

# Inspection report for Kingsbrook Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Bedford
<b>Inspection number</b>	383516
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Stephenson Lower School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Not applicable

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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## 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 centre manager, the head of centre, children's centre teacher, members of the governance group, staff, local authority representatives and partner agencies, including representatives from the health service. They had informal discussions with parents, carers and children.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of documentation.

## Information about the centre

The Kingsbrook Children's Centre is a phase one centre situated on the site of the Stephenson Lower School and serves the Kingsbrook ward in Bedford. The centre was designated in January 2008 and is run by the charity Spurgeons on behalf of the local authority. The governance group contributes to the management of the centre and includes representatives from a number of community and statutory partners and is chaired by a parent representative. The centre is open from 8.30am to 5.00pm, each weekday for 52 weeks of the year.

The centre serves an area that is ethnically, socially and economically diverse. There are high levels of ill health and a high number of vulnerable families in the reach area. The largest ethnic groups in the area are White British and Asian. There are smaller percentages of other minority ethnic groups and an increasing number of White European families. Several languages other than English are represented among centre users, including Urdu and Polish. There are 981 children under five in the reach area. Around 41% of children live in households dependant on workless benefits, and take-up of further education is low. Unemployment is the third highest in Bedford and is still rising at a faster rate than the borough average. Parts of the reach are among the 20% most deprived areas in England and among the 10% most deprived in respect of income. Overall, the centre serves one of the 30% most

deprived areas nationally. The levels of skill shown by children when they start early years provision are well-below those expected for their age.

The children's centre offers multi-agency services for families and children under five years. These include family learning, 'Stay and Play' activity sessions, a weekly midwifery drop-in, family support, including outreach and support for those seeking employment. The majority of services are delivered from the centre with staff offering support within the community, such as the 'Tiny Times' group during visits to the local swimming pool.

The children's centre has achieved the under five's Healthy Eating Award.

## 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

Kingsbrook Children's Centre makes a good contribution to improving the outcomes of families. Staff are highly enthusiastic and passionate about their work. This is because those in charge demonstrate a clear vision and inspire continuous improvement.

A key strength of the centre is the family support work which is helping those who are identified as more vulnerable or experiencing difficulties in their lives to make significant improvements. There has been an increase in the number of families receiving family support over time. Discussions with parents and case studies confirm there is significant and sustained improvement for children on child protection plans, and those identified as children in need or looked after children.

The centre has a good capacity to improve further. It uses a range of data provided by the local authority and local knowledge to identify needs and target services. For example, the centre is successfully increasing the number of families it reaches, including significant increases of those from target groups, such as families whose circumstances make them vulnerable, families from minority ethnic groups, those dependent on workless benefits and fathers. Leaders know the centre's major strengths and areas for development. They conduct a range of monitoring activities to ensure the effectiveness of services. These monitoring activities lead to an

accurate self-evaluation and the identification of future priorities, in order to secure further improvements. However, the centre has two different action plans that feed into the centre's organisational plan and current targets do not always include precise and measurable success criteria in order to explicitly show the impact of services on outcomes for families.

The environment, although compact, is highly welcoming and accessible. All families say they feel safe within the centre. Staff make effective use of the available space to ensure the environment is conducive to good learning and development. The centre provides a range of different opportunities for parents to develop skills to support their children's learning. A number of case studies show how some families have improved their economic stability. However, there are not enough opportunities at present for parents to develop their skills for the future. Exciting plans are in place to gain extra space within the building in the New Year and the centre has plans to extend the range of services. It is working with adult learning partners, including Bedford College, in order to provide more opportunities for families to access accredited training and develop skills in preparation for gaining employment.

Families are extremely positive about the services and support they receive and how these are helping them to make positive changes in their lives. They respond well to the range of advice and guidance they receive to keep their children healthy. They gain an awareness of the benefits of physical activity when using the outdoor spaces and parks. Family days in the school holidays, organised in partnership with the street rangers, encourage the whole family and the community to engage in a range of physical activity. Around 70% of families access appropriate health services. Parents develop a good understanding of how to ensure the safety of their families and protect them from harmful situations. Staff are well trained to recognise and support families who experience domestic violence.

Children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress at the centre in their learning and development. Interesting and fun activity sessions, such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Up and Away', are well attended and reflect the diverse community the centre serves. There are many opportunities for parents and carers to play with their children. During these sessions staff skilfully help parents to develop confidence and understand the value of children's play. Family books have recently been introduced and these help parents understand the Early Years Foundation Stage and how their children learn and develop. Parents report that these books are a great idea and show their children's progress and provide a lovely memory of their time at the children's centre. The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scores demonstrate that children who access services at the centre achieve better than those who do not, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development, and communication, language and literacy. These scores remain below the local authority average. However, the centre is successfully narrowing the achievement gap between different groups of children and helping to promote good behaviour, positive attitudes to learning and a keen interest in basic skills.

