

Inspection report for Kingsbridge Children's Centre

Local authority	Devon
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Kingsbridge Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if 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.

An inspection of the co-located primary 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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, the service and group managers, representatives of the local authority, the advisory board, partnership agencies, members of staff and families using the centre.

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

Information about the centre

Kingsbridge Children's Centre is a phase 2 children's centre located on the site of Kingsbridge Primary School in Devon. It was registered in December 2009 to provide family and outreach services to a large geographical area across the South Hams district. According to local authority data, the proportion of children living in poverty in the area is slightly lower than the average for the county. Almost 15% of children aged between nought and four live in households dependent on workless benefits and 13% of parents benefit from the childcare element of working tax credit. There is a significant proportion of lone parents living in the area. Almost all families in the area are White British. A small but increasing proportion of families are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Most children enter early education with knowledge and skill levels that are lower than those expected for their age.

In May 2011, the local authority changed the centre's responsible body to the charitable organisation Action for Children. The centre manager for Kingsbridge Children's Centre also acts as centre manager for Dartmouth Children's Centre. The

two centre's advisory boards amalgamated in June 2010 to provide a single advisory board responsible for both centres.

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 small staff team provides a warm, welcoming environment for families. Staff work closely with key partners to provide integrated services for families. The centre has developed effective partnerships with health, the Citizen's Advice Bureau and adult and family learning. These have a positive impact on improving outcomes for families, especially their health and economic well-being. A close working relationship between health and centre staff is a key strength of the centre's work. This enables comprehensive assessments completed by health workers to be used effectively. Monthly meetings attended by staff from health, education, the children's centre and Homestart are used to organise a coordinated approach to supporting families facing difficult circumstances. These meetings avoid duplication of services and ensure regular monitoring of the support provided.

New health staff are appointed by a joint panel of representatives from the children's centre and health and their induction includes spending a number of days in the centre. This innovative approach ensures a greater awareness of each other's contributions and helps to develop close working relationships. Families attending health clinics are signposted to specific activities within the centre because health staff have direct experience of the activity and are confident of its benefits. As a result, staff from a range of agencies work cohesively to improve a range of health outcomes. The proportion of mothers continuing to breastfeed at six to eight weeks from birth is in the highest 10% of the county, the immunisation rates of two- and four-year-old children in the area are higher than average and the proportion of children in Reception Year who are obese has fallen below the local authority average.

During the centre's annual appraisal, the local authority clarified that the responsibility for supporting and developing the Early Years Foundation Stage settings had been delegated away from children's centres to early years consultants

and childcare advisers. The centre has worked to develop learning and play resources to be used by toddler groups in the area so that activities are provided for families in rural areas in the centre's reach. This has helped to encourage higher attendance. However, opportunities are missed to encourage centre staff to provide more challenging activities for children across the area aimed specifically at developing their personal, physical or communication skills. As a result, the centre has more limited impact on raising children's low levels of skills and understanding as they enter Reception classes in the local area.

The centre manager is clearly motivated to seek further improvement and has shown her leadership capacity by successfully leading the centre through recent changes in staffing levels while maintaining a continued focus on the needs of families within the reach area. Senior leaders have a sound understanding of the local area established by experienced staff from a range of agencies. They have developed a clear understanding of the centre's strengths in meeting the needs of local families and have shown that the centre has an overall satisfactory capacity to address key areas and to sustain improvements for families. However, with partners the centre has not developed a clear strategy to address the high proportion of emergency admissions caused by unintentional or deliberate injuries to children and young people; in 2011, this was one of the highest across all children's centres in the local authority.

