

# Inspection report for Penrith Drive Children's Centre Wellingborough

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<b>Local authority</b>	Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	384049
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 June 2012
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Ruskin Infant School (121889) Olympic Primary School (121908)
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Ruskin Childcare (EY339515) Sure Start Wellingborough Children's Centre (EY301852)

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.

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

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre manager, its deputy and business managers, other centre staff and representatives of the centre's parent organisation (Action for Children). They spoke with a number of individual parents. Discussions were held with health professionals, representatives from the local authority and the centre's advisory board, and a wide range of partner organisations and educational bodies who provide services for the centre's families. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Penrith Drive Children's Centre was designated as a phase two centre in September 2007, when it started to fulfil its core purpose. Between 2002 (when it was first opened) and 2007, the centre was part of the local authority's Sure Start Local Programme. In 2005, it moved to its current, purpose-built complex on the Queensway estate on the north-western edge of Wellingborough. The centre consists of a combined entrance and group activity space, a large meeting room, a health room, a sensory room, a kitchen and three small meeting rooms. There is a spacious room for the crèche with a well-maintained fenced garden and outdoor play area for parents and their children. The centre uses occasional outreach facilities at a local church, and at the village of Little Harrowden. The centre is registered on the voluntary part of the Childcare Register and provides crèche facilities. Full-time early years provision is available at Ruskin Childcare, which is based at Ruskin Infant School about half a mile from the centre. The centre works in partnership with the childcare setting to ensure support for families when they are accessing the centre's services.

The centre's manager is answerable directly to Action for Children, which manages the children's centre on behalf of the local authority. An independent advisory board

provides advice and guidance, and oversees the centre's work and activities. This advisory board is a joint body with the Nene Lakes Children's Centre, which is also under the same management. A parents' forum (the Friends of Penrith Drive) has been established to provide additional advice and support for the centre, and to develop its programme of services.

The centre serves communities which live in one of the 30% most deprived areas in the country overall, with some parts being in the lowest 10 to 15%. The proportions of workless families in the area, and those in receipt of benefits or subject to financial hardship, are above average. Some 26% of the children in the centre's area are assessed as living in poverty. The centre's reach area covers the Queensway, Redwell West and Wellingborough North wards, and part of Brickhill ward of the borough council. There are four primary and/or infant schools in the centre's extended area, but most children start school at the Ruskin Infant or Olympic Primary Schools. Within the centre's area live nearly 1000 children aged between nought to five years. Just under 70% of families are registered with the centre. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities are well below those expected for their age overall when they enter early years provision. Most families are White British; the proportion from other heritage groups is below average.

## 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

This is a good centre. It is led and managed well. Programmes and facilities meet well the needs of its communities and users; activities and services result in positive outcomes for children and their families. The accessibility of centre staff is one of its key strengths. This has proved a vital factor in the excellence of the centre's work on child protection and in its support for families and adults whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable. It also inspires confidence in its partners through multi-agency support work. The centre balances well both the more formal and the informal support work it undertakes. One parent summed up typical users' responses when saying, 'This place has changed my life around. You can 'phone, drop-in at any time and feel totally safe here. I have not looked back since coming to the centre.'

Over the past 18 months, the centre has become increasingly effective not only in using data provided by the local authority about the population in its area, but also other data and information it has sought from its partners. Centre workers use effectively their own knowledge of the local communities, and the regular consultations they have with users. Leaders have applied this understanding well to target services and apply for additional funding to meet the needs of families in the area. Funding to combat child poverty has been used effectively to target the centre's more hard-to-reach groups, and particularly young parents. It has also been very successful in developing its facilities and services for families with disabled children and those with special educational needs. The centre's successes in such projects, and the ways it uses its experiences to inform its planning for future development, support effectively its good capacity for further improvement.

The centre is very aware of those parts of its reach area where the highest deprivation factors necessitate the prioritisation of its services. In the past, when it has not had sufficient data, it has used methods such as leafleting and door-to-door canvassing to try to identify its more hard-to-reach families. With improved data, it is becoming increasingly sharp in its approach, and understands that more is required to meet fully the needs of three key groups: young parents, black and minority ethnic groups, and fathers. Since September 2011, the centre has involved half of the known young parents in its area in either parenting or employability courses – and with good success. The Saturday morning breakfast and stay and play group for fathers and their children has become increasingly popular. Consequently, a new centre worker has been employed recently to develop an extended programme for fathers. Links have, and are, being forged with minority heritage groups.

Unlike the centre's own initiatives with its hard-to-reach groups, some elements are not entirely in its own hands. Since midwifery services were centralised and withdrawn from the centre, information regarding new and expectant parents has not been so easily obtained. The centre is not always certain that the information about its services, as provided through partner health services, is being targeted sufficiently to support early registrations. Sometimes, the centre does not know about new mothers and their partners until it receives data about live births, and cases are passed on to health visitors. This has meant the centre has not always been able to play its part in supporting actively such initiatives as preparation for breastfeeding and smoking cessation. Where it is able to do so, with its registered users, it is successful.

