

Inspection report for Keystone Children's Centre

Local authority	Birmingham
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Reporting inspector	Deborah Udakis HMI

Centre leader	Emily Watson
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Purbeck Croft Quinton Birmingham B32 2NL
Telephone number	0121 675 7920
Fax number	0121 675 7919
Email address	ematheisz@surestartsw.org.uk

Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Keystone Nursery EY341004

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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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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 an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, partner agencies, parents, and representatives from Barnardo's, the local authority and the Consortia Group. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the centre's self-evaluation document, data provided by the health services, the local authority and the centre, policies, and minutes of meetings.

Information about the centre

Keystone Children's Centre is managed by Barnardo's which is commissioned to provide a range of relevant services on behalf of the local authority. The centre fulfils its core purpose through a range of integrated services relating to health, family support, adult training and childcare provision. The centre leader had been in post for only a matter of days at the time of the inspection. The centre reports directly to Barnardo's and is supported by a range of partners including health and social care services, the Pre-School Learning Alliance, Home-Start, Kids West Midlands, adult education providers and Jobcentre Plus. Parents are represented in the governance of the centre via the parents' forum. The centre manager also reports to the new Consortia Group consisting of professional partners. The centre's staff team consists of a centre manager, senior workers, family support workers, an early years teacher, practitioners and an administration team.

Keystone was designated as a phase two children's centre as part of the Sure Start Local Programme in 2008. It is one of 75 centres in the city of Birmingham. It serves an extensive urban population. The centre has been purposely designed to offer multi-agency office and community development space and includes a 42-place nursery. Much of the centre's provision is planned collaboratively with community partners to maximise services for families.

The proportions of families who claim benefits or are workless are above the national average at 18%. In the reach area, almost 50% of children live in areas ranked within the top 10% of the most socially and economically disadvantaged areas in the country. The majority of families living in the reach area are White British; however, approximately 50% of children attending the centre are from minority ethnic backgrounds. An increasing number of families with English as an additional language, or new to speaking English, are living in the area.

Within the reach area, there are 773 children who are under five years of age. Children enter early years provision with skills, knowledge and abilities that are well below the national levels expected for their age.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children’s centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for families

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Keystone Children’s Centre is a good centre. It is highly inclusive, accessible and welcoming. Several parents likened the centre to a community. One parent said, ‘We belong to the children’s centre community.’

The centre has been, and continues to go, through a period of transition as a result of local authority re-organisation. However, the interim leadership arrangements, including the recent appointment of a temporary manager, have not adversely affected the smooth running of the centre. This is due to the professionalism of centre staff and the robust centre processes. They show high levels of dedication and commitment to the centre and to improving the lives of children and families. The ambitions for the continued success of the centre are shared equally with staff and leaders at all levels.

Governance is robust and there are clear lines of accountability. The Consortia Group is a very recent addition to the governance of the centre, but early indications are that the group is providing effective challenge and support to the centre. Leaders at all levels are aware of the strengths of the setting. They recognise there are weaknesses in the collation and use of data to demonstrate the impact on outcomes

for families. The significant increase in the number of families moving to the area that have little or no English has raised further challenges to the centre staff. They have limited resources to ensure consistently effective communication with families due to the increasing number of languages spoken in the community. Leaders acknowledge further improvements are necessary to secure a higher inspection grade in respect of these matters.

Much of the centre's success is due to the outstanding partnership arrangements. The centre makes excellent use of the close working relationships they have established with key agencies including the health services and social care. The very effective working arrangements with private, voluntary and independent providers are highly valued and support good and improving outcomes. Staff effectively target those families considered vulnerable due to their circumstances, resulting in 71% of families engaging with services in the area. The centre's membership has increased year-on-year and now includes the large majority of families living in the area. This has contributed to the outstanding engagement with families and the positive improvements in health outcomes. As a result, the centre's capacity to improve is good.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the collation and analysis of relevant data, including data to support and identify children with disabilities and those with special educational needs, to support the assessment and evaluation of the centre's work and its impact on families.
- Ensure consistent and effective support is provided for families who do not speak English as their first language so that they all have access to information and services designed to meet their specific needs.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

There is an increasingly positive picture of families' health. Health outcomes are good or rapidly improving. The majority of activities are designed to promote health and nutrition and include vitamin distribution, healthy eating, and workshops on recognising childhood illnesses. Breastfeeding take-up rates have improved significantly at 62% and, impressively, most continue to breastfeed at six weeks. This is as a result of good ante-natal health promotion and ongoing breastfeeding support provided at the centre. Childhood obesity at the end of the Reception Year is broadly in line with the national average. However, data show that there has been significant improvement in the healthy birth weight of babies, from 76% in 2009/10, to 91% in 2011. Levels of immunisation remain above the national average. Approximately 180 hours of counselling are provided for individual family members each year, resulting in improved confidence, self-esteem and mental and emotional

well-being. Parents also provide on-going support to one another through their buddy system.