Children's safety and well-being are enhanced by the effective implementation of Spurgeon's safeguarding policies and procedures. Staff and managers are well trained, particularly in relation to child protection and the centre is proactive and collaborates effectively with key agencies to reduce the risk of harm to children.

## What does the centre need to do to improve further?

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Review the effectiveness of the centre's evaluation cycle in order to develop smarter targets that are measurable and demonstrate explicitly the impact on outcomes for families.
- With partners, develop the work to support parents in improving their education, learning and development and provide more opportunities to prepare for employment.

## How good are outcomes for families?

<b>2</b>
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Obesity rates for children in the area are historically higher than local authority averages. The centre focuses on the promotion of healthy lifestyles well in order to tackle this. Parents develop their understanding of providing healthy meals for their families when they attend 'Kingsbrook Cook Sessions'. This is an opportunity for parents and children to cook meals together. Parents contribute to the healthy eating display board, sharing successful recipes they have tried at home. Healthy start vouchers are distributed to lone parents so they can access fresh fruit and vegetables for their families.

There is good support for breastfeeding, and take-up rates for breastfeeding at six to eight weeks have increased over time. The promotion of emotional well-being is an important aspect of the centre's work. Staff work well with health partners to provide effective support through postnatal drop-ins, baby massage, 'Tiny Times' and parenting courses. One parent said that coming to the centre with her new baby has prevented isolation and enabled her to make lasting friendships with others in the area. Another parent said, 'The centre is my friend.'

Family workers carry out ROSPA home-safety checks. They effectively support parents to identify potential risks and provide a range of home-safety equipment to prevent accidents. Such checks and training in first aid are helping families to develop a good understanding of how to keep their families safe. Staff know families well and successfully and quickly identify when they may be experiencing a crisis or change in circumstance so they can access the required support.

Early intervention strategies ensure children are protected against harm and receive the support they need, for example, referrals to speech and language therapy. Children who are subject to child protection or children in need plans are monitored closely. Those subject to the Common Assessment Framework are supported extremely well. Staff have helped an increasing number of parents in the area access

funding for their two-year-olds to attend local early years settings. These children are making good strides in their learning and development.

Parents' aspirations for themselves and their children are raised through their involvement with the children's centre. Parents are supported to observe their children at play sessions in order to understand their children's learning journeys. Courses for parents, such as 'Story Sacks' and 'Numeracy Sacks' are helping parents' to develop an understanding of the importance of early communication and numeracy skills. These courses, along with the nurture group and a pre-school transition group, help parents support their children as they start school and with homework.

The centre works with adult learning partners, such as family learning and the museum to deliver a range of short courses for parents. However, there are fewer opportunities for families to access accredited courses in order to gain skills in preparation for employment. Available evidence demonstrates that some families are improving their economic stability and independence, for example, one parent has gone on to further education and another is volunteering at the centre. Jobcentre Plus holds regular work-based interviews within the centre, and the information kiosk provides access to information on topics such as training, job vacancies, childcare and family support.

There are high levels of respect between parents, staff and children. Activity sessions are well attended by families, including those from minority ethnic groups, those considered more vulnerable, grandparents and fathers. All parents spoken to report that they do not feel judged, they feel listened to and made extremely welcome. Families are learning about each other's cultures through planned activities, such as a 'Twilight Tea' celebrating Chinese New Year.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>3</b>

## How good is the provision?

2

The centre has a good understanding of the needs of the community. Staff make good use of available data to target services. They have significantly increased the proportion of families accessing services that come from the most deprived areas. Staff worked successfully with a range of partners to hold a 'Skills training and education event' in this area, providing families with a range of information on training and becoming volunteers. Around 67% of those who attended were from the target area.

The centre has worked hard to increase the numbers of families registering at the centre from target groups. The numbers of fathers accessing services, those from minority ethnic groups, families dependant on workless benefits, lone parents and teenage parents have all risen.

There are good assessment procedures for those who require specific support packages. The centre is working with an increasing number of families as part of a child protection plan or child in need plan. Resources, including staffing, are carefully considered, ensuring the intensity of this work results in improved and sustained outcomes.

Parents greatly value the good care, guidance and support given to them. Friendly and approachable staff have built high levels of trust with families, who feel nurtured and well supported, especially when they experience challenges in their lives. Sensitive information, such as information on sexually transmitted diseases and domestic violence is carefully displayed in the privacy of the toilet areas.

