

Inspection report for Queensway and Riverside Children's Centre

Local authority	North East Lincolnshire
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Reporting inspector	Alison Veall HMI

Centre leader	Mrs Helen Geer
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY397870 Queensway Children's Centre Daycare EY396058 Precious Times Daycare

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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 one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, parents, partner agencies and local authority senior managers.

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

Information about the centre

Queensway and Riverside Children's Centre is a phase two children's centre. Originally they were separate centres, both being designated in 2008. A recent re-organisation has resulted in one centre. However both sites are used for the delivery of services. The centre is situated in the heart of the Willows housing estate and is attached to Willows Primary School. The centre's services are mainly delivered from the two sites but some are also delivered from Great Coates Primary School, Great Coates Village Nursery, Wybers Wood School and For Under Fives Daycare.

The strategic management and governance of the centre is the responsibility of North East Lincolnshire Council. Support and guidance are provided by the senior management team which consists of managers, staff, representatives from partner agencies, parents and the local councillor.

The most recent figures indicate there are approximately 958 children aged under five years living in the area. The children's centre is part of the Freshney and Yarborough wards with areas that fall within the 30% most deprived wards in the country. Twenty-four per cent of children live in households dependent upon workless benefits.

The large majority of families are of White British heritage with 6.1% of children from minority ethnic groups which are predominantly of Eastern European heritage. Children enter childcare and early education with a varying range of experiences and skills. Some are typical of those expected for their age and others are below.

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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

'Without this centre we would be isolated and probably sat in a corner rocking' and 'I have gained so much I want to give it back' are powerful statements that reflect the local community's view of the impact of the work of everyone involved with Queensway and Riverside Children's Centre. All associated with this outstanding centre have worked hard to achieve an exceptional level of trust, acceptance and respect amongst local families. The dedication and commitment of staff and partners have ensured that outcomes for the large majority of people living within this locality have greatly improved. A significant strength of this centre is the attention paid to improving the emotional well-being and safety of families. Highly effective use of the Common Assessment Framework ensures a universal approach. Strategies and interventions aimed at reducing obesity levels are extremely successful. Levels within the centre's reach area currently stand at 8.9% which is 2% below the local authority rates and 1% below national rates. However, all agencies are aware that the proportion of mothers who breastfeed their babies is too low.

The organisation of children's services at local authority level has a significant impact and ensures that families benefit from a wide range of integrated services. The centre is exceptionally well led and managed. Recent changes have ensured that the centre has a strong and energetic leadership and development team who are highly experienced and give outstanding support to the centre coordinator. Multi-agency partnerships are outstanding. They provide the foundation stone from which to deliver a holistic service to ensure the development of families who are then empowered to lead better lives. Sophisticated systems for monitoring and evaluation ensure a cycle of continuous improvement in relation to the quality and impact of the services provided. This demonstrates an outstanding capacity for improvement which is greatly enhanced by the centre's data analysis. Members of the senior management team, which is the centre's advisory board, are fully supportive of the work of

the centre and are clear about their roles and responsibilities. However, whilst local parents are involved in contributing to the centre in numerous ways, there are still too few involved in the senior management team. There is scope to empower more parents and carers to contribute to the governance of the centre, including through more influential representation on this team.

Provision is outstanding both in relation to the flexible, individualised outreach work carried out by centre staff including family resource workers and the high quality activities delivered within the centre. The importance the centre gives to reaching out into the community is commendable and ensures that services are provided to those families most in need of intervention and support. The expertise and breadth of knowledge demonstrated by every staff member within the centre is impressive and has ensured the provision of first-class support and guidance to all families. This deeply embedded sense of security which emanates throughout the centre ensures parents have the confidence to ask for help and support, increasingly before they reach a point of crisis.

Safety awareness is given a high priority and is promoted extremely well. Robust recruitment procedures and excellent safeguarding arrangements ensure the protection of all users who report that they feel safe in the centre. Good quality risk assessments combined with immediate action if issues arise ensure that the site is very safe. A wealth of information in the centre supports parents' understanding of their responsibility to safeguard themselves and their children.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Build upon existing best practice in order to further improve outcomes in relation to increasing breastfeeding rates.
- Enhance the involvement of parents and carers in the development of the centre, including through more meaningful representation on the senior management team.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

Families are providing a much healthier lifestyle for themselves and their children as a result of attendance at programmes and activities such as 'HENRY' (health, exercise and nutrition for the really young), swimming sessions, 'Melody Movers' and 'Whatever the Weather'. As a consequence, childhood obesity in Reception Year in the area is reducing and sits 1% below national averages. Parents indicate that the centre has been instrumental in helping them to adopt healthier lifestyles. The emotional needs of families, particularly those with circumstances that make them most vulnerable, are improving well due to the support and guidance available from the centre and its partners including 'CAMHS' (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service) and the onsite counselling service. Children's health is promoted extremely well through antenatal and postnatal services delivered onsite. The

parents take up excellent advice and support for breastfeeding and weaning, with baby massage and yoga to help develop bonding. The intensive work and support in relation to breastfeeding is beginning to successfully change attitudes, although rates are still below local and national levels.

