

Inspection report for Stanground Children's Centre

Local authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	386931
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Stanground St John's Primary School: 110819
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Stanground St John's pre-school: 256825R

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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361

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, the designated lead for safeguarding, centre staff, a local councillor, local authority staff, staff from a local school and preschool, National Health Service staff, other key partners as well as parents.

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

Information about the centre

Stanground Children's Centre is a phase two children's centre that provides full core purpose provision. This includes: early education integrated with childcare, family support and outreach to parents, child and family health services and access to Jobcentre services. It operates in the Stanground ward from a centre attached to Stanground St John's Primary School and shares the accommodation and large outdoor area with Stanground St John's pre-school. The centre provides some services jointly with a neighbouring children's centre, in the home and a local play centre.

The centre manager is responsible for the centre and has been in post since August 2012. The local authority funds the centre. The governing body consists of representatives from partner organisations and key stakeholders that work with the children's centre, the local authority and parents. The centre opened in 2009 and is now run by Spurgeons, a charity which has been commissioned by the local authority since April 2012 to provide management and support to some of the children's centres in this city.

The levels of unemployment and deprivation in the reach area are generally close to the national average with one super output area which falls within the top 30% of the most deprived areas nationally. Overall, 2% of children aged 0-4 are living in

households dependent on workless benefits and 22% of local families are eligible to benefit from the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. There are 106 lone parents in the reach area and the number of teenage mothers and pregnant teenagers is relatively low. Most of the families in the reach area are of White British heritage.

The children's centre has 515 children under five in its reach area and 88% of children 0-4 years are registered with the children's centre. When they start early years provision, the majority of children have the skills, knowledge and abilities that are expected for their age.

The range of activities offered by the centre includes support at the local community baby clinic, antenatal birth clinic, breast-feeding support and baby massage. A review and rationalisation due to reduced funding has led to the offer of a more limited range of activities in September 2012. The centre has links with health visitors, community midwives and speech therapists. It signposts families to a range of providers that offer adult education, volunteering opportunities, and activities designed to support parents and carers back into employment and training.

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

Stanground Children's Centre's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. The centre's welcoming atmosphere and positive relationships between staff and users have established a service where users choose to come for routine health appointments and to enjoy the satisfactory range of groups offered. Outcomes for users' health are satisfactory. The proportion of mothers who initiate and sustain breastfeeding is increasing but remains below expected levels and a greater proportion of mothers smoke during pregnancy than typically found.

Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory and as a result children and adult users feel safe. Parents and carers are clear about and follow safe practices. Adults whose family circumstances have made them vulnerable are confident to approach the centre for advice and support. The centre's work with other agencies to support

vulnerable children is effective.

The centre gives appropriate support to ensure users have equal opportunities to access services and groups. A minority of users from minority ethnic groups attend regularly because of the positive relationships that exist. Families with children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are given satisfactory support to access services. Children make good progress and many develop good levels of confidence and are well prepared for successful learning in pre-schools. Parents and carers who attend centre services and activities enjoy learning with their children and develop a good understanding of their behaviour and development. No adults take part in education and training in the centres, although a few have been referred to a private provider by jobcentre staff to give them the skills and confidence to return to work. Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. Since his appointment two months before the inspection, the centre manager has ensured that parents are now represented on the advisory board. Data that were available were analysed to see what effect the centre has had on improving outcomes for users.

Processes for collecting users' views have improved and are now satisfactory. Users receive good support to enable them to cope with challenging behaviour by children, and for families with multiple needs. There have been some improvements in outcomes, including children's achievement and learning, and a reduction in obesity in young children. The number of users attending activities has increased very recently. A minority of potential users living in the reach area are not yet accessing services and groups. The centre has not received a wide enough range of performance data and is not yet clear enough where these people live or why they are not participating in services. As a result, improvement targets do not always contain appropriate measures against which to accurately evaluate the success of strategies.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Accurately identify the needs of the wider community, increase the proportion from target groups who use the centre's services and groups, particularly lone parents and parents and children with disabilities.
- Improve the collection and analysis of data about the outcomes and achievements of the children and adults who use the services to inform the setting of improvement targets which improve outcomes for service users
- Improve the health of service users by helping reduce the proportion of people who smoke through stronger reinforcement of the harmful effects of smoking and better promotion of the benefits of smoking cessation.
- Support the development of the economic and social well-being of children and adults by improving their access to family learning, adult training and education

