Inspection report for Little Stars Children's Centre

Local authority	Kingston upon Hull
Inspection number	367834
Inspection dates	14 - 15 December 2011
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY307681 Janet Genter Community Nursery

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

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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 registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with staff and senior managers from the centre and Child Dynamix, parents and carers, members of the advisory board and representatives from Kingston upon Hull local authority. Inspectors also met with a number of partners, including those from health, education and Jobcentre Plus. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Little Stars Children's Centre is a Phase One children's centre, managed by Child Dynamix on behalf of Kingston upon Hull council. It is situated in the Southcoates East ward of Hull. It is on a site shared with some other services which has benefitted from regeneration. The centre provides the full core offer of services, including onsite day care for children aged from birth to five years. Health professionals provide some services and clinics in the centre.

Governance is through the advisory board, which consists of professional partners, parents and community members. A hub and satellite model of children's centres was introduced in Hull in April 2011, with Marfleet Children's Centre as a hub and Little Stars and one other children's centre as satellites. One full-time and one part-time coordinator, based at the hub, share the coordination of the services and staff across all three centres.

The majority of local families are of White British heritage with a low minority ethnic population of around four per cent. The centre serves an area of deprivation.

Unemployment rates in the area are high and some families are second or third generation unemployed. Of the 939 children in the reach area, 355 live in workless households. Of those families working, a high number are low paid and are in receipt of the child care element of working tax credit.
Children enter Early Years Foundation Stage provision with skills and abilities that are below those typically found 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

The overall effectiveness of Little Stars Children's Centre is satisfactory.

Outcomes for users are satisfactory. Children's centre practitioners provide effective one-to-one support and advice to families in times of crisis and promptly share any concerns with relevant agencies. Policies and procedures for safeguarding, including the recruitment and vetting of staff are satisfactory and regularly updated. Parents and carers told inspectors that they and their children are safe at the centre and that the support they receive helps them to stay safe.

Children's achievements, as demonstrated by their results in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile, are improving overall and the gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest is narrowing. However, results range from an average of 32% for children living in the most deprived wards to 75% average for children in some more affluent wards. There is a positive impact on the progress of children who attend the good quality onsite day care provision. However, this affects only a small minority of the children in the reach area.

Adults improve their parenting skills because of the support they receive from the centre. Adult education partners provide a range of adult learning courses on the same site and the centre provides crèche places so that parents can attend some courses. Case studies indicate that some adults gain qualifications and progress to employment. However, the centre does not have access to sufficient information on adults' achievements or progression in order to monitor and plan provision. The centre promotes healthy living through its

effective partnership with health professionals and onsite services and clinics. As a result, families increase their understanding of how to stay healthy.
Working with its partners, the centre offers a satisfactory range of services across the locality. Engagement of families and key target groups is satisfactory overall. However, few fathers or teenage parents engage with the centre. Families enjoy the learning and development sessions provided and benefit from outreach support in times of crisis.

The inclusion of all children and families is central to the vision of Child Dynamix and the staff team. The centre meets the duties that apply to it for equality and diversity. However, equality and diversity is no better than satisfactory as the centre does not have sufficient mechanisms for engaging with all of its different target groups, nor does it have systems in place to measure the impact of all of its work.

Leaders and centre staff are committed to improving the provision, building on its strengths and reaching more of the families most in need. However, the reduced staff numbers and their deployment across three centres, limit their ability to do so. Evaluation is systematic but lacks both challenge and a rigorous analysis of outcomes leading to precise, measurable and meaningful targets.

The centre encourages users to be involved in decisions about the centre through a range of mechanisms. However, there is an imbalance between the low number of parents and the high number of professionals represented on the advisory board.

Satisfactory leadership and management, outcomes for users, quality of provision and an overall improving trend in performance demonstrate a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- The local authority and partners should provide the centre with timely and accurate data in order for leaders, managers and the advisory board to monitor, analyse and challenge the impact of services and set precise improvement targets.
- The local authority should ensure that the centre has sufficient resources to increase engagement with and improve outcomes for its key target groups.
- Increase the number of parents represented on the advisory board.
- Develop strategies to increase engagement with fathers and teenage parents.

How good are outcomes for families? 3

Families benefit from advice and the promotion of safety by outreach staff. As a result, they have a better understanding of how to keep their families safe. The centre provides effective, timely support for families referred to the centre by its partners. Children in care

or on child protection plans benefit from support from the centre and as a result, their progress is at least satisfactory. However, a lack of continuity in the deployment of staff reduces parents' regular access to familiar and local centre-based support.

Children and parents enjoy the fun sessions in the centre. Adults benefit from courses and sessions that develop their parenting skills. One parent said: 'The centre has really helped me learn how to manage my children's behaviour in a positive way.' Case studies indicate that some users return to work or progress to education or training. However, the centre does not have information on all positive outcomes.

Children behave well and develop useful skills for the future, such as cooperation and independence and families develop respect for each other. The centre provides a range of opportunities for users to make a positive contribution through evaluations and consultations and the parents' forum. Some users express their views leading to improvement in their personal development.

The centre promotes healthy living through a range of mechanisms. Attendances at clinics and rates of immunisation are improving. Data indicates that the number of children that are obese by the time they reach Reception Year at school is reducing and at eight per cent is below the average for Hull. However, by the time children reach Year 6, obesity rates increase significantly to 23%. The centre recognises that at 27%, too few babies are breastfed beyond six to eight weeks. The centre does not have data to demonstrate the impact of its work in encouraging pregnant mothers to give up smoking.

