

Inspection report for Pocklington Children's Centre

Local authority	East Riding of Yorkshire
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

The inspection of this 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 one additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with parents, volunteers, the centre manager and staff, local authority officers, health and other partners, childminders, early years' advisors, a local headteacher, a Governor of HMP Full Sutton, the Chair and members of the advisory board and the manager of the Families' Information and Service Hub.

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

Information about the centre

Pocklington Children's Centre is a phase two centre, located on the site of Woldgate College, which hosts adult education and training provision. The centre was designated in December 2007 and comprises a playroom with access to a small outdoor area, a health room, a kitchen and a staff office. A satellite centre was fully staffed in September 2012 in the library building at Stamford Bridge, 10 miles from Pocklington. Three staff are based there to provide outreach work. The centre offers support and integrated services for children and young people from pre-natal to 19 years. The centre runs a range of integrated services including health, support for teenage parents, sexual health, family support, smoking cessation and adult education. It is governed by the local authority, East Riding of Yorkshire.

The reach area of Pocklington Children's Centre is spread across a wide rural area of 119 square miles. There are 778 children under five years of age. Of these, 757 (97%) are currently registered with the centre. There are 380 registered male carers, 60 registered lone parents, five teenage parents and 14 children who are disabled or have special educational needs. The Stamford Bridge satellite centre covers a reach area of 29 square miles. There are 431 children under five years, of whom 277 (64%) are currently registered

with the centre. There are 103 registered male carers, nine registered lone parents and a small number of teenage parents and disabled children.

The make-up of the centre's reach falls between the 0-10% and the 40-50% least deprived areas in the country. There are 6.3% of children living in households dependent on workless benefits. Of those families in employment, 20.5% receive the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. Families in many of the surrounding villages experience rural isolation both socially and in terms of access to services. This isolation is exacerbated by poor local transport links and limited or no local facilities in outlying areas. Almost all families are of White British heritage with a few Traveller families and a small but increasing number of families of East European heritage. Children access early years education from a range of childcare providers in the locality. Most children enter early years provision with the expected level of skills 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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

Pocklington Children's Centre provides outstanding services to a very large majority of children and families. Inspirational and highly innovative leadership from the centre manager fuels the enthusiasm of the skilled staff to work seamlessly with a wide range of professionals. Together they establish high quality provision overall. This, in turn, leads to excellent outcomes for users in terms of leading healthy lifestyles and staying safe. Users make an outstanding positive contribution through exemplary behaviour, strong relationships with each other and centre staff, and well-informed decision-making about the centre's future.

Children enjoy and achieve well and parents develop their parenting skills effectively. Take-up rates for adult learning are good and are improving learning outcomes for families, including their independence and economic stability.

Comprehensive assessments and monitoring systems allow staff to match services to the individual needs of families, including target groups, with consistent success. Activities are

of good quality and the centre promotes purposeful learning well. However, there are occasions during long sessions when learners' enthusiasm wanes and staff do not pick up on this quickly enough to prevent learning and progress from slowing at these points.

All staff are totally committed to providing exceptional levels of care, guidance and support to all users and consistently do so. Parents and partners say that, 'One of the centre's greatest attributes is that of listening.' This, coupled with meticulous attention to high-quality safeguarding practices, ensures that users feel very well-protected. Registrations are very high and the number of users engaged in centre activities continues to increase rapidly. For example, the volume of users seen in 2010-11 at Pocklington has more than doubled from 6016 to 15,531. At Stamford Bridge, the increase was from 267 to 790. Partnership working is exemplary and includes innovative collaborations that support high quality outcomes for families, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. One partner commented, 'It would be an unmitigated disaster for users if centre services were withdrawn.'

The centre's admirable accomplishments, particularly in the two years since the current centre manager took up post, highlight excellent capacity to sustain and further improve its exceptional performance.

Highly effective governance and accountability arrangements are in place. Evaluation of services is rigorous with key priorities linked to ambitious targets. Users' views are consistently heard and used fully to help shape the service. Available resources are used to best effect in a highly creative way and engage the large majority of families including target groups. The management's sophisticated monitoring and promotion of equality and celebration of diversity are highly effective. They ensure that any inequalities are swiftly identified and addressed through a flexible approach to removing barriers to the accessing of services, including for disabled children.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Sustain high levels of engagement with learners throughout all sessions so that the good progress made in developing skills is even more rapid.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

Outstanding health outcomes are the result of concerted efforts to raise families' understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles. For example, there has been a rapid decrease in the incidence of obesity among Reception Year children which has fallen to 9.6% from 22.4% in 2009/10. Highly successful programmes such as 'Together for Tea' help families learn together about how to prepare healthy meals. Adults and children benefit from dance and physical play activities at the leisure centre during 'Move 'n' Groove' sessions. There is excellent uptake of reduced-price family swimming. Over 200 children participate.