## **What does the centre need to do to improve further?**

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Enhance the good quality and effectiveness of the centre, and augment the proportion of its more hard-to-reach groups using the centre regularly by:
  - supplementing the effective work the centre is undertaking with fathers by broadening the scope of its provision and activities throughout each week
  - strengthening its work to reach minority ethnic groups through the good links it has developed with community leaders

- reinforcing the effective work being undertaken with young parents.
- Work with the local authority, health and midwifery services to:
  - ensure information is made available to the centre to enable it to offer support at the earliest possible opportunity to new and expectant parents
  - develop more reliable systems to ensure information can be provided to such families to promote their early registration with the centre.

## How good are outcomes for families?

<b>2</b>
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The centre has built good working relationships with its local schools and other education partners. The centre no longer has its own teacher, but liaison between Early Years Foundation Stage settings is regular and supports children's development well. Joint planning and training, relating to the crèche facility, have ensured good preparation for children's transfer to a school setting. When they enter school, the skills, knowledge and abilities of children in the broader reach area are low overall, but for those children who have attended the centre, they are slightly higher. This gives them a more positive start, enabling good progress and attitudes to learning. This is helping to close the gap between local and national outcomes at each of the primary key stages. Discussions show that parents attending the centre are well informed about child development and the importance of healthy lifestyles. They are, therefore, able to support more effectively their children's learning and development.

At an outreach parent and toddler session, the children's physical, sensory, social and language development was being supported well. From the children's height and perspective, the layout of the play equipment was immediately attractive. The children of a family using the facility for the first time needed no invitation to explore what was on offer. The interaction between staff and the parents themselves illustrated well the benefits the centre has to offer in the promotion of the social, emotional and mental health of families. As one father said, 'When we feel low we can come in and staff give their time whether we are with our children or not.'

In times of crisis, those families most at risk and those from target groups feel particularly well supported by the centre and its staff. There is a secure sense of trust between families, staff and volunteers. Users say they feel relaxed, safe and secure while at the centre because of the good care and attention the staff pay to their welfare. Case studies, especially those relating to child protection, show the centre is prompt to take action, and successful in the support of its more vulnerable children and families. Their needs are assessed thoroughly through the Common Assessment Framework process; families benefit very well from the coordinated, partnership support they receive when they require multi-agency assistance.

Adults and children enjoy active learning and improving their personal skills and understanding. Adult learning is promoted well. Over the past year, over 40% of users have been involved in a wide range of courses from basic literacy and numeracy, through health and employability training to professional qualifications for users who become volunteers. Data show good retention and pass rates on courses with accreditations. Since September 2011, the centre has reached half of the known

young parents in its area; success on courses enabling them to get back to work or training has been good. Effective support is also provided by the centre staff and through the weekly Jobcentre Plus clinics. Discussions with parents show they are supported well in gaining advice on grants, benefits and basic finance training. This enables families to get back on their feet if they become unemployed or need to move house to gain work or start training. Local demand has meant that parenting programmes are being expanded; feedback from users shows these are successful. The percentage of mothers sustaining breastfeeding is broadly average but improving, not least because of the work of the centre's breastfeeding support group. Similarly, Overall childhood obesity rates, a problem across the borough, are falling for users due to the good work of the centre in promoting healthy lifestyles.

Users feel they have a good stake in the centre and its future. They have a regular input into its thinking and planning through the Friends of Penrith Drive group, and regular, monthly 'drop-in' sessions where they can share their views and ideas. There is good representation of parents and volunteers on the advisory board.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

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

## **How good is the provision?**

<b>2</b>
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Outcomes are good for those in the centre's key target groups who have been reached and use its facilities. However, there is still scope to increase further the proportion of registrations and regular use by such families. This is the key to developing further the centre's provision and is at the heart of its development planning. In practice, registrations for all target groups have increased well over the past year, showing particular success with young parents and fathers. In this, work with partner agencies and organisations has helped significantly. However, access to information which would enable the centre to approach new and expectant parents has sometimes limited opportunities for both the centre and the families.

The centre's services to families are good, both at the centre itself and through its

outreach provision. There is a flexibility of planning which enables programmes to be adapted to meet individual needs. There are good planning and cross-border links between Penrith Drive, other children's centres in the local area, and those managed by Action for Children. This is exemplified by its use of funding to develop a sensory room for disabled children and those with special educational needs. This facility supports well not only the work of its 'Sparkles' group for disabled children, and the centre's work with their siblings, but is also open to families across the whole of the Wellingborough area. As well as organised groups, families can book the sensory room for their own use and, at times, arrange with staff for their support as part of respite care. As the parent of one disabled child said, 'The staff here are special, as well as our children. They are always patient and adapt to our individual needs.'

