

Inspection report for The Park Children's Centre

Local authority	Gloucestershire
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Linked school if applicable	Park Infant School and Park Junior School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	The Park Early Years Provision (EY510044)

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 co-located junior school 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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with: the centre manager; senior leadership team; early years practitioners; local headteachers; health, domestic violence and social service professionals; Jobcentre Plus manager; adult education staff; community family workers; partnership board and governing body members; local authority representatives and parents. They also observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centre's self-evaluation and business development plan.

Information about the centre

The centre was designated in 2007 as a phase two centre and has delivered a range of services to meet its core purpose since 2009. The centre shares a site with Park Infant School and Park Junior School and is open Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm for 48 weeks of the year, with a monthly session on a Saturday from 9.00am to 11.00am. It is involved in a 'clustering' arrangement with Five Ways Children's Centre which involves the sharing of staff, a combined programme of activities and joint partnership board comprising partners and parents. The governing body of the infant school with which the centre shares a site oversees the centre's leadership and management through a service-level agreement with the local authority.

The centre's reach area is mainly rural and comprises of a local ward which serves the 20% most disadvantaged and three other wards serving the 70% most deprived families. Data show that 2.9% of children live in workless households which is in line with the county average; some 10.8% are in receipt of work-related benefits. The

vast majority of families living within the reach area are of White British heritage with a very small percentage from Polish and Asian backgrounds. Currently there are 888 children under five living in the reach area. Children’s knowledge and skills when they enter early years provision are typically below the level 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

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

The centre makes good provision for the large majority of children and families living in its area and meets its core purpose well. The overall proportion of children in direct contact with the centre is increasing and outcomes are good. The centre’s aim to ensure that ‘Everybody Matters Everyday’ is very well met in practice and is reflected in parents’ exceptionally high satisfaction levels with centre services.

Exceptionally purposeful partnerships and well-integrated service delivery help families to live healthier lives, keep safe and make a positive contribution to the life and development of the centre. Effective use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) results in timely support for those most in need. The very few children subject to a child protection plan or who are in need are safeguarded well by a multi-disciplinary team who together ensure a strong safety net of support; 100% of looked after children have regular contact with the centre.

Learning and development opportunities are very well planned. As a result children are enabled to achieve well from their starting points. The gap in achievement between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest is closing rapidly. There is clear evidence that early intervention is supporting the communication, language and personal, social and emotional development of children who have attended the centre very effectively. Outcomes at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage are above the national average. Parents benefit from centre services such as the life-skills programme, and from activities that help them to learn positive behaviour management techniques, overcome stress and adopt healthy lives. Case studies

demonstrate that some families are clearly improving their financial stability and employment prospects from accessing services but courses are not specifically targeted at workless or low-income families and the centre is not yet tracking the longer-term impact of its input to adults' enjoyment and achievement.

Parents feel comfortable in the centre and know they will get a friendly reception from the staff. They identify lots of ways in which the centre helps build their confidence and improve their well-being. Comments such as 'the staff make the centre feel a warm and welcoming place as if you're visiting a friend's house'; 'everyone is really helpful and always has time for a chat and a smile' and 'I have been helped through some really tough times', are typical.

The manager and senior leadership team have the drive, determination and shared ambition to make the centre outstanding. Effective action has been taken to increase the engagement of target groups, as reflected in the rising number of children from families most in need of support now using the centre. Self-evaluation is accurate and the right priorities have been set to further improve outcomes. The governing body undertakes its role effectively and works productively with staff to both shape and monitor service delivery.

Leaders and governors rightly recognise that data analysis and target setting could be sharper and that more timely checks on the impact of actions would make development planning an even more robust tool. The centre's excellent partnership with a wide range of agencies enables families in the reach area to have the widest access to services and adds tangible value to the centre's good capacity to build for sustained further success.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the engagement of families from workless households in centre services that help them enhance their skills, extend personal achievements and further improve their future economic well-being.
- Develop a consistent method to track the achievement of adults who have accessed the centre, measure the longer-term impact and identify where to target further services.
- Sharpen the analysis of data to inform the setting of more precise targets in the business plan against which to measure the impact of actions taken to improve outcomes.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The centre works effectively to assist families in being healthy and outcomes are good. It involves families in practical activities, for example the 'Hands on Dads' group undertook a sponsored bike ride with the funds raised spent on resources to

