

Inspection report for Kinver Children's Centre

Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	383518
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Joy Law HMI

Centre leader	Sarah Underhill
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Edgecliff High School Enville Road Staffordshire DY7 6AA
Telephone number	01384 551000
Fax number	01384 551000
Email address	kinverchildrenscentre@gmail.com

Linked school if applicable	Edgecliff High School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	N/A

The inspection of this Sure Start children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

Report published: October 2011



Corporate member of
Plain English Campaign
Committed to clearer communication

361

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100080.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

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

No.100080

© Crown copyright 2011



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 Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the local authority, centre staff, partner agencies, parents and carers. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the centre's self-evaluation form, data provided by the local authority and the centre, documents and policies, and minutes of meetings.

Information about the centre

Kinver Children's Centre is situated in the village of Kinver in the district of South Staffordshire. It is a phase two part-time children's centre serving a community ranked within the 70% most deprived in the country. The area is relatively affluent with small pockets of disadvantage. The centre was designated on 23 January 2008 and has provided full core offer through commissioned services since December 2009. It operates from an office and a room within the Edgcliff High School sports hall. There are also two primary schools, one junior and one infant school within the reach area.

The local authority is responsible for governance. The District Children's Commissioning Officer and the Head of Children's Centres for South Staffordshire are responsible for commissioning and leading services. The centre does not directly employ any staff as it commissions local organisations to provide all of its services. This includes the two part-time centre coordinators who are employed through Edgcliff High School.

The population of the reach area is 10874 of which there are 390 children aged five and under. Unemployment is relatively low and in 2007, 8.6% of children aged under five years were resident in households dependent on workless benefits, which is

lower than the district average of 11.6%. There are 185 lone-parent families in the reach area, and the number of these families out of work is falling.

The majority of the families using the centre are White British, with the remaining population being from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. A small proportion of users speak English as an additional language.

The centre provides health and family support services, links to adult learning at the adjacent school, and early years advice and guidance to parents and carers on childminding and daycare facilities available. There is no early years childcare provision at the centre, but it is on the same site as Kinver Pre-school. A large majority of children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage have skills knowledge and abilities in line with 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 families

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

Kinver is a satisfactory children's centre. It is an inclusive and welcoming place run by dedicated adults who aspire to serve their community well. Parents speak highly of the centre as being 'a great place to meet for both big and little people' and a place where they feel safe, secure, supported and listened to. Comments from users such as, 'Staff are great and put in a lot of time and effort,' are typical.

Some aspects of the centre's work are stronger than others. The recently appointed leaders are skilled and knowledgeable. They have a clear vision and commitment to build on the sound foundation shaped by the previous manager, volunteers and commissioned services. The early intervention through the speech and language therapist sessions is proving successful in supporting children's early communication and language skills. Exercise classes to promote healthy lifestyles are well attended and improving the health and well-being of children and parents.

User engagement is steadily increasing as the centre is becoming firmly embedded within the community. However, the centre is very well aware that more needs to be done to engage with the most isolated and vulnerable families living in the

community. Equality and diversity are promoted satisfactorily and discrimination tackled appropriately.

Some effective partnership working is in place, such as with the health visitor and the Families First Local Support Team. However, some partnerships, for example, with Jobcentre Plus, midwives and early years providers, are less well established and less well engaged. Staff endeavour to gain information about the reach area from a range of sources including local knowledge from partners, volunteers, parents and a range of accessible data. However, some commissioned services are failing to provide data on a regular basis. As a result, it is difficult for managers to evaluate accurately and target resources where they are most needed.

Quarterly, well-attended family forum meetings take place. The centre listens to users' views which result in changes and improvements to the centre's provision. For example, as a result of users' suggestions, the centre now runs football sessions for fathers and provides more structure to 'Baby Club' sessions.