High-quality monitoring of the children's welfare is enriched because of the excellent partnership working between the centre staff, on-site Family Intervention Service, and nursery. As a result, child protection concerns are swiftly acted upon. Children subject to child protection plans receive effective and timely support. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used well to secure improved outcomes for children and families. Parents are very appreciative of the centre's focus on their families' safety and well-being. One parent commented, 'The staff are great, really friendly and they always listen to you.' Risk assessments are thorough. First aid training is available for parents, and home-safety equipment is provided for families to help raise children's and families' awareness of risks and dangers in the home and their communities.

When children start attending early years provision, many make rapid progress from their starting points. Over time, children make good progress during the Early Years Foundation Stage. The gap between the lowest- and highest-achieving 20% continues to close. High-quality speech and language support, such as 'Little Chatters', routinely provided at the centre for children at risk of possible communication and language delay, ensures that they make good progress by the end of Reception Year. One parent said, 'It has been absolutely amazing and has helped me to have confidence in supporting my child's communication and language.' Staff also make highly effective use of Makaton to support communication with young children. Where known, children with disabilities and special needs receive good-quality support to enable them to make good progress. However, the centre has limited data to be confident that this is the case for all of those children living in the area.

The centre has a positive focus on learning and development. A total of 50% of parents are involved in accredited learning activities, including level 1 mathematics, English, computing and childcare. In addition, 400 adults have participated in parenting programmes and health promotion workshops at the centre in the last year. The centre's volunteer programme is increasingly successful and is very well supported by Home-Start partnerships. Volunteers receive professional training opportunities and are well supported to develop their confidence and skills. An increasing number of individuals have secured employment as a result. The centre's excellent partnerships with the Law Society and Jobcentre Plus have helped families to maximise their incomes by supporting them into work, reducing debt and improving access to benefits to which they are entitled. For instance, 10 families seen received almost £27,000 of additional welfare benefits between them. Unemployment in the area is high and there are many more children living in homes dependent on workless benefits than seen nationally. However, specific data regarding the reach area are not available.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment	2

How good is the provision?

2

The high levels of engagement with families and their good and improving outcomes are a result of the positive range of good-quality services and activities provided, especially in relation to health promotion and positive parenting programmes. Outreach work completed by the family support workers is very successful. They determinedly reach out to families identified as in greatest need. One parent commented, 'I like the way my family support worker makes me feel. You can't believe how much they helped me.'

The Haven Centre delivers much-needed drop-in services in close partnership with the centre. Centre activities to encourage healthy lifestyles feature strongly in the timetable of provision. Activities such as baby massage help to secure strong attachment and the emotional well-being of parent and baby. Adult and family learning activities are popular and take-up rates are high. For instance, in the last year, 33 parents accessed accredited paediatric first aid training.

Care, guidance and support are good. Parents who made their comments known spoke in very high regard of the work of centre staff and of packages of care and support they receive. Relationships between staff and families are trusting. Case studies provide persuasive evidence of improved outcomes for families at times of difficulty, as a result of high-quality support from the centre. Home visits, speech and language support, and direct one-to-one support for children with disabilities and special educational needs are examples of the effective ways that staff support good outcomes for families. The centre successfully targets its support at those considered in greatest need and provides flexible, good-quality services to meet their specific needs.

Families using the centre say they feel safe and their needs are met very well. The Common Assessment Framework and Early Years Foundation Stage assessments are

very well embedded and ensure that services and interventions improve outcomes. Parents and children who are in receipt of intensive support are consistently encouraged and supported to contribute to the process of assessing and reviewing their achievements.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

During this period of transition, the local authority and Barnardo's have continued to work effectively together. Strategic planning and service provision support good and improving outcomes. Governance and accountability arrangements are good. Strong leadership and well-established and clearly understood management systems ensure the continued good performance of the centre. The new leadership team, although a temporary arrangement, has identified the centre's strengths and priority areas for development. The leaders are enthusiastic and motivated to make improvements. They have secured the commitment and support of the existing staff group and morale remains very good. The professional support provided is appreciated by staff and supports their enthusiasm and motivation.