Breastfeeding initiation rates are the highest in the East Riding with 81% of babies being breastfed at 10 days and 62% sustaining breastfeeding at six-to-eight weeks. These figures reflect the impact of the well-established breastfeeding support group which runs from the centre and the individual outreach support offered before and after birth. One mother wrote, 'The breastfeeding group and clinic have been a Godsend and helped me to continue breastfeeding well beyond six months.'

Children and adults whose circumstances make them vulnerable are exceptionally well safeguarded. Staff work collaboratively with social care workers to ensure the best possible outcomes for families, particularly in times of crisis. Case studies exemplify where timely intervention from staff and highly effective use of the Common Assessment Framework process has made a significant difference to outcomes for users. The separation of parents and children has been avoided wherever possible due to the excellent partnership working in relation to child protection, and the provision of tailored individual support and expertise. High levels of parent satisfaction show that users are very happy with what the centre provides for families to develop positive relationships and be involved on a social level. Children behave exceptionally well. They and their parents copy the excellent examples set by staff. Parents are heavily involved in decision-making through the parents' forum and advisory board.

An increasing percentage of children reach a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. This has risen from 45.2% in 2009 to 66% currently. The achievement gap between the lowest 20% of children and the rest continues to narrow from 33.2% in 2009 to 27.4% in 2012. There are firm plans in place to continue to raise achievement through an even more rigorous audit of provision and learning outcomes.

Well-established links with the job centre ensure that employment opportunities are displayed weekly in the centre. Users have access to a good range of adult education courses and the majority are taking advantage of these to improve their employability skills. Others follow a range of courses such as first-aid and volunteer at the centre. A six-week play course specifically targeted at young parents, and accredited courses in numeracy and other basic skills are increasingly popular as staff encourage parents to strive for additional qualifications to increase their economic stability.

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	1
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
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	1
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?

1

Staff pay the closest attention to assessing the needs of families in order to provide tailored support. The well-established relationships and fully integrated work between partner organisations and the centre enables staff to provide high quality and wide-ranging activities. The expertise of partners is used very well to support learners and supplement the skills of centre staff. Outreach provision is of high quality, flexible and meets local needs particularly well. Some invitation-only groups such as 'Together for Tea' bring individuals together based on their needs. Highly-tuned home visiting and individual support ensure targeted groups, such as young parents, the rurally isolated and disabled children, do not miss out on experiences and can learn from the expertise of staff. Staff provide information packs on themes such as potty training and sleep patterns and support their attendance well at appointments such as job clubs. Creative solutions are found to problems such as supporting transition into school for those children subject to child protection plans by placing a volunteer, from the centre, in school. One parent said, 'The centre has helped me see a way forward I did not think possible.'

The centre promotes purposeful learning well and staff ensure that they target children and parents most in need of support. These users are encouraged to return regularly and to build on their initial gains. Many evaluations refer to a strong sense of achievement at the end of courses. Activities are enjoyable and well resourced. During a few sessions, the otherwise keen engagement shown by children or adults dips. This is because staff do not always identify quickly enough when this happens and so learning and development slow slightly.

Staff provide exceptional levels of care, guidance and support because they have a comprehensive understanding of the needs of users. The centre is well known throughout the community and 100% of users who completed evaluations agree that the centre is secure and welcoming. Vibrant shared areas attract children with colourful learning

environments, an extensive range of books, and high quality toys and equipment. Users make friends at the centre because staff support initial introductions and coax potential users to sessions. For instance, mothers experiencing post-natal depression can chat to others and alleviate their feelings of isolation. Young parents socialise and learn how to make the most of outings to parks with their young children, for example to promote their development. In addition, the centre provides transport so that those in isolated rural locations can also participate fully and build support networks. Members from all target groups say they feel confident to approach staff in times of crisis. Users' evaluations emphasise how extremely effective the support is for those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. One mother wrote, 'The support has been fantastic. It has really helped me feel cared about and reassured.'

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	1
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.	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

The centre manager sets the highest standards and inspires the whole staff team to adopt a rigorous approach to their practice. Professional supervision of staff is exemplary. Staff enhance their own skills continually through training and coaching. Governance and accountability are of a consistently high quality. The advisory board is forward thinking and supports innovative practice such as the transition project with a local infant school as well as the collaboration on play provision at the local prison. This encourages community involvement in improving the prison play centres used by children visiting relatives and improves the quality of experiences for families.