support local families in keeping fit. Healthy snacks are available daily for children and the centre works with parents to ensure their children eat nutritionally and achieve healthy weights. As a result, child obesity rates in the area are reducing and at 8% are below those in other parts of the county. The level of new mothers sustaining breastfeeding is rising and at 56% is similar to elsewhere in the county: a few mothers would like the centre to re-open its 'breastfeeding cafe' on site. The centre works hard to raise parents' awareness of safety matters through an annual Accident Prevention week and its popular first-aid courses together with personal and home safety sessions led by police and fire service officers. The rate of accident and emergency admissions is below the county average. Virtually all families in the reach area engage with health services, which is reflected well in the 97% take up of immunisation programmes.

Parents are involved in the governance of the centre through membership of the partnership board, governing body and being a part of the 'Parents' Voice', a forum for sharing ideas. As a result, most parents are enabled to express their views on the quality and impact of services. The centre plays a positive role in the local community through such initiatives as 'All Pulling Together' which links services to ensure best impact on the community and achieve best value. There is a strong ethos of friendly and mutual respect which is evident between families and staff. Parents say they feel free from any form of discrimination, as summed up by a young mother, 'I feel safe and secure when I am here and feel able to be myself.'

The well-being of young children, including those subject to a child protection plan, shows good impact from well-focused interventions and multi-agency work to ensure they stay safe. There is clear evidence to show that vulnerable families are very effectively supported by nurturing programmes and a range of parenting programmes. These ensure that parents are helped to manage their children's behaviour with increasing success and this often helps keep families together.

Children who attend the centre achieve successfully and are very well prepared for school by the on-site early years provision which was judged as 'outstanding' in April this year. Tracking shows that the centre's strong focus on promoting early talking and confidence in reading has proved positive in assisting boys' and girls' rapidly improving achievements. Children who are disabled and those with special educational needs benefit immensely from tailor-made support and the centre's excellent partnership with local schools and achieve well in consequence. At 61.4%, an above average proportion of children achieved over 78 points on the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile, including their communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development.

The centre has helped a large number of adults to build trusting relationships and develop their confidence and self-esteem. Over a third of families using the centre are engaged in training, adult learning or other activities, although those from workless homes are not participating as well as others. A small number go on to further education and some find paid work following the centre's interventions. Family learning sessions contribute effectively to the good outcomes for families,

including the most vulnerable. Consequently, the majority of families are improving their life skills, chances and choices and future economic well-being.

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	2
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
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	2
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	2

How good is the provision?

2

Staff have a thorough knowledge of the local community and together with the excellent partnerships with a wide range of local providers ensure services meet the needs of the large majority of children and adults in the reach area. All target groups benefit from the opportunities provided, as shown in the good outcomes; however, the percentage of families from workless homes who access the services, while still adequate, is lower than for others. Assessment is used robustly and all activities have a clear rationale and are linked to the centre's well-conceived priorities and the wider local authority key objectives for improving people's lives. For example, well-focused partnership work to improve the achievement of children most at risk has been particularly successful. Programmes such as 'Inspiring Minds' enhance parenting skills through creating simple and affordable play environments and strongly promote a 'can do' culture.

Clear pathways from baby time through to pre-school sessions ensure children's continuing learning and development. Where the needs of specific groups such as adults looking to up skill or increase their employability can be better met by partner agencies, the centre facilitates this, although the impact of the services they access is not consistently followed up. Children's personal development and achievement are celebrated through comprehensive learning journeys and the high levels of praise from staff. Adults also receive positive encouragement although there are missed opportunities to give more prominence to their on-going achievements, for example through displays, the award of certificates or celebratory events.

Good quality care, guidance and support and well-targeted services help families

from different backgrounds who use the centre to develop a good sense of well-being. CAF work and the 'team around the child' approach to keeping children safe are effective in keeping children well protected, including looked after children. The centre signposts services, to help with sexual health, drugs misuse and mental health problems, and assists families in knowing how and where to access services, although the organisation of leaflets for parents' independent use could be better. The centre works very closely with local groups to provide supportive courses to help those in times of crises, including sufferers of domestic abuse. Families strongly agree that they are empowered to build trusting relationships and feel good about themselves as a result of the centre's timely interventions.