The centre provides a good range of weekly activities at the centre. These are carefully planned to make effective use of the limited space. Staff skilfully plan sessions to ensure maximum enjoyment and joint learning for children and families. Staff use 'Every Child a Talker' and the Early Years Foundation Stage to carefully plan all play sessions. The centre encourages families to undertake family learning, such as the 'Safer Community' course, which enables parents to gain first-aid and food-hygiene qualifications.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

## How effective are the leadership and management?

2



Governance and accountability arrangements provided by Spurgeons are clear and understood. The local authority provides good levels of challenge through regular review meetings and the annual conversation. The governance group is embedding its role in challenging the centre and monitoring the effectiveness of the services provided. Good working relationships with key agencies ensure all partners work towards common aims and services are integrated and making a difference, such as midwifery services.

There are clear line management and supervision arrangements, and staff value the opportunities they receive for their ongoing professional development. The centre manager and her team are very much at the heart of the centre's recent success in increasing the number of families they reach from the target groups and those families most in need. As a result, they are narrowing the gap for the most disadvantaged. A range of monitoring and evaluation systems ensure services are of high quality and identify what needs to be developed further. There are many targets within the centre's operational plan but these are not always precise with clearly measurable success criteria to demonstrate explicitly the impact on outcomes for families.

The centre uses available space highly effectively. It deploys staff well to ensure activity sessions are of high quality, while maintaining the valuable family support work that is making such a difference for those most in need. The centre provides good value for money.

Safeguarding is given high priority. Recruitment practices are effective and ensure all adults working with children are suitable. Family workers carry out risk assessments to ensure the centre is a safe place. Through intervention and support programmes, staff help families to recognise their responsibility to keep their children safe. As a result, there are improved outcomes for children on child protection plans.

User engagement is good. Parents and children routinely evaluate the impact of the services they receive at the end of group sessions or through the 'Friends of Kingsbrook' meetings, the centre's parent forum. Children's views are sought through activities such as 'taster sessions', and through observations made by parents and staff.

These are the grades for leadership and management

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated,</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	
<b>The effectiveness of the centre’s policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Kingsbrook Children’s Centre on 9 and 10 November 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

Your children’s centre provides you with an attractive, safe and inclusive environment where you and your children feel safe, valued and respected. Those of you we spoke to told us that you really enjoy the range of activities on offer, from drop-in groups, such as ‘Up and Away’ and ‘Tiny Tots’, to courses such as parenting courses and ‘Safer Communities’. Your centre makes effective use of the available space and resources providing good value for money. It was good to hear the plans to extend into the additional space.

From our observations, discussions and case studies, we were able to see that the centre has a positive impact on your lives. The use of ‘Every Child a Talker’, a speech and language programme, in play sessions and courses such as ‘Storyland’ are promoting your children’s communication, language and literacy skills. The centre is making good strides in tracking children’s progress. Family books have recently been introduced and these are already helping you to understand the Early Years Foundation Stage and how your children learn and develop. You told us that you think these books are a great idea and show your children’s progress providing a lovely memory of your time at the children’s centre.

We found that staff are enthusiastic and passionate about their work. They work well with partners, such as midwives, to successfully help you make positive changes in your lives. Outcomes for families are good overall and improving. Evaluations show that you are very appreciative of all that is on offer. The staff use this information for future planning and to measure the success of services on offer. Those in charge of the centre know what they do well and where they need to do better. We have asked them to review the effectiveness of the evaluation cycle in order to develop

targets that can be measured more easily, helping staff to show the full impact services and interventions are having on your lives.

Safeguarding practices are given high priority. Staff have a clear understanding of the policies and procedures and ensure you and your children are safe. For example, they carry out frequent risk assessments, checking the centre is a safe place, and leaders follow robust practices ensuring all adults working in the centre are suitable to do so.

You have good opportunities to take part in group activities and courses that help you adopt healthy lifestyles and help you understand the importance of keeping your families safe. Children consistently behave in ways that are safe for themselves and others. It was good to talk to some of you at the start of the parenting course and hear how you value the support and guidance you receive from staff to make positive changes for you and your families. For example, you told us how you develop effective ways to manage your children's behaviour. We heard how some of you have enjoyed attending courses, such as, 'Story Sacks' and 'Numeracy Sacks' and how these have helped you support your children as they start school and with their homework. We have asked the centre to provide more opportunities for you to access academic courses that lead to qualifications as well as helping you to gain skills to prepare for employment.

Partnerships with key agencies are positive so they can offer the correct support and guidance. Staff are good at assessing the individual needs of families in order to ensure you receive specific support, especially for families who need the most help.

Staff provide a range of information and this includes some, which is translated into different languages, for example Polish. You are celebrating different cultures through planned activities such as a 'Twilight Tea' where you had a celebration of Chinese New Year. We found that the care, guidance and support that staff offer you are good. We agree that staff are approachable and often go out of their way to support you. As a result, you feel valued.

We were pleased to talk to some of you during the inspection and were grateful for your views and comments. Thank you for contributing to the inspection at Kingsbrook Children's Centre.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).