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 centre is based in a modern, attractive building and skilled reception staff provide a warm welcome to families. Informal assessment, user feedback and careful planning enable the centre to develop its provision, across the locality, for existing users. The range of services provided by the centre generally meets the needs of most users who access it and

as a result, participation rates are satisfactory. However, the low staffing ratio, although recently increased improved from one outreach worker to 500 children to one to 350 children, limits the centre's ability to identify and engage with some of the families most in need of their services.

The centre promotes learning and development through joint parent and child sessions, such as 'Five Senses' and parent courses such as 'Nurturing'. Typical comments from parents include: 'We enjoy coming here, my child loves playing with other children and doing the fun activities' and 'I was worried that my child does not share toys and can be aggressive. Coming here is helping her to learn.' Children in day care benefit from staff planning for their individual learning. As a result, their progress is good. Local primary school headteachers recognise that support from the centre helps children's smooth transition into school. However, local authority staffing cuts have reduced the centre's current ability to provide this service.

Case studies show that one-to-one support from the centre is making a difference to families who may be vulnerable due to their circumstances. Good quality childcare is available on the site. Families have sufficient access to appropriate advice and guidance on issues such as employment, benefits and housing.

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

Governance and accountability arrangements are satisfactory with clear links between strategic planning and service provision. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities and are appropriately supervised. However, with a high number of professional partners on the established delivery group and the more recently introduced advisory board, there is a lack of distinction between the two bodies.

The local authority, Child Dynamix, and the advisory board regularly monitor the work of the centre. There are links between the centre's on-going evaluation of its services and the priorities set out in its delivery plan which lead to improving outcomes overall. However, the lack of timely and complete performance measurements means they do not have a full understanding of how successfully the centre is influencing outcomes across the five outcome areas.

The centre meets its statutory duties for promoting equality and celebrating diversity. Action to promote greater equality has resulted in satisfactory engagement with some key target groups such as lone parents, disabled children and parents and low income or workless families. The centre recognises that, although numbers are increasing it does not engage sufficiently with fathers or with the high number of teenage parents.

Safeguarding meets current statutory requirements. The centre has effective systems in place for recording information related to the vetting and recruitment of staff. Staff and partners have a clear understanding of policies and procedures to ensure the protection of users. They understand their role in identifying and reporting concerns and do so promptly. The centre has appropriately prioritised its staffing resource to support families in times of crisis and to promote safety. All staff have had training in safeguarding but some new outreach workers have not yet had training in the use of the Common Assessment Framework.

Partnerships with other services contribute to the satisfactory outcomes for users. Services are mostly integrated and generally deliver cohesive provision for users. However, some partners do not evaluate the impact of their work or sufficiently share information or the responsibility for improving outcomes.

The centre makes satisfactory use of feedback from users to develop the range and quality of its provision. However, there are too few parents currently represented on the advisory board. The use of resources has a satisfactory impact on outcomes for users. Coupled with its satisfactory overall effectiveness, the centre gives 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 secures 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

This report includes findings from the concurrent inspections of the Janet Genter Community Nursery which was graded as good overall.
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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Little Stars Children's Centre on 14 December 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you for talking with us and contributing to the inspection of your children's centre. The centre provides a satisfactory range of services to all of you who use it. It offers you practical help and advice on safety that you appreciate. Those of you that attend parenting courses and activities appreciate how these help you to manage your children's behaviour. We found that staff have a clear understanding of child protection procedures and that they are well trained. You said that you feel your children are safe at the centre.

You enjoy sessions such as 'Five Senses' with your children. Those with children in day care value the care their children receive. We found that children benefit from accessing services at the centre as they help them learn and make progress. The centre works with local adult education providers so you can improve your own education and future employment opportunities. In order to help plan the provision, we have asked the adult education partners to make sure the centre knows how many adults gain qualifications or progress to further education or training.

Your children behave well and you learn more about how to stay healthy. The number of children that are obese by the time they go to school is reducing. However, although the centre offers support and advice to mothers, the number of babies that are breastfed beyond six to eight weeks is not improving. Centre staff do not know if their support is resulting in mothers giving up smoking during pregnancy.

We have asked the local authority to make sure the centre has precise and timely information so that the performance of the centre can be monitored more closely and targets can be set for improvement. The centre listens to you and asks you what you think of the services and activities they offer. They change some things because of what you say. Some of you are involved in making decisions about your centre through being on the parents' forum or attending planning sessions. The chair of the advisory board represents

parents very well but we have asked the centre to increase the number of families represented on the board.

We found that the centre has a long history of commitment to the inclusion of families in the area. They are keen to promote equality and diversity. Funding cuts earlier in the year have reduced staffing levels and, as a result, some services have been reduced. However, the centre has ensured that families in crisis get the support they need. We have recommended that the local authority makes sure the centre has sufficient staff to provide an excellent quality of service to families in order to improve their outcomes. We have asked the centre to try even harder to engage with the teenage parents and dads living in the area.

The local authority and the centre staff want to improve the work of the centre. The centre has been improving and knows most of what it needs to do to improve further and we are confident that it will continue to do so.

A special thank you to those of you who took the time to come in and talk with us and for letting us join you in some of your sessions. We wish you all the best for the future.

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