

Inspection report for The Deans Children's Centre

Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	410360
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2012
Reporting inspector	Michael Rhodes-Kubiak HMI

Centre leader	Celia Lamden/Sue Moore
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Rudyard Kipling Primary School Chalkland Rise Woodingdean Brighton East Sussex BN2 6RH
Telephone number	01273 306387
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	Celia.lamden@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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: December 2012



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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

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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.

They held meetings with parents, staff, leaders, volunteers, representatives from a number of partner agencies and the local authority. They observed the centre's work and visited a number of groups. They also looked at a range of relevant documentation including case files and case studies, the centre's self-evaluation, service improvement plan and minutes of meetings.

Information about the centre

The Deans Children's Centre is a phase two centre which was designated in 2008. It is located on the site of Rudyard Kipling Primary School. It works in partnership with the school, but there are no further links other than sharing the same site.

Children's centres in the area provide an integrated approach with local authority staff and health services through a section 75 agreement. The local authority manages and delivers centre services through this agreement, including overseeing the governance arrangements, and delegates responsibility to the centre's advisory group.

The centre's reach area covers Woodingdean on the outskirts of Brighton, with 1,052 children under five in the reach area. The centre is open weekdays from 9.00am to 3.00pm during term time. A reduced number of groups operate during school holidays. In addition to running groups at the centre, some run at other venues in the community including Hazel Cottage Clinic, St Margaret's Cottage and Boomerang Kids Nursery.

The centre's reach area is mixed in terms of deprivation, with one area in the lowest 20% found nationally. The majority of families in the reach area are of White British heritage, with an increasing number of families of Eastern European origin.

Around 13% of children live in households dependent on workless benefits, and around 18% of children live in families where adults are on a low income and in receipt of Working Family Tax Credits. Children’s skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are below those typically 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

The Deans Children’s Centre makes a good overall contribution to improving outcomes for families living in the local area. Many activities are located in the community so that they are more accessible; parents greatly value being able to access services locally. Space in the centre is well used and the excellent partnerships with the school mean that centre users also benefit from accessing space within the school building. Although space is limited, the environment is warm and inviting, and staff use it creatively to provide services which families enjoy attending. The centre runs larger groups at bigger community venues enabling more families to attend.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding as staff work sensitively and skilfully with parents and this is clearly reflected in the excellent being healthy and keeping safe outcomes. Staff have high aspirations for families and work enthusiastically, energetically and show excellent levels of commitment. They work to empower families to make decisions. Inspectors heard many comments about how parents value the support including, ‘I am a new mum and the staff have helped me feel confident that I can do this,’ and, ‘[the centre] help make things easier.’ Staff use rigorous assessment procedures accurately to identify those families most in need. They offer an excellent package of tailored support to these families and case studies demonstrate that they make excellent progress and sustained changes to their lives as a result. There are excellent partnership working relationships with a wide range of agencies including Oak Cottage Nursery and Progress, which have a significant impact on the overall good and improving outcomes.

Safeguarding procedures are excellent and underpin the work of all centre staff. Robust recruitment procedures for adults at the centre ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. Families report feeling safe there. Risk assessments ensure that potential hazards at the centre are reduced.

Parents contribute to the work of the centre through a range of methods and their views and opinions are valued by the centre. One comment from a parent, which reflects the views of many, is, 'I feel heard.' Parents have good opportunities to undertake adult learning and development and the numbers are increasing. The centre rightly identifies weakness in procedures for tracking adults' education and learning which impact on their ability to monitor their progression and access to further training and paid employment.

The management team is highly committed to improving outcomes for families. It empowers staff to make decisions and to use their extensive community knowledge to signpost and support families. In addition, staff successfully engage families in the centre, building open and trusting relationships. Staff at all levels have an accurate picture of the centre and its strengths and areas where it needs to develop. Overall, the self-evaluation provides an accurate picture of the centre; however, it is not regularly updated and therefore does not accurately reflect the centre in all areas. Targets within the service improvement plan are sometimes too broad and do not reflect the ambitions of the centre. The management team is fully aware of where it needs to strengthen its evaluation and planning, and there is evidence of positive changes to working practices. Therefore, the centre's capacity to improve is good.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Strengthen systems to track adult learning to:
 - provide an accurate assessment of all adult learners
 - ensure courses provide progression and improve adults' skills and knowledge.
- Strengthen self-evaluation and improvement planning to ensure that they provide an up-to-date picture of the centre and that targets for improvement are ambitious and challenging.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Outcomes are good and improving for a significant proportion of the families who access the centre's services. The centre promotes the importance of parents continuing their children's learning at home through courses such as Play and Learn. At the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, 62% of children achieved more than 78 points; this represents a 16% improvement in the past four years. The principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage are embedded in groups run by the centre. An increasing number of adults access training courses at the centre, which they find enjoyable and which helps them to develop confidence and learn new skills. Groups such as Triple P are popular with parents and have an impact on families. Some

parents volunteer at the centre; however, the numbers are very low. Those who do volunteer benefit from good induction procedures and on-going support. A very small number of volunteers has been successful in obtaining paid employment.