The centre is provided with data by the local authority as well as collecting its own information. However, analysis of this information by leaders and the advisory board is not always sufficiently detailed. The centre has targeted services at areas and improved attendance but has not used available data to gain a clear indication of the proportions of different target groups accessing services and activities. This, in turn, has an impact on the centre's ability to set precise and quantifiable targets to increase the engagement of those families most in need in the area. Some of the target groups in the local area are underrepresented and participation rates for some groups are lower than expected, especially fathers and minority ethnic families.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Make better use of data and other information in order to:
 - identify clear development priorities
 - produce precise and quantifiable targets for short- and long-term improvement
 - improve the rigour of the centre's planning and evaluation.
- Increase the participation rates of target groups, of lone parents and especially of fathers and minority ethnic families.
- In partnership with the local authority, improve outcomes for children and families further by:

- reducing the rate of emergency hospital admissions caused by injuries to children and young people
- raising the levels of achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

There is a wide range of health services available from the centre, which engage the majority of families so that they make good progress in developing healthy lifestyles. Friendly staff and professional counselling sessions help parents to overcome low self-esteem and raise their self-confidence. The centre has extended the range of activities on offer to include 'Baby Massage' sessions helping to further improve families' emotional well-being. In addition, 'Groovy Movers', cooking for life sessions and outdoor education sessions all help to develop parents' understanding of healthy lifestyles and eating and help to reduce the proportions of children locally who are obese. Parents describe how they have a greater awareness of a healthy diet and what makes nutritious meals.

Many parents report that they feel safe at the centre and are warmly welcomed. They explain that staff are responsive to their concerns and worries. The centre provides activities to encourage greater safety awareness. During 'Staying Safe' week, the centre provided a wide range of information for parents in helping to ensure the safety of their child. The centre's Family Support Worker works in close partnership with the local Parent Support Adviser, social workers and Family Intervention Workers to support a high number of families where there are concerns for children's well-being. These partnerships share information and work closely to reduce the risk of harm and support families facing challenging circumstances. However, the centre has no clear detailed strategic targets to work with partners to address the high proportion of emergency admissions caused by unintentional or deliberate injuries to children and young people.

Children enjoy participating in activities in a relaxed and friendly environment where they develop their social skills. 'Stay and Play' sessions are popular and well attended as are 'Learning through Play' sessions held at venues around the local area. Play leaders at the centre have developed an imaginative range of resources that provide a wider choice of activities and resources for local toddler groups. The local authority's consultants provide helpful advice, support and expertise so that staff are developing their skills and understanding of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, data show that the proportion of children in the local area gaining at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage is lower than the local and national average.

The centre is a well respected part of the local community. Parents provide their views informally to staff and contribute to the life of the centre. The centre has recently initiated more formal consultations, for example 'Air and Share' where they gather the views of families who use the centre. These views have made a positive contribution to shaping provision to meet their needs. However, the views of those

not accessing services are not routinely sought and few parents actively contribute towards the governance of the centre.

Staff and tutors play a valuable part in enabling parents to attend adult learning and other courses in order to extend parents' qualifications and help to raise their aspirations. In addition, the centre has developed innovative partnerships with the National Trust, enthusiastic play rangers and Family Learning, and staff have helped to provide families with enjoyable new learning activities in historic buildings and in the outdoors. Parents report that a day spent with their children hunting bugs, painting with mud and toasting marshmallows over open fires has opened their eyes to the possibilities provided by the local environment. In the last year, the centre has developed partnership arrangements to provide good support on financial planning, debt management, housing and benefits. As a result, the majority of families make good progress in developing economic stability and access training.

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	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	2

How good is the provision?

3

The centre knows the families using the centre and has identified those most in need of support and adapted services to meet their needs. It has developed effective partnerships with key partners and works closely with social services to support families. Well-developed partnerships with Family Learning help to develop parents' skills and knowledge and obtain qualifications in accredited courses. Easily accessible advice on benefits and monthly sessions help families maximise their income and improve their financial stability. Partnership working with Early Years Foundation Stage settings in the area to improve children's achievement is less well developed. Partnerships with parents are satisfactory. The centre is developing strategies to support parents to promote the home learning environment for their children and has been looking at developing different models of parent consultation.

The use of assessments to ensure the promotion of purposeful learning,

development and enjoyment is variable. Assessments are used effectively to improve healthy lifestyles and ensure that services with health are well integrated. Parents are involved in assessing their individual learning needs and these are used well to identify suitable courses to make good progress in building their knowledge and skills and gaining qualifications. Family learning sessions provide focused feedback against clear outcomes. However, assessments of children's achievements and interests are less detailed and do not provide staff with clear information to provide individualised programmes and activities.