- Extend the arrangements in place to collect the views of children and families about the centre's services, including those who need help to communicate their views, and involve them in the self-evaluation process.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

The good advice about healthy diets and feeding babies is making a positive impact on reducing the levels of obesity in young children and an increasing proportion of families are taking better care of their teeth and attending dental clinics. While improving, the proportion of mothers initiating and sustaining breastfeeding is still below national levels. A higher proportion of pregnant mothers than average continue to smoke during and after pregnancy. There are no figures for immunisation take-up rates from local medical practices. Parents and carers of children who exhibit challenging behaviour learn to manage better and reduce their anxiety because of the good support they receive.

Children show they feel safe in the centre in the confident way that they approach adults for help, and the positive way that they respond when adults join in with their play. They are familiar with the centre's surroundings, are developing good levels of independence and enjoy choosing from the varied range of resources and toys available. There are currently four children living in the reach area with child protection plans. Improvement in the setting of targets and the planning of effective actions, using the Common Assessment Framework, has resulted in a number being removed from the child protection register since the centre opened in 2009.

Adult users who access the centre's services and groups say that they value and enjoy them greatly. Speech and language support has improved the levels of children's communication when they start pre-school. The proportion of children reaching six points at the end of the Reception Year in personal, social and emotional development and in their communication, language and literacy is improving. The gap between the lowest 20% and the rest is closing slowly. Parents are able to give feedback about groups and services through group evaluations and newly formed focus groups. A small number of users now contribute to the re-launched advisory board to provide improved guidance to the direction of the centre.

Effective advice from Jobcentre service staff ensures workless families receive the benefits to which they are entitled.

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	3

and social development	
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	3

How good is the provision?

3

Assessment procedures are satisfactory. Group planning is based on evaluations of what parents thought went well and the quality of these is good. The best evaluations include comments about individual children's learning, which help staff plan well-matched activities to meet the specific needs of users. Some evaluations are descriptions of activities, without enough consideration of their effectiveness. This insufficient level of detail does not guide service planning to ensure all the specific learning needs of adults are fully met. Assessments for families who receive outreach family support are good. Detailed records include all instances of contact and the agreed targets for the package of support. These are evaluated at each visit to ensure families are progressing towards their targets. Parents greatly appreciate the way that attending groups and activities helps to overcome social isolation 'Attending the group has been a lifesaver', 'I have met a lot of other mums who have become friends' and make good use of the advice and emotional support they receive from centre staff', are typical comments.

The groups and activities make a positive difference to outcomes for the many users who attend them. 'Stay and play' and 'Messy play' groups enable parents and carers to enjoy playing and learning with their children and to build an understanding of their behaviour and emotional development. 'Soft play' helps children to explore the world and practise their physical skills, such as climbing and jumping, in a very safe, attractive environment. The newly introduced 'Activities to do at home' resources are starting to encourage parents to participate more in their children's learning. Plans are well-advanced for the introduction of additional activities to support language development, including the imminent introduction of a 'Chatter matters' group. A satisfactory number of fathers participate in the 'Saturday Dads' and 'Soft play' groups and the number joining the group is growing. The centre supports the 'Communication Coffee morning' in a local school to improve relationships with a greater proportion of growing number of Eastern European families living in the reach area.

Health clinics are very well attended and so parents and carers receive good-quality care, support and guidance about their babies' development and needs. Workless families are given guidance about benefits, training and work at monthly meetings by Jobcentre staff. Teenage parents are given excellent advice and guidance about money issues and debt management by the Family Nurse Practitioner. Families in times of crisis are supported well in partnership

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	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

During the recent period of significant change, the centre manager has successfully maintained the focus of staff in their work to support centre users. He has also introduced a wide range of improved policies, procedures and supervisory arrangements; although it is too early to securely judge their effectiveness and impact. Targets for which the centre has data include some measures of success that reflect a gradual improvement since 2009. Data show that there are still some aspects of the centre's work that require improvement. To date, actions have had limited success because measures have not been included in all targets. The early evaluation of the effectiveness of the centre's services by the new manager is accurate and underpins the centre's satisfactory capacity to improve. There has been an increase in the numbers of people using the centre very recently. The range of groups offered is narrower than before following a reduction in funding. Users travel more than previously to attend groups being delivered at other venues, some outside the reach area. There are still a minority people living in the reach area who choose not to use the centre's services. The centre has started to assess the needs of the wider population so that it can target areas, groups and the needs of the wider community more effectively.

