

Inspection report for Popin Children's Centre

Local authority	Plymouth City Council
Inspection number	386953
Inspection dates	9–10 October 2012
Reporting inspector	Jane Burchall HMI

Centre leader	Maria Jackson
Date of previous inspection	No previous inspection
Centre address	Kitto Centre Honicknowle Lane Plymouth PL5 3NG
Telephone number	01752 201918
Fax number	01752 201918
Email address	maria.jackson@4children.org.uk

Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY428422: The Cabin Childcare Centre at the YMCA EY447994: Plymouth YMCA Holiday Club

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.

Report published: October 2012



The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100080.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No.100080

© Crown copyright 2012



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 an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre's management team, members of the advisory board, the local authority, 4Children, partnership agencies, members of staff and families using the centre. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of documentation including key policies, the centre's self-evaluation documents, its development plans, evaluations of services and data about people who use the centre and about the wider community.

Information about the centre

Popin Children's Centre is a phase two children's centre which was designated in 2008 and has been run by a commissioned provider, '4Children', since January 2012. It is situated within a Young Man's Christian Association (YMCA) building. The centre offers a range of services which include health services, family play sessions, parenting programmes and outreach services. All services are provided in venues in the community as the centre's current accommodation is an administrative site only.

The centre's reach area covers Beacon Park, Pennycross, Manadon and parts of Peverell. It is in an area which is not identified as deprived overall, although there are some pockets of deprivation where many families are dependent on workless benefits. The population is mostly White British, with a small but growing percentage of different ethnic groups, some of whom speak English as an additional language. There are 515 children under five living in the reach area. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years education are low, particularly in communication, language and literacy and in their personal, social and emotional development.

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

Popin Children’s Centre provides satisfactory support to children and families accessing its services and, as a result, outcomes for families are beginning to improve. Staff and leaders show high levels of commitment to improving the lives of families they serve. Through the analysis of data and good local knowledge, the centre has a clear understanding of the needs of the community and is developing a comprehensive range of services aimed at meeting those needs. Staff have been very successful in registering a high proportion of families in the reach area. A concerted effort by staff has seen the number of families, including those from target groups, engaging in services begin to rise although these efforts have been somewhat hampered due to late availability of some data provided by the local authority.

Safeguarding is a key priority for all staff at the centre. They are well trained and demonstrate a clear understanding of expected protocols and procedures. Their immediate response to concerns and liaison with children’s social care contribute well to keeping children safe. Rigorous systems are in place to ensure staff are safe; they follow an appropriate lone-working policy and utilise an electronic system to record their location when undertaking activities that may make them vulnerable.

The centre is supported by an advisory board which meets regularly. Leaders have experienced difficulties in recruiting members and, as a result, the membership of the current board is limited and the role of chair is undertaken by the centre coordinator. Although meetings explore relevant issues, not all members are fully conversant with the role of an advisory board and are not sufficiently challenging the centre or holding it to account. Leaders have begun to address this through the provision of information to board members.

In the short time that the commissioned provider has been responsible for the centre it has developed a clear and comprehensive understanding of the needs of the community. Together with the centre coordinator, it is making use of data available to identify the needs of the reach area. Consultations with families have helped the

centre to shape a new programme of activities aimed at meeting the needs of the community. Leaders are beginning to provide parents with opportunities to contribute to decision making, for example, by involving them in the recruitment of newly appointed staff. However, such opportunities have yet to be embedded as parents are not routinely involved in the governance of the centre.

