

Inspection report for Parklands Nursery School and Children's Centre

Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	383791
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Parklands Nursery School Parklands Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Parklands Learning and Care Centre EY280087

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 maintained nursery was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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

The inspectors held meetings with staff and senior managers from the centre. Inspectors also met with parents and representatives from Northamptonshire Local Authority as well as a number of partners including those from health and education. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Parklands Nursery and Children's Centre is a phase two centre. It is situated within the maintained Parklands Nursery School, on a site shared with Parklands Primary School and Parklands Learning and Care Centre, on the outskirts of Northampton.

The school's governing body is contracted by the local authority to govern the centre. The centre has an advisory board made up of school governors, representatives from the local community, professional partners and parents. The headteacher of the school is also the head of the children's centre. A range of partners work with the centre to deliver services for families.

The centre meets its core purpose and serves a community, which is relatively socio-economically privileged with some small pockets of deprivation. The centre provides services from its own premises and outreach provision in target areas. The majority of local families are of White British heritage, while 24% of the children in the reach area come from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of children who live in households without paid employment is 13.5%. Children enter Early Years Foundation Stage provision with skills, knowledge and abilities that are 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

Parklands Nursery School and Children's Centre is satisfactory overall. Family support workers 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. However, limited communication from children's services restricts the centre's ability to target its services to families who may benefit from them.

Children's achievements, as demonstrated by their results in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile, are above national and Northamptonshire averages with 57% of children in Reception Year achieving at least 78+ points and six points in communication, language and literacy. The results, provided by the local authority by postcode area, vary widely depending on where children live. In 2011, they ranged across the reach area from an average of 31% to an average of 88%. The centre does not sufficiently analyse this data in order to develop its services and target its provision. However, the progress and achievement of those children who attend the outstanding onsite nursery is excellent. There is a positive impact on the progress of children who attend the outstanding onsite nursery school. 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. Partnership working means that some adults benefit from courses in English for speakers of other languages and from a vocational course in care, education and health. Case studies indicate that a minority of adults gain qualifications and progress to employment or further training. The centre promotes healthy living satisfactorily through its sessions such as 'Bouncy Beans' and 'Buggy Walking'. There is a positive impact from the centre's support for mothers with post natal depression and as a result their well-being is improved. However, despite the centre's efforts, the health authority's lack of sharing of information limits the ability to improve health

outcomes. As a result, there is little demonstrable improvement in increasing breastfeeding rates or in reducing childhood obesity.

The centre meets the duties that apply to it for equality and diversity. However, the centre does not have sufficient mechanisms for engaging with all of its different target groups. As a result, it engages well with workless families and lone parents but engagement with fathers and families from minority ethnic groups is low.

Leaders and centre staff are committed to improving the provision, building on its strengths in the outstanding nursery. Self-evaluation is systematic but lacks a rigorous analysis of outcomes leading to precise, measurable and meaningful targets. Support and monitoring by the local authority are limited and lack sufficient rigour in order to help the centre use data to raise standards. The centre encourages users to be involved in decisions about its development and some parents take part in the parents' forum or the advisory board. The centre has had difficulty in recruiting an independent chair for the board.

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

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- The local authority should:
 - ensure that children's services and health services share information with the centre so that the centre can target its work and contribute effectively to early intervention and support
 - increase support and monitoring so that data are used effectively
 - develop strategies to share the expertise in the outstanding nursery to raise children's achievements across the reach area.
- Measure the full impact of the centre's work, particularly with key target groups, by:
 - increasing the collection, collation and analysis of data and setting precise improvement targets
 - evaluating all activities and carefully monitoring the progress of individual children and adults.
- Increase partnership working to ensure services meet the needs of all key target groups and broaden adult learning opportunities.
- Strengthen the advisory board by recruiting an independent chair and increasing the number of parents represented.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Families benefit from advice and the promotion of safety by family support workers. 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. However, children's services do not share sufficient information with the centre in order for it to target its support.

Children and parents enjoy the fun sessions such as 'Time4us' and 'Time2play'. Typical comments from parents include: 'We love coming here, my child enjoys playing with other children and doing the messy play activities' and 'It's great to get the children out of the house. The staff are really friendly – they make you feel welcome.' However, the centre's systems to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of its activities on achievement have not been fully introduced. Children benefit from outstanding provision, as recognised in the concurrent inspection of the nursery, which found that children attending make excellent progress. Adult learning courses and referral for employment advice are helping to improve the economic well-being of some families. However, only a minority of adults gain qualifications or progress to training, education or employment.

Centre staff listen to and use the feedback of families to help shape and develop its services. Children behave well and develop useful skills for the future, such as cooperation and independence, and families demonstrate respect for each other. Some parents benefit from opportunities to make a positive contribution to the centre through volunteering or participation in the parents' forum.

The centre promotes healthy living through its sessions and staff give good advice to parents. However, the impact on outcomes is limited by the health service's lack of information sharing and shared responsibility for outcomes. The centre does not have information on the impact of its work on things such as attendance at clinics, immunisation rates, or smoking cessation during pregnancy.

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	3

stability and independence including access to training and employment	
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How good is the provision?

3

The centre is a welcoming, attractive building, enabling children to play and adults to develop their parenting skills. The centre provides a good number of sessions and activities and is extending opportunities through outreach provision. Joint sessions for parents and children are well resourced and staff effectively model good parenting skills. One parent said: 'I have been to other toddler groups but it is much better here. The outside play area is great'. However, the centre does not sufficiently evaluate the impact of its activities in order to target its provision and engage key groups. There is little assessment of individual starting points or monitoring of individual progress, although new systems are being introduced. While children benefit from well-integrated speech therapy services, health services are slow to integrate their services with that of the centre.