Staff develop warm relationships with parents and carers who are confident to approach staff and talk freely about any problems or issues they face. Safeguarding procedures ensure children's safety and well-being are protected. Outreach work to target groups is developing and beginning to have an impact, although the number of families supported is low. The one-to-one outreach support and attendance at nurturing programmes help parents to understand and manage their children's behaviour. Parents report how their confidence has grown, their household is a lot calmer and, as a result, their children settle well into school.

The centre is establishing itself well in the community. The centre has evolved and continues to grow as a result of the commitment from parent volunteers. From onset, families were engaged in setting up and shaping the service. As a result, community cohesion is developing well. Families are supported and signposted to services to help them improve their economic stability or independence, and a small proportion take up opportunities to progress to training and adult education programmes. However, the centre does not have robust tracking systems in place to monitor the uptake of these.

Governance has recently gone through a significant period of change due to the changes of government funding. The original, effective and well-represented Community and Learning Partnership structure ended in March 2011 and is currently being replaced by a single governance approach across all children's centres within South Staffordshire. This has yet to become embedded and, therefore, it is too early to judge its effectiveness. In addition, major staffing restructure of children's centres also took place. However, during this turbulent period of change, the management team successfully secured high staff morale and the services continued to run seamlessly, with no significant impact on users. The centre's self-evaluation, despite the lack of some data, is broadly accurate and based on a sound understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for development. Improvement plans are in place, although these are not sufficiently detailed. The manager is aware of this but has

had insufficient time to address this given the short time in post. Leaders are committed to bringing about sustainable improvement and demonstrate the capacity to continue to do this given the achievement to date.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the number of families engaging with the centre's services, particularly the most isolated and vulnerable families living in the community.
- Increase the level of engagement with partner agencies, such as JobCentre Plus, early years providers and health and social care services, particularly midwives.
- Increase the robustness of tracking, monitoring and evaluation of services through obtaining accurate and up-to-date information from all sources, particularly commissioned services.
- Ensure the new governance structure becomes fully embedded and effectively supports and contributes to the development of the centre's services.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

The centre is focused on improving the health and well-being of families, and outcomes overall are improving. Parents, carers and children benefit from being outdoors as they take part in the fun activities such as 'Buggy Fitness' and events organised by the National Trust at places such as Kinver Edge. They are also developing their understanding of healthy eating through the 'Itsy Bitsy' cooking sessions provided by a volunteer parent.

The effective partnership working with the health visitor ensures that parents have access to a range of postnatal services and information, such as breastfeeding, weaning and feeding routines. Parents value these sessions. However, these sessions are limited to one day each month. The health visitor is keen to promote antenatal sessions as the centre does not currently have links with a midwife.

Satisfactory procedures have been implemented to ensure that children are safeguarded. The staff work effectively with the First Response team and Pre-school Learning Alliance to support families in need. Families report how the support has enabled them to manage their children's behaviour effectively, and that their children have settled well into school. The Common Assessment Framework is implemented effectively. Parents say that they trust the staff to help them in times of crisis or personal difficulties.

First-aid courses are provided to support parents gain the necessary skills in the event of their children having an accident. The setting engages with the local fire prevention services and police to help raise children's and families' awareness of safety in the home and their communities. Parents confirmed that they felt more able than they had been previously to keep their children safe from accidents.

The varied range of activities for parents and children to play, have fun and learn

together enables them to develop skills that will help in the future. A satisfactory range of resources and activities to promote children's understanding of the wider world is available, such as Asian food-tasting sessions and celebration of cultural events. 'Stay and Play' sessions provide parents and children opportunities to socialise in a safe and secure environment. Socially isolated parents talked positively about how these sessions had enabled them to meet other adults, develop lasting friendships and encouraged their children's interaction and social skills. Children's 'learning journeys' are created and given to parents when their children move on to another setting. Staff work in partnership with some agencies to support children's learning and development but are not consistently working with early years providers to share what they know about children. Children are making good progress by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, although the gap between the outcomes for the most vulnerable groups and others is only narrowing marginally.