Staff are committed to providing support and advice to everyone they encounter through their work. Several professionals spoke of the valuable contribution the centre makes in sharing information and working together to encourage families to benefit from their services. There is evidence that care, guidance and support make a discernible difference to families, including those most in need. Families who attend the centre told inspectors how welcome they are made to feel and how much they value the support staff provide.

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

Representatives from a range of key partnerships participate at the centre's advisory board meetings. The amalgamation of the governance of two centres has led to variations in the structure and organisation and has resulted in a degree of uncertainty in the precise roles and responsibilities of governance arrangements. Staff and the advisory board regularly meet to monitor activities and review services. They have acted appropriately to commission additional services where necessary, and to develop close partnerships with other agencies so that overall the centre provides satisfactory value for money. The centre gathers its own data and receives regular information from the local authority that has identified higher emergency hospital admissions rates locally and the lower than average proportion of children reaching expected levels at the end of Reception Year in local schools. However, systems to more rigorously monitor data to set clear targets to improve identified weaknesses and increase the uptake of different groups of users are not embedded.

The centre's leaders, advisory board and local authority have used annual conversations and evaluations to develop an up-to-date delivery plan containing key priorities. The plans have helped the centre to provide activities in the more deprived

areas and engage with a higher proportion of families from these areas. These actions have ensured that the centre promotes the inclusion of a wide range of families and provides sufficient services and activities to ensure satisfactory or better outcomes for families in the local area. As a result, the promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. However, the centre does not consistently reach and engage all target groups, and fathers and families from minority ethnic groups are underrepresented.

All staff receive regular training on safeguarding and this has formed part of induction procedures during the recent change of the responsible body. Appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures are in place. Parents are provided with a clear statement of the centre's safeguarding policy, although this does not include the name of the designated person. A respected key member of staff works relentlessly to provide support and guidance to a high number of families in crisis. Staff work closely with health and volunteer agencies to provide integrated support for families facing crisis and ensure outcomes for some families are improving. The centre manager makes good use of funding for two-year-olds to provide timely support for parents and to ensure that children are provided with suitable education. Senior leaders have used training to raise awareness and understanding of domestic violence helping to support families and preventing greater risk of harm. Although it has taken time to respond, the strategic managers in charge of a number of children's centres locally have appointed a new member of staff to increase the centre's responsiveness to new referrals.

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

None

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Kingsbridge Children's Centre on 20 and 21 June 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We enjoyed visiting your centre, talking with you and seeing you and your children join in a range of sessions. Thank you for the warmth of your welcome. We especially enjoyed watching the video of families visiting National Trust properties. You and your children obviously enjoy these sessions and get a lot from them. The play rangers are enthusiastic and we thought the 'veil of silence' was a fantastic way of helping your children to observe the environment quietly.

Staff at the centre are determined to work together with other professionals to help and support you. It was good to hear how they have helped you and your children at times when you have faced particular difficult circumstances. You told us how feel safe at the centre and enjoy attending a range of sessions. The 'Air and Share' surveys have helped to get more families to share their ideas and views. You can help the centre by attending parent forum sessions and helping the centre to develop and improve.

The staff and activities at the centre and in towns and villages around the area are leading to improvements for you and your families. For example, many of you make sure your children are immunised, breastfeed your babies from birth and develop your skills as parents. Several of you have participated in the wide range of adult and family learning sessions and go on to obtain certificates and qualifications. Staff at the centre provide activities for you and your children that are enjoyable and are helping to develop social skills. However, a number of the sessions provided for you and your children across the area do not provide your children with challenging activities aimed at improving their early communication skills and language.

The centre is provided with a range of data and information but does not always use this to identify the proportions of families attending activities and to set clear targets to improve services. We have asked the centre to work with other professionals to increase the proportion of children in the local area reaching expected levels at the end of their Reception class. In addition, we have asked the centre to work with health partners to set clear plans aimed at reducing the high number of emergency

hospital admissions in the local area caused by injuries to children and young people. At the moment, a number of groups do not attend regularly, especially lone parents, fathers and parents from minority ethnic families.

Thank you to all those of you who took the trouble to speak to us about the centre. We wish you and your children every success.

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