Children are safe and very well protected as a result of the centre's outstanding attention to safeguarding. Good signposting to Safety Net provides families with safety equipment that makes their homes safer. Staff act as good role models by promoting excellent safety practices and, as a result, parents report that they feel totally safe at the centre and are confident to leave their children in the care of the centre staff. Staff identify families with additional needs early and work with them sensitively and skilfully to bring about positive changes to their lives. They use the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes rigorously to identify priority areas for families. Robust quality assurance processes mean that targets are clearly focused and are bringing about improved outcomes for families. The highly effective outreach work is contributing to reducing the numbers of children on child protection plans in the reach area, which are below the local authority average. Training for parents on topics such as first aid gives them the confidence and skills to treat minor injuries.

The centre is committed to giving children the best start in life through promoting healthy lifestyles. Breastfeeding rates are significantly above the national average, although lower than the local authority average. Specialist breastfeeding services have been targeted at the area and their work is beginning to improve the rates. Obesity rates are low and are reducing further. All groups run by the centre provide children with a range of healthy snacks and, where available, staff encourage children to access outdoor play spaces. Assessment of new mothers at six weeks successfully provides early identification of postnatal depression and the centre provides appropriate support services.

Parents contribute in a wide range of ways to the work of the centre. Some parents are members of the advisory group and the centre is committed to improving parental representation at all levels. Systems for feeding back more widely to parents and obtaining the views of the wider reach area are not yet in place.

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	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
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How good is the provision?	1
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The centre offers an excellent range of services and groups at the centre and within the community. Staff overcome the barrier of limited space at the centre by targeting families to attend groups run from there. This also allows them to monitor attendance. As one parent told inspectors, 'Services are supportive and [there are] lots of them.' Attractive environments and high quality resources enable children to thoroughly enjoy their time at the centre. Staff use space very creatively to provide a comprehensive range of stimulating and enjoyable activities that are well linked to the Early Years Foundation Stage and designed to improve children's attainment and close the achievement gap. Programmes such as the Chatterbox group demonstrate that children make excellent progress in their communication and language through attending the course; adults are given information weekly which develops into an extensive information pack that they can use to develop their children's skills further.

The care, guidance and support the centre provides are outstanding. Staff work hard to build extremely positive, trusting relationships with families. As a result, parents feel that staff are very approachable. Staff understand fully the barriers families may face and are highly proactive supporting them by intervening early. The outreach work provided by centre staff is highly effective in identifying the most vulnerable families and a comprehensive range of supports are put in place, tailored to the families' individual needs. The newly introduced home visiting record format focuses staff on setting clear targets for improvement. Case studies demonstrate the positive effect of outreach work with families.

Parents and staff complete group evaluations and these feed into shaping the centre's services. Many groups are targeted well at those families most in need and overall attendance figures are good. The current system for registering families means that the centre misses opportunities to demonstrate the positive impact of its outreach work. Some parents are involved in the centre's governance through their membership of the advisory group. The centre runs training for adults who are interested in taking on the advisory group chairperson's role. Centre staff have high aspirations of families and work with adults to improve their employability skills. Groups, such as Triple P and basic first aid, are well attended and staff use these sessions successfully to promote adult learning and to build on the adults' skills, knowledge and interests. Centre volunteers receive a comprehensive induction and on-going support in order to fulfil their role. The centre has developed a number of parent-led groups and staff provide a good level of support to the leaders of these groups.

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?

2

Management arrangements are good and the management team is highly effective as the members motivate, empower and support staff. Good supervision arrangements, robust quality assurance processes, training and development, and individual target setting mean that staff develop professionally.

Staff use their extensive knowledge of the community and the city to effectively engage with a wide range of partner agencies. The excellent partnership arrangements mean that other agencies understand the centre's aims and priorities. As a result, they work extremely well together to improve outcomes for families.

Centre staff understand the diversity of their community and the different issues they face. They successfully engage target groups in centre services. Groups for children with disabilities and for male carers operate city wide, although all families are encouraged to visit any group as the centre provides an inclusive environment. Displays and information around the centre promote the diversity of the population. Staff have access to interpreters and translation services to support families whose first language may not be English.