The centre has satisfactory capacity to improve further. Leaders have rightly focused their initial efforts on developing a cohesive staff team to provide a solid foundation upon which to build. They have a clear understanding of what the centre does well and where they need to improve, and suitable plans for improvement are in place although these are not always sharply focused.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Engage families in the governance of the centre so that they are more involved in decision making and in driving forward improvement.
- Strengthen governance and accountability by:
 - widening the membership of the advisory board so that it better reflects the range of stakeholders
 - identifying an independent chair to lead the advisory board
 - ensuring all advisory board members are clear about their role and are well placed to challenge the centre and hold it to account.
- Together with the local authority drive improvement further by:
 - sharpening action planning to include targets which are clearly measurable
 - timely access to data to assist with the targeting of services and the measurement of success.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Parents learn how to adopt healthier lifestyles for their families. The 'Let's Get Cooking' helps parents understand basic cookery skills and how to provide nutritious meals on a budget. One parent told inspectors that she had learnt how quick and easy it is to prepare her own food from scratch and that her child is now eating better and trying new foods. Parents and children have many opportunities to take part in activities which increase their levels of physical activity, for example by taking part in groups such as 'Stepping Stones (into green spaces)' and 'Walking for Health'. Leaders are aware, however, that while levels of obesity are below those seen nationally, they are on the increase and have prioritised this area for further improvement within their development plans.

Mothers who choose to breastfeed receive suitable support; breastfeeding is well promoted within ante-natal provision and in the early days by a maternity care assistant. Ongoing support is offered through a local 'Latch-on' support group. As a result the level of mothers who sustain breastfeeding has seen a steady increase from 42.8% in 2010 to 49.2% in 2011. Staff place a suitable focus on supporting parents' good emotional well-being. Through attendance at baby massage classes

and the 'Baby and You' course, new parents are provided with help in adjusting to the change in their lifestyle, bonding with their babies and preventing social isolation.

Families benefit from improving the safety of their home environment by the implementation of the 'Safe at Home' scheme which provides free advice and home safety equipment. Data indicate that rates of hospital admissions have fluctuated across the reach area and have increased significantly in some areas of the community. Leaders are using this information in order to target their efforts to support families' understanding of how to keep their children safe. For example, they have responded well to parents' request to organise first-aid training. When staff identify concerns they swiftly refer to appropriate agencies in order that children are protected. Through effective packages of support for families, the centre has successfully improved outcomes for some families subject to a child protection plan or the Common Assessment Framework (CAF).

Activities provided at the centre give good opportunities for children and their parents to have fun learning together. Parents are guided to support their child's learning and development through role modelling by staff in groups as well as through attending parenting programmes. Some parents are replicating the ideas they obtain in the centre when at home with their children. Staff place appropriate focus on the development of children's communication and language skills and benefit from the direction of a communication coordinator for the centre. Over time, the number of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved from 49% in 2009 to 53.3% in 2012, although this figure remains below the local authority and national averages. Data regarding narrowing of the achievement gap are not provided to the centre regularly enough to help them to establish whether their work is having the desired impact.

Staff place appropriate focus on successfully building the confidence and self-esteem of parents. Many parents shared how their contact with the centre has resulted in them being more confident as parents and as individuals. Parents value the opportunities the centre provides for them to meet with others and form friendships. Families recognise that the centre is a place in their community where they can receive trusted support and advice. Staff model respect and consideration and as a result, good relationships are in place with families. The centre provides parents with a number of ways to enable them to share their views on services such as seeking feedback on specific groups as well as conducting wider parental consultation. However, parents' regular involvement in decision making, for example membership on the advisory board, has yet to be established.

Some families are improving their economic position as they are supported to claim benefits and to budget effectively. Others have been successfully supported in developing their skills through accredited training, for example National Vocational Qualifications, which has in turn led to them securing employment. The national lead for Education, Training and Employment is supporting the centre to ensure staff are well placed to offer families support and guidance and to accurately signpost them.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	3
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	3
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	3
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment	3

How good is the provision?

3

Leaders and staff know the families who use their services well and have an increasing understanding of their community as a whole. They implement suitable systems to assess the needs of families who benefit from targeted support, including good use of the CAF process. Staff are making improved use of available data alongside their local knowledge in order to evaluate the key issues that are faced by those who live within the reach area. Individual services are now better focused on outcomes for families as staff ensure groups provided meet an identified need. Systems to clearly measure the impact of services have been developed although these are in their infancy. Staff have made good use of outreach work to provide support to some families who may have been traditionally harder to reach.

Parents have access to a range of opportunities to develop their parenting skills. More recently, staff have developed partnerships with the local authority's family learning service to extend the range of courses parents can access. Together they are developing learning pathways to lead parents towards undertaking accredited qualifications in literacy and numeracy. The Young Parent Engagement Officer is working closely with an outside training agency to deliver a programme of 'Young mums to be' and 'Parents with prospects' courses.