A holistic approach to care and welfare is exemplified by the centre's MEND courses (mind, exercise, nutrition and diet). These are contributing well to combating the wider issue of childhood obesity in the Wellingborough area. They are popular with families and focused well on prevention as well as cure. A parents' breastfeeding support group has been very active, and also proved a good example of users' positive contributions to the centre. There are good links with the local Jobcentre Plus advisor, and mutual referrals benefit users well. Activities such as 'Rhyme-Time' enable children and their parents to have fun as well as bonding through listening, singing and learning together. Such activities also promote well the children's language and communication development.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>

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

**2**

Leaders and staff at all levels, including members of the advisory board, have a clear understanding of what is needed to help the centre progress from being good to outstanding. Self-evaluation is accurate overall, and has informed well the centre's improvement planning and focus on key target groups. Line management and accountability are good, not only within the centre itself but also through Action for Children. Day-to-day management of the centre is efficient, and is underpinned by an effective group of well-trained volunteers. Staff create an ethos and environment which is equally as supportive of new as of established users; this plays an important part in raising users' self-confidence and esteem. Users are happy to share their ideas about the centre's development, not only through regular surveys and questionnaires, but also through the activities of the parents' forum. This approach to the 'ownership' of the centre by its users is indicative of its commitment to



ensuring equality of opportunity for all, including for those whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable. The centre celebrates well the diversity and character of its users. It utilizes its resources efficiently, whether human or material. There is pro-active work with the centre's partners and a range of support agencies. As a result of good outcomes for its families, and increasing engagement with its target groups, the centre provides good value for money.

Effective safeguarding arrangements stem from an approach which is understood well, practised by all staff and explained well to users. In practice, all necessary checks are undertaken relating to the suitability of staff and adult volunteers who work with families. Child protection and health and safety have a high profile; risk assessments on behalf of families are thorough. The centre regularly gains a five-star rating from the local authority for its approach to hygiene. This provides an excellent example for its users. Furthermore, the importance of early intervention is embedded and centre staff play a major role in any multi-agency work. Child protection work, involving the centre, health workers, family and social care services, operates most efficiently.

These are the grades for leadership and management

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>

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

The findings of the inspection of the Ruskin Childcare in July 2007, when it was judged satisfactory, were also used to guide the inspection team's findings with regard to educational provision and outcomes for pre-school children. Further information on this setting was also included in the September 2009 inspection of Ruskin Infant School.

In addition, the findings of the last inspection reports on Ruskin Infant School, its Ruskin Wrap Around Care setting, and the inspection of Ruskin Junior School were taken into account. In September 2009 these were all found to be satisfactory.

The findings of the March 2009 monitoring of the Olympic Primary School were also taken into account. This was found to be satisfactory.

None of the above schools and settings were re-inspected at the same time as the inspection of the children's centre.

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Penrith Drive Children's Centre Wellingborough on 20–21 June 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank all of you who took the time to talk with us during our recent visit. We appreciated the fact that some of you took the trouble to come in specially to speak with us when you found out about the inspection. The discussions we had with you about your experiences, and those of your families, were very helpful indeed. None of you had any criticisms of the centre's work. You only had praise for the ways it works with you and your families. The centre's work has clearly made important differences to your lives and your children's development. You showed us you have confidence in the staff. We saw for ourselves that staff work together well to help you keep your children and families safe and healthy. Safeguarding arrangements are good, and there is good attention to your welfare. Your centre helps and supports you and your families effectively, both in the good times and when you may find yourselves in difficulties.

There are a number of good things about your centre. These have come about because of the work and dedication of the centre manager and his staff. You told us how much you appreciate this. Many of you commented on the fact that you feel very confident in walking through the centre's doors and knowing that you will receive not only a warm and friendly welcome but also valuable help and support. The fact that staff take the time to listen to you, and actively seek your views about the centre's work and activities, is important to you. As a result, a good number of you are prepared to give back to the centre, either as volunteers, through the

Friends of Penrith Drive, or by joining the advisory board. We know this is a great help to the staff, and is much appreciated.

Your centre is a good one, and its leaders and staff are determined to work on your behalf to make it even better. They have good plans to do so and have been working hard, together with their partner agencies and other colleagues, to put these plans into action. Until about 18 months ago, the centre did not have access to sufficient data and information to help it reach some members of important groups in your community. These included young parents, fathers and those of you from minority heritage groups. In the past year they have reached more of you in the local area, and increasing numbers of you are benefiting well from the centre's services. The centre's work with fathers is much appreciated, and the centre is now supporting the majority of young parents in the area. However, there is more to be done in terms of reaching out to, and registering, potential users in the centre's area who are young parents, fathers or from minority heritage groups.

In some cases, the centre does not get told about the newly expectant parents in your area, so staff can let them know all about the centre's services. We have asked the local authority to work with the centre and health services to make sure this situation improves. In the meantime, you can help if you know of any friends, neighbours or families who are new or expectant parents. Please let them know all about the centre's good work.

We thank you again for all your contributions to the inspection and trust that, in the years ahead, even more families from your communities and local area will be able to join you and benefit from the centre's growing services and activities.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).