Safeguarding arrangements are extremely secure. Regular training, quality assurance, professional discussions and training ensure that staff are highly skilled and confident in dealing with safeguarding issues. Clear policies and procedures ensure that staff and volunteers fully understand their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding. Excellent partnership working between the health visitors and early years visitors is effective in responding promptly when families are identified as needing additional support. The CAF process is used extremely effectively to support families. Robust checking procedures for staff and volunteers ensure their suitability to work with children.

The centre's service improvement plan is based on areas for improvement identified in the centre's self-evaluation. Developments and changes to services are not always accurately reflected in the self-evaluation and service improvement plan. A lack of specific targets for improvement in some areas limits the full effectiveness of the centre in driving improvement through the setting of challenging and ambitious targets. The centre's main sources of data are the Sussex Health Trust and local

authority; the availability of this data has been variable recently. However, the centre uses data meaningfully to inform targets and set future priorities in some areas.

The centre understands the need to target services at the most vulnerable families. Many groups are offered via direct referral or invitation and this ensures that services are provided for those vulnerable families. The centre provides many services run from community venues as they are more accessible for families. Regular service reviews and subsequent changes to the centre's activities ensure that services are improving the good outcomes for families. Parent-led groups are particularly successful in providing services for families with a lower level of need. As a result, the centre provides outstanding value for money.

The centre encourages comments and suggestions from parents formally and informally, and uses these to inform services. The advisory group discusses relevant parents' issues and includes representation from parents. A centre newsletter provides feedback to a wider audience of parents on issues that may be relevant to them. Parental feedback from courses and training informs future services. The centre has recently begun to track some adults' learning and development journey. Staff are aware that they need to strengthen this in order to ensure that courses are appropriate for the adults' levels and skills and that the adults are able to progress in their learning.

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	1
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	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	2

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 The Deans Children's Centre on 28 and 29 November 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you for welcoming inspectors to your centre when we visited recently, to those of you who spoke to us when we visited the groups and adult courses at the centre, and to those of you who took the time to come and talk to us about your experiences at the centre.

The centre's management team works hard to support staff and to provide a good centre for you and your families. The team has worked very hard to establish excellent links with a wide range of partner agencies and this contributes significantly to improving outcomes for you and your families. Excellent communication between agencies means that there is a good package of support for those of you who need it the most.

Centre staff treat you all as individuals and have great insight into the issues and barriers you may face. They are committed to working with you to overcome many of those barriers, for example by providing groups at many venues across the area in an attempt to reduce the amount of travelling that you need to do. The staff have high aspirations of you and are highly committed to working with you to make improvements in your lives. Many of you told inspectors what a difference the centre has made and how you have made positive changes for your families after attending courses such as Triple P. Staff treat you with respect and work with you sensitively and supportively.

Safeguarding procedures are exemplary. Excellent procedures ensure that adults looking after your children are suitable to do so. Effective safeguarding policies and procedures are in place. Staff give safeguarding of children their highest priority. Security at the centre is good and risk assessments ensure that potential hazards are kept to a minimum.

Those of you who may need additional help benefit from outreach work in your own homes. Case studies show that many of you who receive outreach have an excellent package of support with services coordinated among a range of partner agencies. Health outcomes are outstanding; the centre works with new mothers to encourage

breastfeeding and provides you with information about how to promote healthy lifestyles for you and your families. Wherever possible, the centre promotes physical exercise through outdoor play opportunities for your children.

Displays at the different venues provide you with helpful information about issues related to the centre's work and details about how you can support your children, for example through activities you can undertake with your children at home to develop their skills. Some of you access specialist city-wide groups, such as the dads' group, and for disabled children; however, we can see that the centre provides a welcoming environment, which is inclusive to all families. Access to translation and interpreting services means that language barriers are effectively overcome.

Some parents volunteer at the centre and run parent-led groups. They receive an excellent package of support, including a comprehensive induction package and ongoing support. Inspectors visited some of you at training courses, including the paediatric first-aid course. We saw centre staff talking to you about future training and courses you may wish to undertake. We have asked the centre to look at how they can better track your learning so that they can support you in accessing courses that will progress your learning and help you to develop new skills.

The centre self-evaluates its services and identifies areas where it needs to develop which are used to form the basis of its service improvement plan. We have asked the centre to look at how it can improve the documents as we feel that the centre has the capacity to do even more for you and your families.

We wish you and your families every success for the future.

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