The centre is particularly successful in supporting individual families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Parents value home visits and individually tailored support and say that the centre has made a big difference to the lives of their families. One parent said: 'The staff listen to me – I don't feel judged. My child's behaviour and speech has already improved and he is interacting better with other children and adults.' Another parent said: 'The centre has been a lifeline – I would not survive without them. I can't thank them enough.' Adults have adequate access to information, advice and guidance on training, benefits and work.

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	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory overall. The centre manager sets high expectations and the centre's nurturing and empowering ethos extends to staff, as well as families. As a result, responsibilities are clearly understood and teamwork is a strength of the centre. Staff understand their roles and are appropriately supervised.

The head of centre has a clear understanding of the key issues facing the centre but is restricted by the lack of a rigorous analysis of reliable data. The current collation and analysis of data does not ensure that the local authority, governors, leaders and staff have a clear understanding of how successfully the centre and its services are

having an impact on the five outcome areas. The lack of use of data limits the centre's ability to set precise and challenging targets and prioritise its developments.

The use of resources is having a satisfactory impact on outcomes for users. The work of the family support workers is effectively targeted on supporting families in times of need. Overall engagement of users is satisfactory and the centre provides satisfactory value for money. Action to promote equality has resulted in increased engagement with teenagers, disabled children and parents, workless families and families who may be vulnerable due to their circumstances. However, the centre does not have access to pertinent information on some of the groups it serves and, therefore, cannot identify them nor evaluate the impact of their engagement.

Safeguarding arrangements meet current statutory requirements. The centre has clear systems in place for recording information related to the vetting and recruitment of staff. Staff understand their role in identifying and reporting concerns and do so promptly. However, children's services do not sufficiently communicate with the centre regarding children they identify as in need. Therefore, the centre is unable to target engagement with these families in order to contribute to early intervention and provide support.

Partnerships contribute to the satisfactory outcomes for users. Services are mostly integrated and generally deliver cohesive provision for users. Outreach provision in partners' venues extends opportunities for families. However, the health service is slow to effectively engage in partnership with the centre, provide integrated services and share the responsibility for improving outcomes.

The centre seeks and makes use of feedback from users to develop the range and quality of its provision. Some parents participate in decision making through involvement in the parents' forum or the advisory board.

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

Findings from the concurrent inspection of the maintained nursery school, which found that its provision is outstanding and children make excellent progress, were used to form some of the judgements during this inspection.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Parklands Nursery School and Children's Centre on 22–23 May 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you very much for talking to us and letting us come into your sessions. The information you gave and the stories you shared with us helped us to make our judgements. Some of you talked about how the centre has helped you and your children. Some parents told us how the centre has supported them to improve their lives and how they now have more confidence as parents.

You enjoy the sessions with your children such as 'Time4us' and 'Time2play', and a good number of families attend these sessions. You thoroughly enjoyed playing in the lovely outdoor area when we at last had some sunshine. We found that children benefit from accessing services at the centre, but the centre has not fully introduced systems to measure their progress. We have asked them to improve this.

You spoke very highly of the nursery school and those children who attend it make excellent progress in its outstanding provision. However, we found that across the centre's reach area, children's achievements vary widely. We have asked the local authority to find ways to share the expertise of the nursery so that all children's achievements improve.

The centre is successful at engaging with the majority of local families that need support. The centre works with adult education providers to give access to courses, which help improve the education and future employment opportunities for some adults. We have asked the centre to increase its partnership working to make sure it

meets the needs of its key target groups and broaden the adult learning opportunities.

You told us how the involvement with the centre and courses such as 'First Aid' are improving your ability to keep your children safe. We found that staff have a good understanding of child protection procedures and that they are well trained and promptly report any concerns to relevant agencies. However, we found that sometimes children's services do not share information with the centre which means the centre cannot effectively support families who may benefit from their services. Your children behave well and you learn more about how to stay healthy through advice from staff and sessions such as 'Bouncy Beans'. We found that health services are not fully integrated with the centre. We have asked the local authority to make sure that health services and children's services improve the sharing of information so that the centre can better provide support and services to those who need it.

The centre listens to you and asks you what you think of the services and activities it offers. Everyone seems to get on well together at the centre and there are opportunities to volunteer. The governance and accountability arrangements delegated by the local authority are clear but the centre has found it difficult to recruit an independent chair for the advisory board. Some of you are involved in making strategic decisions about your centre through being a member of the parents' forum or advisory board. We have asked to find ways to increase the number of parents represented on the board and to recruit an independent chair.

We found that all the staff are keen to promote equality and diversity. Families treat each other with respect. The centre works well for everyone in the community, irrespective of their background or disability.

The head of centre sets high expectations and teamwork is strong. The centre has been steadily improving and knows what it needs to do to improve further. However, there is little use of data to measure the full impact of its work and set precise improvement targets. We have asked the centre to improve the availability and use of data so it can more carefully monitor the full impact of its services on the families with greatest need and set targets for improvement. We have also asked the local authority to help them with this by strengthening its role in supporting and monitoring the performance of the centre.

We thoroughly enjoyed spending time at your centre, meeting you and your children, and we wish you and your families all the best for the future.

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