Staff and parents talk positively about how the setting engages with fathers. For example, a parent volunteer was supported in becoming an accredited football coach and successfully runs weekly football sessions which are well attended by parents and children. Fathers also attend sessions with their children, such as 'Stay and Play' and dance classes, and develop their understanding of how to promote children's learning.

Parents say they feel 'included' and 'listened to' and comment on the difference that the centre has made to their confidence and achievements as well as their children's progress, development and behaviour. There are satisfactory levels of involvement of parents through the parents' forum and advisory board to ensure their views are put forward and their suggestions are considered.

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	3
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?

3

The assessment of users' needs and the tracking of progress are good in some

respects and developing in others due to the variable quality of data obtained. Analysis of data and information is used to ensure the commissioned services are appropriately matched to families' needs. Family assessments following referrals from health and other services are timely and thorough, and individual packages of support are tailored to need. The centre has satisfactory links with family and children's services. However, the variable partnership working with some services means that some vulnerable groups, such as lone parents and the unemployed, are not being reached or supported effectively. Consequently, the centre is improving the life chances and personal development of some of the targeted groups of families.

The centre is a welcomed and valued provision. The staff are clear about and sensitive to the particular needs of their community and are steadily increasing the number of families accessing the centre. They try to engage families through promotion of the 'What's On' leaflets and posters at venues, such as all pre-schools, clinics, schools and parish noticeboards. In addition, the health visitor hands them out during her contact with families. Consequently, they are reaching all groups to varying extents and engaging with the majority of families within the centre's reach.

The centre coordinators demonstrate a satisfactory understanding of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and adequately promote children's learning and development during sessions. Ongoing assessment of children accessing activities at the centre is insufficiently thorough because a robust system for regularly recording progress about their learning and development is not in place. Parents are involved in a satisfactory range of activities with their children including 'Stay and Play' sessions, but staff miss opportunities to support parents' understanding of how they can build on their children's learning at home. Parents talked about their increasing confidence in playing with their children, developing their speech and managing their behaviour.

Parents are signposted for advice and support to enable them to access services, such as housing benefits, health services and childcare provision. Some parents have successfully moved into learning, training and employment. However, the centre is unable to confirm how many have accessed these services due to the lack of robust tracking systems. The centre's engagement with volunteers is a particular strength and has been a major contributory factor towards sustainability and improving outcomes for children and their families. Parents who became volunteers and were supported through training are now commissioned to work at the centre. Consequently, parents' economic stability and independence have improved as a result of the opportunities the centre has provided.

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	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	3

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Leaders are well qualified and experienced. They are focused on the needs of the immediate community. Their expertise and skills are being used efficiently to ensure that the satisfactory service improves with immediate effect across the centre's operations. Clear contractual arrangements with commissioned services are in place. Quality assurance, through quarterly reviews, is undertaken to ensure the services are operating in line with their contract and that staff fully understand their roles and responsibilities. Evidence confirms that the quality of practice is variable and, therefore, outcomes for users overall are satisfactory.

Previous governors were highly supportive and had a strong commitment to the centre and to the ongoing development of its role in the community. New governance arrangements are now in place but, as yet, the governing body have not had the opportunity to meet, monitor performance and hold the centre to account. However, as a result of the strong foundation put in place by the previous manager, the impact on parents and children accessing the centre has been minimal.

The centre recognises the need to develop the robustness of data gathering from all sources to ensure the analysis of the reach area is accurate and resources are targeted where they are most needed.

Staff take satisfactory action to ensure children and families are safe. For example, through undertaking daily risk assessments and completing accurate attendance registers. All staff are appropriately trained to their level of responsibility and there is rigorous attention to vetting and recruitment procedures.

The children's centre is an integral part of the community it serves. Its location within the local high school means that the community is well aware of its presence and, therefore, has easy access to the services provided for some families. However, access to public transport is an issue because of the rural location and limited service available; therefore, the most isolated and potentially vulnerable families are least likely to access the centre. The centre is looking at innovative ways to engage more with these families, such as using the volunteer taxi service or delivering sessions out in the community. In addition, the centre only has 50% use of the room which also limits the range and frequency of services available.