The centre promotes equal opportunities and the reach area's cultural diversity adequately. Children with disabilities receive well-targeted outreach services and their needs are met effectively once they start pre-school. More could be done at each site to celebrate equality and diversity, welcome users for whom English is not their first language, or those with low literacy skills. Crèche facilities enable users with children to attend courses held at the Thistle Drive play centre. Translation services are available to enable users who speak English as an additional language to communicate with the centre.

Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory, the centre meets all of the current government requirements, staff complete appropriate training and users have an adequate understanding of associated topics. There is a strong partnership between centre staff, on-site pre-school staff and health professionals. They are able to talk regularly with each other because they are frequently at the centre. This enables

immediate discussion of concerns, changes to services and reduces the need for some families to be referred to social services. The centre has good partnership arrangements with a broad range of external agencies.

The advisory board arrangements were previously inadequate to involve service users in directing and governing the centre, these have been improved recently and are now satisfactory. The centre manager has also very recently supported the introduction of a useful user's forum and focus group to promote discussion about the quality of services and generate suggestions for further improvement. After passing the day-to-day management responsibility of the centre to Spurgeons the local authority has recently devised a wider range of quality assurance measures, including termly assessment visits of the centre and greater data analysis to support their governance of the centre with appropriate oversight of service provision. The centre gives satisfactory 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	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	2
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

The inspections of childminders and pre-schools in the last two years and the inspection of the Early Years Foundation Stage at Stanground St John's Primary School, which was judged satisfactory, contributed to the children's centre's inspection and report.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Stanground Children's Centre on 9–10 October 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you for telling us about your own and your children's experiences at the centre. It is clear that relationships are positive and that you have fun with your children and enjoy learning and playing with them. The centre makes you feel welcome and those of you who attend sessions and groups grow in confidence while you are developing your parenting skills. Your children make good progress and, when old enough, are confident to attend pre-school. Children who have attended the children's centre do better than those who have not.

There are good partnerships between a range of external agencies and centre staff. Health clinics are very well attended leading to better health outcomes for you and your children. The centre gives appropriate care to maintain and improve your personal safety and wellbeing. Good support and guidance are resulting in some improvements in your families' health. Nevertheless, fewer mothers breastfeed and more people smoke during and after pregnancy than in many other parts of the country. You receive satisfactory advice about work and benefits which has given a few of you the confidence to apply for work and to improve your families' economic circumstances. You and the centre make sure that your children are safe when attending groups and activities. You are able to make a satisfactory contribution to the centre's work through the newly established focus group and talking to staff about what you like and what could be better. Parents and carers are now making a valuable contribution to the direction and governance of the centre through the centre's newly re-launched advisory board.

The staff in the centre are clearly determined to improve the outcomes for the children living locally and there is evidence that they are helping children achieve their potential. The centre provides good quality services to you and your children although the range of activities is rather limited. We particularly enjoyed the 'Messy play' and 'Soft play' sessions which we observed.

Families who have particular challenges value the good support they receive. However, more needs to be done to increase the proportion of families from more vulnerable groups to attend activities and use the services on offer. The centre has started to collect data about outcomes to help it to target resources and to ensure it is meeting every user's needs. We have asked the centre to work with you, its partners and the organisations that provide services to collect and use a wider range

of data. This data is needed to help plan in detail how it will further improve the quality of the centre's services to increase the positive outcomes for you and all families who live within the reach area. The centre can also help to improve the health of those service users who smoke by helping them to understand the consequences of continuing to do so and effectively supporting those who wish to stop. We would also like the centre to provide more opportunities for adults to attend training and education through the centre. In order to make sure that the centre collects feedback from parts of the local community we would like to see better strategies in place to help those who have barriers to communication give their views on the range and types of services offered to support the accurate self-evaluation process.

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