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	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Leadership and management are good with outstanding partnerships adding positive value to the quality and effectiveness of the centre's work and good capacity for improvement. Everyone is ambitious to make the centre outstanding and is very focused on making a difference to the community and meeting the range of target group needs as effectively as possible. Work to ensure that a wide range of good quality services continue to be accessible, while centre staff concentrate their actions on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable families in the reach area, is resulting in good take up of activities, sustained participation rates, and good and improving outcomes.

Business planning is well informed by accurate self-evaluation and the right priorities have been set to further improve outcomes. However, targets are sometimes too general and this restricts the opportunities for precise checks on the impact actions are having. The use of data, although satisfactory, is central to ensuring that the centre's monitoring is as searching as possible and to ensure that the outcomes for all target groups are the highest possible, particularly those from workless homes.

Professional supervision and management arrangements are consistently good and this improves performance. Staff development is given high priority so that everyone can keep up to date with best practice and ensure that all requirements are met, for example in respect of equalities and safeguarding. The centre is very effective in removing barriers to access, has zero tolerance to any form of discrimination and challenges any unacceptable behaviour. Parents value highly the centre's fully

inclusive practices which not only promote mutually respectful relationships but also make them feel safe and secure, especially in times of personal crisis. Safeguarding arrangements and risk assessment are effective and meet government guidelines. Well-trained staff are pro-active and not only ensure that the safeguarding of children is given a high priority in the centre, but also work with parents, for example through first aid training, to ensure that they have good awareness of safety matters and that safe practices are implemented within their homes. Protocols for making referrals and sharing information between relevant agencies are effective and are supported by regular liaison meetings.

Governance arrangements are clear. The centre's governing body undertakes its role effectively and there are strong links with the partnership board that oversees the clustering arrangements and the local authority which result in good accountability. Resources are managed efficiently and the centre is used well by families. There is sensible dovetailing of services, for example a baby weighing clinic and well-baby advice takes place at the same time as the baby time nurturing group. Parents are involved routinely in decision-making through a range of opportunities and are instrumental in helping to scope services, for example by establishing a lunch club where different speakers share their experiences about how to set up a credit union or coping with mental health issues. These features together with the good outcomes result in good 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	2
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
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	2

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

The Park Early Years Provision (EY510044) inspection April 2012 which judged the provision to be outstanding.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected The Park Children's Centre on 14 and 15 June 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We talked with some of you, your children, staff, and a wide range of partners and members of the local authority linked to the centre. We observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documents. Thank you very much for sharing your views, we found them extremely useful. It was great to hear many of you say how your lives have been transformed through contact with the centre.

We found that the centre makes good provision for the young children and families who use it and this helps you to keep healthy, be safe and enjoy the good range of activities that help you and your children achieve both personally and academically and grow in confidence. The centre's growing links with schools are helping to keep track of your children's progress when they start school and we hope that more work will take place with those of you who are not currently in employment to plan activities to help you move forward and to keep track of how you get on.

The centre makes sure that you are well looked after when you visit and in consequence you feel safe and free to take full advantage of the good range of opportunities available. You told us that you feel welcomed whatever your specific needs or background. We could see that you have respectful relationships with staff and make new friends and these help you to manage the demands of being a parent. We enjoyed seeing several of the activities such as 'Baby massage', 'Nurture groups' and 'Stay and Play' which contribute much to your children's development.

You told us that you are confident to put forward your views and that the 'Parents' Voice' is well attended; through your representative on the governing body and partnership board you contribute to decisions about services really well.

Leadership and management are good with everyone working together effectively to make sure that services are provided which you can all gain from, particularly those

of you who are feeling especially vulnerable. The centre manager and staff are endeavouring to make even better use of data to help monitor the full impact of services on all groups and to set precise targets for improvement in the business plan. They are ambitious to make the centre even better and we judge that the centre has good capacity to build for further success.

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