Parents and children are benefiting enormously from the arrangements for them to stay safe, which are strong and exceptionally well promoted. Many activities within the centre focus on the safety of families and children. For instance, there is strong joint working with a range of agencies and community organisations which promotes good home safety practices. Trips made to the 'Hazard House' provided by the local fire service very effectively improve parents' awareness of home safety. The excellent family and parenting support, very well attended and successful nurturing courses, and the purchase of low cost safety equipment are ensuring that the potential for harm or injury to children is minimised. Improvements in safety are particularly evident for families with circumstances that make them vulnerable. Parents benefit from appropriate and timely responses when they drop in to the centre in crisis.

The centre's bright and well equipped activity rooms create an excellent learning environment for parents and children alike. This, combined with the enthusiasm and dedication of all staff, ensures that children make outstanding progress. This progress is captured step by step in their 'Magic Moments' books to which staff and parents make a very effective contribution. Children also benefit from the highly effective transition arrangements with some local schools and are well prepared as they make the leap into the next stage of their learning. The percentage gap between the lowest performing 20% has been significantly reducing. However, this has been slightly affected this year due to the changing demographics within the centre's reach area. The centre has excellent evidence to support this. The progress made by adults is exemplary. At least half of the parents registered at the centre attend some type of course, evaluations for which are almost entirely positive and indicate excellent learning outcomes. Many adults, for example, take important first steps to employment by participating in English language and other educational courses. Parents say, 'I have a better understanding of my son's behaviour now' and 'staff have helped me to see things through a child's eyes.' These comments evidence the benefit to parents of attending the many high quality parenting courses and activities delivered by the centre.

Children using the services of the centre behave exceptionally well. Participation in the volunteer programme is high and enjoyed immensely by those who take part. As a result of exceptionally effective partnership working, two volunteers received funding and were able to participate in a training development course in Madrid. They are now in the process of becoming trainers themselves. Other volunteers either work in the centre or the community. This centre is having a significant impact on the improvement of parents' independence and economic stability.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	1
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	1
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.	1

How good is the provision?

1

The children’s centre’s bright and informative environment is an absolute hive of activity and it is clear to see why it has been described as the hub of the community. Administrators provide an initial warm welcome and ensure that parents and visitors are directed to the relevant members of staff. There is an excellent range of good quality toys and equipment throughout the centre. It is evident that families and professionals alike feel relaxed and comfortable in its pleasant surroundings.

The centre provides an excellent balance of universal and targeted provision and it delivers outstanding care, guidance and support. High levels of engagement by families evidence how valuable they consider this to be. The needs of the area, particularly those in the target groups are very well understood by the experienced, well-qualified and trained staff. Assessment methods are highly effective and outcomes are well recorded. Outreach work is flexible, highly individualised and promotes independence. This ensures that all family needs are met, particularly for those families with circumstances that make them most vulnerable and who have difficulties in attending the centre.

Children enthusiastically play and learn in the indoor environment and photographs show how much they enjoy exploring the interesting provision. Their achievements are well recorded in their ‘Magic Moments’ books which clearly evidence the progress they are making. Attendance at the ‘Humpty Dumpty’ ready-for-school group is preparing children very well for when they move into school. A headteacher reports that children who attend the centre are developing skills which are improving their readiness for school. There are numerous opportunities for adult learning. Highly effective systems track and monitor the progress and achievements of parents, providing an excellent picture of their learning journey. ‘Award ceremonies’ acknowledge achievements and are highly valued by parents. ‘I didn’t achieve anything at school’, commented one parent. Another said, ‘I just want to keep on learning.’ Prior learning is acknowledged, valued and recorded and used well to signpost parents to further learning.

The sensitive and highly individualised care, guidance and support provided to families are outstanding. Highly effective interventions are reducing the numbers of families who present in crisis. However, if this does happen, support for families is excellent. One parent described the centre as a 'lifeline'. Another parent explained how centre staff had helped her to deal with personal issues including depression in a positive way which had enabled her to move on with her life and to take part in training. As a result of this she had gained qualifications and employment.

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	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	1

How effective are the leadership and management? **1**

The centre coordinator and senior leaders display a real passion to serve the community and improve outcomes for children and families. They are constantly looking for new and innovative ways to improve what is already outstanding provision. The day-to-day management of the centre is excellent; staff are committed, sensitive, empathetic and willing to go the extra mile. Excellent relationships with a wide range of partners contribute significantly to the centre's rich programme of activities, and partners are very clear about the centre's main priorities. Partners find the centre's staff supportive and cooperative and they contribute willingly and helpfully to the free flow of information which helps the centre to decide its priorities.