Families with complex needs are well supported by staff who take time to get to know them well. Parents truly value the support that they receive. They reflect that staff are always there to listen and support them. Parents state that they 'always feel welcome in groups' and that staff are 'so easy to approach' when they need support. One parent summed up, 'It is good to know there is someone to contact, especially when you are on your own.' Staff recognise that the current centre base accommodation is not fully conducive to welcoming parents. They are working hard with the local church and the local authority to secure more appropriate facilities.

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

The centre is led by a committed leadership team which manages an enthusiastic, passionate and cohesive staff team. Leaders clearly communicate a vision which is grounded in improving life chances for the families they work with. They have made significant inroads in developing appropriate systems to ensure the centre provides a suitable range of services which meets the needs of the community. Staff are clear on the role they play and how they contribute to the centre's key priorities. Through access to a comprehensive programme of professional development they are appropriately skilled to undertake their individual roles.

Leaders are motivated to seek improvement. They are clear about where they need to develop their provision and the ways in which this can be achieved. The centre's service delivery plan focuses on appropriate key issues identified through accurate self-evaluation. The local authority monitors the centre through quarterly reviews against identified expectations. Targets for improvement are set both by the local authority and by the centre itself, although these not always sharp enough to enable the centre to clearly measure the impact of its work or to promote rapid improvement. The centre regularly seeks the views of different groups of users and takes account of these when planning services.

The centre provides satisfactory value for money. Leaders utilise a number of tools to monitor budgets and to ensure best value for money is achieved. Staff make appropriate use of community venues in order to deliver services where they are most needed. They are able to draw upon a range of expertise centrally from 4Children to support with developing aspects of provision such as employment promotion and education for young parents.

Centre staff have built some effective partnerships with a range of agencies, for example health and social care. Leaders have worked hard to develop new and creative partnerships and this is beginning to have some success. For example, they have made links with the local football club in order to deliver services aimed at increasing levels of physical exercise and children's understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle.

The centre promotes an ethos where inclusion is integral to all services. Those who speak English as an additional language are supported with information that is translated into their mother tongue. The centre is having increasing success in engaging dads, young parents and those from multi-ethnic groups in services. Good relationships with social care and close working with families who are at risk result in children being very effectively safeguarded. Those subject to a child protection plan receive good support and services which have improved outcomes for children and enabled many to be well protected and remain within their families. Robust recruitment procedures mean that those working with children and their families are suitable to do so.

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	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	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

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance, *Complaining about inspections*, which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

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

The centre's leaders and staff show a strong commitment to improving the lives of all of you. Since 4Children took over responsibility of the centre they have worked hard with staff to make sure that they all understand your needs and develop services that help you to make improvements in your lives and those of your families. They have spent time finding out from you what services you want and are developing a programme of activities based on your feedback. Some of you have been involved in helping the centre to recruit new staff; it is important, however, that more of you are involved in making a direct contribution to the management of the centre, helping to identify how services should be developed. We have asked managers to support you to do so.

We found that a particular strength of the children's centre was the steps it takes to ensure you are safeguarded. Staff are well trained in how to protect children and work well with you and outside agencies to help families to stay together. We agree with you that the staff are caring and supportive. Those of you who spoke to us during the inspection told us how much you value the support network that the centre has helped you to develop and what a difference this has made to your lives. You particularly value the opportunity attending activities at the centre gives you to meet people and make friends.

Leaders know what the centre does well and where they need to develop further. In order that it improves quickly, we have asked the centre to make sure its plans for development are as clear as possible and that the local authority helps by providing the information it needs as early as possible. Leaders are supported by an advisory board which helps them to understand how best to provide services to your community. In order that they are able to do this effectively, we have asked that more people are involved in the advisory board and that they are all clear about how they can contribute to the development of the children's centre.

We would like to thank those of you who spared the time to speak with us and were willing to share your thoughts about the centre. We are very grateful and we wish you all every success for the future.

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