Engagement with parents is outstanding. Parents routinely contribute to the evaluation of activities, and their comments are used to influence the development of services. The influence of parents' views in service planning and delivery is evident throughout the centre. For instance, parents suggested, planned and organised Jamaican Independence Day celebrations, a community-wide cultural event which attracted significant numbers of families. The parents' forum is a constant feature of the centre. Parents provide feedback to the centre, help to evaluate the effectiveness of the centre's work, and make suggestions for change. They actively participated in consultations led by the local authority regarding the future of children's centres. The volunteer programme is proving a very positive feature of the centre's work and is empowering parents to get more involved in the governance of the centre. The centre's self-evaluation is predominantly accurate and reflects contributions from parents and partnership agencies. However, the availability of relevant data hinders the evaluation of certain aspects of the centre's work.

Safeguarding arrangements are good. Staff and volunteers are well trained in child protection and safeguarding procedures. Safeguarding is a standard agenda item during monthly supervision meetings and team discussions. Staff demonstrate a

thorough knowledge and understanding of their key roles in protecting children from harm. Recruitment procedures are very robust. All staff, including volunteers, undergo checks regarding their suitability on appointment. Criminal Record Bureau checks are completed every three years by the local authority.

Parents appreciate the centre's inclusive and non-judgemental environment. Both parents and staff spoke of the 'zero tolerance' culture that exists to challenge and tackle aspects of discrimination. Diversity and difference are celebrated throughout a good range of cultural events. Many families new to English are well supported within the centre. However, the growing number of families with little or no spoken English provides the centre with fresh challenges as it endeavours to meet the needs of these families, with limited knowledge of the wide range of languages spoken within the community. Children with disabilities and special educational needs who attend the centre or partner agency provision receive good-quality support. However, uncertain data mean the centre cannot be sure that the needs of all children in this target group are met consistently well.

Partnerships between the centre, agencies such as health and social care, and private, voluntary and independent providers are excellent. The centre is established in the heart of the community and has secured the trust and commitment of its partners to improve the lives of children and families. The outstanding collaborative work has ensured that families are able to access a wide range of high-quality services. The Consortia Group is a very welcome addition to the partnership arrangements, supporting the promotion of best practice, reduced duplication of services and shared evaluation of services.

The centre manages available resources very effectively and it has a positive impact, as reflected in the good outcomes and provision. As a result, the centre provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

<p>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</p>	<p>1</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>1</p>

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

Keystone Nursery was inspected by Ofsted in July 2012. The setting was judged to be good overall with outstanding partnerships.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Keystone Children's Centre on 7 and 8 November 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank all of you who took the time to come in and meet with us and tell us about your centre. Many of you said how safe and happy you and your children feel at the centre. You told us that staff are always friendly and supportive and that they have helped you and your families a great deal. Staff are very effective at meeting your individual needs and children are thriving in the good-quality child care and Early Years Foundation Stage provision. Children with disabilities and special educational needs make equally good progress because they are included in the positive range of activities and also receive additional support. However, the centre does not know the actual numbers of children with disabilities and special educational needs living in the area and is unable to state with absolute confidence that all of these children are accessing good-quality services. Centre staff are very good at helping you to keep your homes as safe as possible and we know several of you have received home-safety equipment and many of you have attended paediatric first aid courses.

The centre is providing you with important support in times of difficulty. Some of you spoke enthusiastically about the benefits of the impressive adult learning provision as you follow pathways to employment. The volunteer programme is also providing many of you with high-quality personal and professional development opportunities.

We were impressed with the highly inclusive environment and the commitment of the centre staff to ensure all families are welcomed into the centre. The engagement with parents is excellent and is extremely well supported by outstanding partnerships with a wide range of professional and voluntary organisations.

The speech and language support available on site is helping children to make good progress in their communication and language development. In addition, the many activities provided to encourage and support good health are helping to improve children's and families' well-being.

We have asked the centre leaders to improve the availability and accuracy of data to support the evaluations of the effectiveness of the centre, including the quality of information about children with disabilities and special needs. We have also asked that they consider how they will meet the individual needs of the increasing numbers of families moving into the area who have little or no spoken English.

Thank you again for helping us with the inspection. It was good to meet you all and we wish you all the very best for the future.

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