Leadership is highly reflective and self-evaluation is meticulous. Development plans are precise and staff know exactly what they are aiming to improve. As such the manager is able to check how well the centre meets and exceeds its targets. The centre continually strives for improvement, building exceptionally well on previous successes to ensure a seamless improvement in services. Ambitious targets are set and rigorously pursued. Consequently, services have improved rapidly over the last 18 months with registrations rising by 3% each month.

Systematic collation of reliable data helps staff to swiftly identify target groups with impressive efficiency. Each member of staff is allocated part of the reach and builds local knowledge of that area. This provides an exceptionally detailed overview of target groups and enables staff to decide on how best to support users.

The centre uses and manages its available resources exceedingly well, including creative use of the cramped accommodation. It provides outstanding value for money. Each activity is assessed in terms of outcomes, weighing potential benefits against costs. For example, the 'Toy Library' reaches 17 venues and provides a non-threatening introduction to centre services. Sustainability is given high priority and the centre promotes recycling and home-grown herbs and vegetables.

Meticulous attention is paid to community cohesion and to the promotion of equality and diversity as reflected in displays. The centre manager assesses registration details and knows the numbers of users and families in target groups. This helps her to plan and monitor services very efficiently and to recognise changing patterns. For instance, staff take new members of the community who speak English as an additional language to the leisure centre to meet people from their local community. Discrimination is not tolerated and immediate action is taken to prevent any bullying.

Partners from a range of organisations praise the centre for the excellent support it offers. Staff find creative solutions to improve service delivery. Many of these involve partnership working. For example, agencies deliver a cohesive package of services to young parents including adult education, smoking cessation and sexual health. These support outstanding outcomes for users.

Safeguarding takes the highest priority. Staff receive regular training about child protection and safeguarding and always follow best practice. There are robust recruitment and vetting systems in place for all staff, volunteers and advisory board members. Rigorous monitoring of children subject to child protection plans ensures their well-being. Their individual needs are constantly assessed so that staff and partner agencies can react swiftly to any developments. Case studies show that staff regularly take measured, yet immediate, action to ensure that identified safeguarding concerns, such as incidents of domestic violence, are addressed quickly.

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	1
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
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	1

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.	1
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Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

None.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Pocklington Children's Centre on 6 and 7 November 2012. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

We would like to thank all of you who made us feel so welcome during the inspection. We enjoyed meeting so many of you during activities and when you came in specifically to talk to us. We felt privileged to have spent time in this excellent children's centre. One of the most important messages you gave us was just how important a role the centre plays in your lives and how much you value the kindness of the staff team.

You told us how much time staff take to get to know you and your children. We saw this too in the caring way they worked with you all and how well they were able to match up the services available to your own particular circumstances. The only aspect of the centre that you did not like was that the building was not big enough. However, we found that the staff are working extremely well to provide even more outreach opportunities and these are taking place near the new satellite centre at Stamford Bridge.

The centre manager knows exactly what is working well. She and the staff check very carefully to make sure that all activities and the services provided by the staff meet your individual needs very well. They take time to invite you to the events and activities they feel best meet your needs and this means that you enjoy them and gain a lot from attending. Several people we met said that coming to the centre is a highlight for them and commented on how the centre has helped them to make friends and to develop greater self-confidence.

The building has an extensive range of information on how to help you and your families live healthier and safer lives. We heard and read many positive comments from you about how rigorous safety checks for your homes have been so valuable.. We saw that the centre staff pay very close attention to making sure that the centre is very secure so that you and your children are safe while there. Your children learn and develop well and you also make good progress in developing skills useful for the future. We have asked centre staff to make sure that when they are leading sessions, either with you or your children, they keep a close

check on how well everyone is joining in. That way, they will be able to encourage children and adults to make the very best of each opportunity to develop new skills.

You are all very confident that staff listen carefully to your ideas and suggestions about how to improve services further. We saw how many of you fill in evaluations of the courses you attend. It is clear that the staff pay attention to your comments when planning future activities. As a result, numbers registering with the centre are high and continue to rise so that even more people are benefiting from the centre's excellent resources. Those of you who are members of the parents' forum and advisory board have helped to change the approach towards new mothers. You made it clear that some health partners were encouraging the centre to wait for too long before inviting you to join in sessions and so you were feeling isolated at home. Now, new mothers are invited to attend sessions much sooner after the birth of their child and this approach is clearly very popular.

The strong links with local job centres ensure information and support are provided for those of you looking to return to work. There are also close links with the college so that you all know about adult education and training opportunities. We were pleased to see that more of you are now attending these.

We wish you and your families all the very best for the future.

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