Staff and partners are committed to inclusion and work relentlessly to improve the life chances of families with young children, particularly those most at risk within its key target groups. For example, over 80% of lone parents and teenage mothers, over 72% of fathers and over 73% of disabled children are consistently engaging with the centre's activities. Disabled children and their parents are very well supported through the centre's extremely effective signposting and their facilitating of the 'Parents supporting Parents Group'. Children who speak English as an additional language are supported extremely well in all activities including the 'Let's Play Together' group.

Safeguarding is given the utmost priority with highly effective policies and procedures in place to ensure the safety and protection of families and staff. Criminal Records Bureau checks are carried out for all those who work or volunteer at the centre. Multi-agency early intervention using the Care Pathway system underpins all centre work, resulting in the swift exchange of information. As a consequence, the children with circumstances that make them vulnerable, including those subject to Common Assessment Framework processes and

child protection plans, are extremely well protected. Risk assessments are rigorous and the comprehensive lone working policy and procedures help to ensure staff are safe when visiting families on their own. Families are informed of the importance of safeguarding when they start at the centre. Parents who spoke to inspectors commented that they now better appreciated this to be a shared responsibility with the community and not just the 'job of the professionals'.

Through a continuous cycle of review, reflection and consultation managers are able to ensure that all services have a clear purpose, measurable outcomes and meet the needs of users exceptionally well. Governance is extremely effective and there is demonstrable accountability to users. The local authority plays a vital role in supporting and challenging the centre. They provide an excellent range of data giving information on the centre's priorities and how well it is reaching them. The centre's improvement plan has clearly identified priorities, actions and targets, all of which are reviewed on a regular basis. Significant cuts to funding have been managed exceptionally well and very creatively at a strategic level. There have been no cuts to provision and worker capacity has improved. As a result of all of the above, this centre provides outstanding 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	1
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
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	1
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.	1

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

The Ofsted reports on the centre's designated day-care provision and local schools were scrutinised to provide contextual information.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Queensway and Riverside Children's Centre on 2 and 3 May 2012. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

As part of the inspection we visited a number of activities, we looked at the centre's plans and documents and talked with several of you and the professionals who work with you. Many of you came in especially to talk to inspectors and to tell us how much the centre had helped you and how you enjoy the activities. Thank you for taking the time to do this.

The children's centre provides an excellent range of activities aimed at improving the lives of you and your family. Your views strongly support this as you tell us that you are happy with the activities you attend and services you use because they have helped you in lots of different ways. For example, some of you have received excellent support in accessing childcare. Others have found the opportunities to undertake parenting courses to be 'supportive' and 'life changing'. Activities and provision for you and your children to attend have ensured that you feel less isolated. Many of you told us how much you look forward to meeting up with other parents, sharing tips and advice about a range of parenting issues. We also heard how large numbers of you have taken advantage of the numerous training opportunities available and we know that these have given you the confidence to become volunteers, to enrol on further college courses or to go back to work. We wish you every success.

Most importantly, you tell us that you 'feel safe at the centre' and you know your children are safe. You also told us about how you trust the staff and how easy they make it for you to ask for help, particularly when you most need it. You appreciate the advice and help of all workers and have welcomed home visits and the opportunity to go with someone to a group until you build your confidence and make new friends. We found that the centre was doing an excellent job of helping you at times in your life when you most need it. We found that action was taken quickly and that different people and organisations worked exceptionally well as a team to support both children and families. Health professionals, education, social care and community and voluntary agencies work really well together to make things better for you and to help you improve your lives. You tell us that it is good to go to the many support groups and clinics and you welcome the opportunity to talk to the health visitor or

the speech and language therapist in a relaxed, informal environment. A lot of parents, especially those who are bringing up children on their own, told us that they felt really happy on the days when they have an activity to go to and have found the friendships made through the centre to have been 'priceless'. There is exemplary support for disabled children and parents are encouraged to take an active role in meetings with professionals, ensuring they are involved in making important decisions about their children's future.

People in charge of the children's centre are doing an outstanding job. The centre coordinator wants the best possible service for all families. She leads a team of committed and motivated staff who share this vision. Together with partners they have worked hard to make sure that everything the children's centre does for you will make a real, genuine and lasting difference to the area in which you live. We know that everyone who works with Queensway and Riverside Children's Centre shares this view. The centre has access to lots of detailed information to help plan future activities and we know they listen to you because you enjoy attending activities they provide.

The centre has spent a lot of time ensuring that you are involved in making decisions about its direction and the different services it provides. We know that you feel genuinely respected and listened to as a result. We were particularly impressed by the work and dedication of the 'Supporters of Freshney Families Group' who plan and deliver activities complementing those delivered by the children's centre. We also heard how the group takes part in fundraising activities, supporting the centre wherever it can. Some parents are also involved in making decisions about the future of the centre through the senior management team. We have asked the centre to encourage more families in the area to play a role in shaping the future direction of the work of the centre and hope that this is something more of you might like to be involved in. We have also asked the centre to further improve health outcomes by encouraging more new mothers to breastfeed their babies.

Thank you once again for coming to speak with us. It was a privilege to be able to talk with you. Your honest and open discussions 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.