomes for those families who receive the service; they work closely with the children's centre on identifying families in their target groups and effectively support parents and carers in engaging with services at the centre. The centre is not yet able to fully demonstrate the impact of its work on developing families' understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

The centre is proactive in seeking the views of families through obtaining comments and evaluating the groups they run. These are effective in bringing about improvements to the groups run at the centre and sometimes help to shape

services. There are missed opportunities for users to see how their feedback has contributed to changes at the centre. Furthermore, users are not yet actively involved in the management or governance of the centre although this has been identified as a priority in the centre's development plan for 2011–12.

A key strength of the centre is the partnership arrangements. Effective use is made of the Advancing Services for Kingston Kids (ASKK) information-sharing facility. The centre has worked hard to build successful links with a number of partner organisations, particularly with those who undertake work with families in the community.

Case studies demonstrate that the work of the centre is having an impact on improving outcomes for some users of the centre. The centre cannot accurately identify all families within its reach area and therefore cannot effectively target services to those who would most benefit from the range of support available. It does, however, identify families through its links with partner agencies and the family support workers, and this work is well targeted at those most in need of support.

The centre's self-evaluation is closely linked to the development plan. National and local level data are available from the local authority. However, this is not always broken down to centre level. This hinders the centre's ability to set accurate targets which are specific to its reach area and to be able to show clearly the impact of its work.

The centre is welcoming to all parts of the community, but this is not always promoted and reflected consistently in the resources, display and literature. Although parents and carers speak a wide range of different languages, information about the centre is only available in English.

Processes for staff management and professional supervision are good with staff encouraged to build on their individual strengths. Centre staff have identified some areas for development based on feedback from users and their own local knowledge, although this is not always targeted at all of the groups most in need of intervention and support. Clear leadership and a strengthening sub-committee mean that the centre has satisfactory capacity to develop further.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure that all areas of the wider community are reflected in resources, literature and displays in order to improve access for all groups.
- The local authority should improve the quality of data available in order that the centre has a clearer picture of its reach area, is able to identify its target groups accurately including those most in need of intervention and support, and is able to assess the difference that services are having on improving lives.

- Strengthen self-evaluation processes and development planning by setting specific targets that will help the centre to demonstrate the impact of its work on improving outcomes and to identify future developments.
- Engage users more effectively in all aspects of the centre including decision making, shaping services and contributing to the centre's governance.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

The centre is at an early stage of being able to demonstrate the impact of its work. However, where evidence is available, it demonstrates the positive impact the centre is making on improving outcomes for its users through good-quality services. Discussions with families show high satisfaction with the services provided. Parents and carers show a greater understanding of healthy eating through groups such as 'Little Cooks' and 'Cook and Eat', and they report that they provide healthy meals at home as a result. The centre evaluates the outcomes of its adult-focused classes, such as parenting. A range of health-related information is available at the centre. Breastfeeding rates are satisfactory as a result of the advice and support parents receive. This is evidenced by centre information that it collects on registration forms as no health data is currently available. Groups such as 'Happy Feet FC', a football-based session, and 'Sparkles' dance group encourage children to exercise. Free access to the outside play area also encourages them to be physically active. Baby massage sessions allow parents and carers to enjoy time together and build on the emotional bond with their children.

Parents and carers report that they feel safe when accessing services. Good partnership working, especially with the family support workers, ensures that help is given to families who are subject to child protection plans, are involved with Common Assessment Framework (CAF) or who may need extra support. Families who may be anxious or nervous about attending the centre are well supported in making initial visits. The 'Play Passes' issued to some parents ensure that they are easily able to access services and this supports them in becoming less isolated. Parents and carers are gaining confidence in their skills through discussions with staff during sessions and through formal parenting programmes. There are limited opportunities for families to improve their knowledge in how to keep themselves safe.

Families actively and enthusiastically engage and enjoy the activities available at the centre. Activities are popular and are very well attended. Parents and carers are encouraged to engage in activities with their children. An extensive range of information about how children learn and develop is displayed and follows the Early Years Foundation Stage principles. Parents and carers are encouraged to contribute to learning journals for their children. This work is complemented by the staff who act as skilful role models and educators. As one parent told inspectors, 'By coming to the sessions, it has helped with my understanding of how my child develops and progresses.' There are examples of adults benefiting from volunteering at the centre

and then progressing to further training.

The views of parents and carers are regularly sought through discussions and evaluations by staff. The centre is not yet systematically telling families how their feedback is used to change. Furthermore, they are not yet gathering the views of others within the wider reach area, nor are users actively involved in the governance of the centre. The centre has worked hard to become part of the community and centre staff are proactive in promoting the centre in the wider community. As a result, attendance rates at the centre are good, although the lack of accurate information about the reach area means that the centre cannot identify if it is effectively reaching the more deprived areas.

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	3
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	3
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	3
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	3

How good is the provision?

2

There is a good range of quality services and activities which are matched to the needs of the families who come to the centre. Space within the centre is well used, especially the large and very well equipped outside area.

The centre has firmly established procedures for assessing the needs of families. The use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) ensures that support for families is available from an appropriate range of partner agencies and services. The centre staff know the community well and have identified where they need to target hard-to-reach families. The centre has been successful in engaging some hard-to-reach groups such as fathers, and is aware that it could do more to reach other groups, for example those with English as an additional language. The centre has been proactive in refocusing activities which target certain groups, such as 'Stay and Play' for twins and the 'Little Tots' session which is aimed at toddlers. But it is not always possible to identify to what extent these services are effectively targeted due to the limitations of the data provided by the local authority.