The inclusion of all children and their families is central to the centre's vision, equality

is promoted and diversity is celebrated. However, the range of services currently provided has a satisfactory impact on outcomes for users. Consequently, the service provides satisfactory value for money.

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 statutory duties	3
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	3
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

Not applicable.

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 Kinver Children's Centre on 13 and 14 October 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall. We talked with some of you, your children, staff, and a wide range of partners and members of the local authority linked to the centre. We observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documents.

The District Children's Commissioning Officer and the Head of Children's Centres ensure that families are provided with a satisfactory range of services that are

tailored to meet your particular needs. Some aspects of the centre's work are stronger than others. For example, the early intervention through the speech and language therapist sessions is proving successful in supporting children's early communication and language skills, and the exercise classes to promote healthy lifestyles are well attended and improving the health and well-being of you and your children. However, engagement with partner agencies, such as JobCentre Plus, early years providers and health and social care services, particularly midwives, is less effective and, therefore, limits your access to these services.

In addition, the local authority has recently been through a period of reorganisation and, consequently, a new governance structure has been created to support the centre. This has yet to become embedded and, therefore, it is too early to judge its effectiveness on the centre. Those of you who spoke to us said that you feel the centre is supportive and staff are kind and caring, and give you advice. Most importantly, you said it helps improve your lives, particularly for those of you who are feeling isolated.

Your children's centre staff team meets regularly to discuss the centre's work and to plan for improvement. All staff place importance on you and your families and provide a listening ear for you. They are keen to create a warm and welcoming environment where you feel at home and are able to talk freely about things that matter to you or are causing you concern. As a result, you value the centre and use the services regularly. Staff listen to what you have to say about the centre and what you need and do their best to adapt the services to meet your needs.

The centre uses a range of information to find out what your needs are. However, some information is not always routinely passed to the centre and, therefore, hinders them from being able to analyse information and target services where they are most needed. The centre offers a satisfactory range of services and activities which are led by a range of skilled and dedicated volunteers and professionals. The number of families engaging with the centre is steadily increasing. However, staff know that more needs to be done to ensure more families access the centre, particularly the most isolated and vulnerable families living in the community.

Those of you who use the centre are now much more able than you were previously, to keep you and your families safe, and you are developing your understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles. Staff provide you with access to training and home visits and give advice on how you can prevent accidents in and around your home to keep your children safe. They are helping you to keep yourselves and your children healthy by encouraging mothers to breastfeed and by giving advice on preparing healthy and nutritious meals.

Those of you we spoke to are particularly proud of your achievements. These ranged from becoming better parents, through gaining qualifications, such as first aid, and to entering voluntary or paid work because of the skills you learnt. Children develop good relationships with their peers at the children's centre, this contributes to a smooth transition into school for these children. This means they settle well and

make good progress because they have benefited from the centre's services. The staff at the centre encourage you to engage in play with your children from a very early age at sessions such as 'Stay and Play'. You told us how much you and your children enjoy the activities you access through the centre and the positive effect these are having on you and your families.

We have asked the local authority and staff team to increase the number of families engaging with the centre's services, particularly the most isolated and vulnerable families living in the community. We have asked them to increase the level of engagement with partner agencies, such as JobCentre Plus, early years providers and health and social care services, particularly midwives. We have asked them to increase the robustness of tracking, monitoring and evaluation of services through obtaining accurate and up-to-date information from all sources, particularly commissioned services. We have also asked them to ensure the new governance structure becomes fully embedded, supports the centre effectively and contributes to the development of the centre's services.

We would like to thank everyone who came to speak to us. It was a privilege to be able to talk to you. Your honest and open discussions with us helped us immensely during the inspection. We thoroughly enjoyed spending time at your centre, and we wish you and your families the best for the future.

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