The centre is highly committed to promoting learning and development for families, ensuring enjoyment and progression. Families report that they feel that they receive a good level of support at the centre and that staff are very approachable. The various sessions that are held at the centre provide an effective range of activities for parents and carers to engage in their children's play. As one parent commented, 'It's amazing. My child loves it, learns a lot and [there is] a wealth of toys.' Resources are of a very high quality and activities at the groups are planned with the individual children in mind. Crèche facilities are provided at some groups so that parents and carers can focus on their learning while their children are cared for elsewhere. Families were actively involved in the design of the outside area and, as a result, children benefit from a well-resourced and imaginative area.

Outreach services are good and are reaching those families most identified as in need. In addition to referrals from partner agencies, staff can refer families to the services. Case studies demonstrate the positive impact of this work in bringing about improved outcomes for families who access the service. Communication between different agencies is effective in ensuring that families are well supported.

The centre has very good links with the school and has identified gaps in children's learning. This has become a focus for the activities at the centre.

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?

3

Centre staff work enthusiastically as a team and demonstrate a commitment to providing good-quality services in order to make a difference to families in the community. The day-to-day management of the centre is well organised. Governance arrangements are in place through the children's centre sub-committee, who are clear about their responsibilities. They are also clear about where they need to develop as a sub-committee. Line management arrangements for staff are clear and understood. The centre manager, school headteacher and Early Years Foundation Stage Leader have formed a very effective working relationship.

The self-evaluation process is enabling centre leaders to reflect on the services being offered and to demonstrate some impact on improving outcomes for users. The centre evaluates individual sessions and seeks views from users. They use this information to inform the shape of future sessions. The centre is fully aware that it needs to obtain the views of the wider community, and target groups, and is looking

at ways that it can effectively do this.

The centre receives data from a number of sources including 'Estart,' the local authority and through information on registration forms. The use of data is developing however it is not always sufficiently detailed for the centre to ensure that services are focused at target groups and those most in need of intervention and support. The centre now provides some targeted groups and entry to those groups is by referral only; other groups include a mix of families within the community and target families.

Safeguarding procedures are robust. Recruitment procedures are good and the responsibility is shared between the centre manager and relevant school staff. Checks on the suitability of adults to work with children are thorough and child protection arrangements are secure and updated regularly. Leaders have built very good links with health and social care professionals, ASKK and the family outreach service.

The centre promotes equality and diversity appropriately, including some aspects of the wider community, although this is variable. There is limited information in community languages and information specifically about the centre is only available in English. The centre has some toys and equipment that promote diversity but displays and publicity are not fully reflective of the wider community and do not include positive images of excluded groups such as lesbian and gay parents and carers, disabled children and adults, and Travellers. Targeted work with specific groups, such as the 'Fun for Fathers' session, has been successful in engaging them in the centre's work. The centre, in close liaison with local schools, has identified gaps in achievement for children. Effective strategies are in place and show that the achievement gap is narrowing.

The centre provides good value for money. The centre is well used and rents out some rooms to private providers to run children's sessions. It is looking at the possibility of maximising rental opportunities when the centre is closed. There is a small charge for most of the children's services. However there is provision for families who may be prohibited to attending due to cost.

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	3
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	3
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its	3

statutory duties	
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	3
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	3

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

The inspection of King Athelstan Primary School was undertaken on 5–6 October. The overall judgement was good.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Kingston Town Children's Centre on 6–7 October 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

The centre provides a welcoming environment. Many of you commented on how friendly you found centre staff and we too were impressed by the good relationships staff develop with you. Many of you commented on how you enjoyed attending the centre and the quality of the building including 'The children's centre is brilliant. Very clean, modern and welcoming' and 'It's amazing. My child loves it, learns a lot and [there is] a wealth of toys.' Staff treat you with respect and are committed to helping you make positive changes to your lives. In addition, the building offers you a safe and secure place where you spend time with your children.

All appropriate checks are undertaken to ensure that staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children. Checks on the suitability of adults to work with children are thorough and child protection arrangements are secure and updated regularly. Those of you who need additional support are well supported by the centre. Staff have built up good links with a number of partner agencies and work well to support you when you most need it. Case studies show that those of you who receive support from the family support workers benefit from it.

Outcomes are satisfactory, and are improving. Staff are working well in supporting you with activities to promote your children's health and to develop your skills in making healthy food. The centre offers a good range of opportunities for you and

your children to engage in fun activities. Many of you are involved in completing 'learning journals' for your children and feel that this helps you to understand how your children learn and how you can support their learning.

The centre frequently asks for your views and evaluates the services that it offers, and as a result makes changes to services. For example, some of you with younger children told centre staff that your children were not enjoying being in the large 'Stay and Play' sessions and, as a result, the centre began to run 'Little Tots' sessions for younger children. We have asked the centre to build on this work and to look at how they can inform you better about how your feedback affects services. We have also asked them to look at how some of you can become more involved in making decisions about the centre.

The centre is well resourced with high-quality equipment. The centre promotes some areas of the community well but it is not so proactive in other areas. For example, although the centre users speak a range of different languages, information about the centre is only available in English. We have asked the centre to make sure that it promotes all aspects of the community in its work and publications.

The centre's self-evaluation and development plan are closely linked and used to set targets for the centre. We have asked the centre to look at setting targets for every area of development and to be able to demonstrate how the services are bringing about improvements to your lives. The centre collects some of its own information about families who use the centre. We have asked the local authority to improve the range of information it provides about the centre's area. This is so the centre can assess the needs of the wider community more accurately, evaluate the effectiveness of services and demonstrate where these services are bringing about improvements to your lives.

Thank you to everybody who took the time to come and speak to us to let us know what you thought about the centre. We are very grateful to you all and wish you and your families every success for the future.

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