

Inspection report for Studley Green Children's Centre

Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	406975
Inspection dates	11–12 December 2012
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Studley Green Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	YMCA Green Shoots Day Nursery EY409652

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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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 parents, partners and centre staff. They met with representatives of the advisory board, the local authority, 4Children, and the linked nursery, Green Shoots. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation. They also observed an outreach visit.

Information about the centre

Studley Green Children's Centre was designated in 2008 to provide the full core offer of services, including childcare. It is situated within a social housing estate on the same site as Studley Green Primary School and Green Shoots Nursery. The nursery provides full daycare. The centre is managed by the charity 4Children on behalf of the local authority.

The reach area comprises of nine super output areas that range in levels of deprivation from 12% to 94%. There are 499 families with children aged under five years living within the centre's catchment area. Most families are of White British heritage, and 12% have ethnic minority backgrounds. There are a number of Moroccan and Polish families living in the area, and also a mixed Asian and Chinese population. Overall, 17% of families live in workless households, which is above the local and national average. In the most deprived area, this proportion rises to 54%. Children enter early years provision with levels of knowledge, skills and experience that are below average levels found nationally.

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

Studley Green is an outstanding children's centre. The centre offers an extremely welcoming and cheerful environment where every family is warmly welcomed, whether they are attending a group or just dropping in for some company. One parent summed up the views of many saying, 'The centre is a place to escape to.' Excellent provision is exceptionally well planned and delivered so that it yields outstanding outcomes. Superb partnership working with parents and an extensive range of agencies underpins the centre's work. Parents are fully involved in all aspects of centre life, routinely influencing provision and working as volunteers. Partners work very well with the centre and the range of services offered is considerably broadened as a result. The centre is proactive and extremely successful in engaging with partners so they are fully involved in governance and development of services. Exemplary safeguarding procedures protect children and vulnerable adults very well.

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding. Comprehensive data about the composition of the reach area are analysed and organised very well to engage target groups. As a result, the very large majority of families from all target groups are using the centre, and almost all of those living in areas of greatest need. Most families with ethnic minority backgrounds attend the centre regularly. In recent years there has been a trend of improving engagement, and this continues to increase rapidly. Excellent systems are in place to drive further development and self-evaluation is wholly accurate. Sophisticated management systems for all staff and volunteers evaluate performance. Performance management is fully coordinated with the centre's priorities for development, and this results in excellent team work and rapid improvement. For example, the centre has prioritised the improvement of outcomes for families dependent on workless benefits, and this has resulted in 96% of these families accessing relevant services.

Partnership working with health services is excellent. Frontline universal services such as Healthy Child clinics and checks operate from centre premises. Families report they prefer the child-friendly environment offered by the centre for these sessions, and take-up rates are excellent. The centre has had noticeable success in

improving health outcomes for families, especially those most in need. Rates of breastfeeding have improved rapidly (by 6.2%) in the past year, as a result of concerted efforts by health and centre staff to provide education and support. The proportion of mothers who are sustaining breastfeeding is 48.6%, which is above the national average, but remains slightly below the local authority average.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase provision to support breastfeeding so the proportion of children who are breastfed when aged six to eight weeks is greater than the local authority average.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

Families benefit from outstanding outcomes because of the centre's work. In the last three years, levels of childhood obesity have improved as a result of groups promoting healthy eating and exercise, from 13.4% to 9.4%, which is just above the local authority average (8.2%). Children with speech and language difficulties make very good progress as a result of concerted emphasis on communication skills through use of Every Child a Talker and centre schemes, such as the Bookshare book loan project. A small minority of families in the area (16.2%) is affected by mental health issues. The centre demonstrates exceptional success in improving their well-being and feeling of self-worth through tailored individual care and excellent emotional support delivered through groups such as Tender Loving Care. The outcomes for vulnerable adults' mental health are greatly improved as a result of this provision, enhanced by the excellent work of the centre's counsellors. Therefore, health outcomes are outstanding overall, although rates of sustained breastfeeding are below the local average.

Parents report they feel exceptionally safe at the centre. Vulnerable families develop their understanding of safety extremely well as a result of outreach and individual working. Targeted groups are educated in parenting approaches that are tailored very well to the needs of those attending, including young and lone parents. These parents are rightly proud of their success in understanding and managing their children's behaviour as a result of these positive and well-planned strategies. Children who are subject to child protection plans make outstanding progress and are very well protected as a result of the centre's superb inter-agency working. The frequent and extremely detailed contact that almost all families enjoy with the centre produces valuable information about their circumstances, so support can be offered and concerns promptly acted upon. Use of the Common Assessment Framework is embedded in the centre's work to identify and monitor children's safety. The safety of adults who experience domestic abuse is significantly enhanced. Adults trust staff wholeheartedly and receive practical help to gain housing and protection, as well as support which helps empower them to change their lives for the better.

Children and adults achieve extremely well. Learning journals clearly show they make

excellent progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage in nursery and groups. This includes those children in receipt of two-year-old funding. Very good transition arrangements are well established. Therefore, children and their parents, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, are very well prepared for starting school. In the reach area, levels of children’s understanding, skills and experience have increased at double the rate of national trends over the past three years as result of expert advisory advice and its implementation. Case files and summative assessments demonstrate excellent improvements in adults’ personal and educational achievement.

A large majority of adults, including almost all of those most vulnerable, see exceptional improvement in levels of their self-assurance and confidence. This enables them to take the next step into volunteering at the centre or taking a college course, for example. Many have progressed to complete National Vocational Qualifications and a few have successfully gained employment as a result of using the centre. Superb partnership working with a wide range of agencies improves families’ economic well-being. For example, a small number of young and lone parents are successfully managing their debts as a result of advice from the Hope Debt agency. Families are very well prepared for the forthcoming benefit changes because centre staff and partners are initiating discussions with those likely to be affected, and families are planning for these changes as a result.

Parents make an exceptional contribution to the centre and to its harmonious atmosphere. In particular, the Parents’ Voice is extremely effective in gathering the views of many. It achieves very widespread feedback by running its consultations over a week rather than a single meeting. The centre is held in high regard by its partner agencies and has very strong community links, as exemplified by the large number of organisations represented on the advisory board.

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	1
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	1

How good is the provision?

1

The range of services is extremely well matched to the needs of all target groups. Detailed data analysis and superb communication with partners provide a wealth of pertinent information about the reach area. The centre makes excellent use of this to plan its services. This has led to an increase of between 100% and over 200% in the engagement of all target groups over the past three years. For example, focused activities held at weekends, such as the gardening group Ready, Steady, Grow, and individual contact have increased the involvement of fathers in the centre by 224%, to 29% over three years. The large majority (75%) of families with a disabled child attend. The overwhelming majority of families expressed positive views of the centre in the most recent user satisfaction survey.

Learning opportunities are exemplary. Sessions for children and adults are enjoyable and beneficial. They are meticulously planned with families' individual interests and needs in mind. All are well attended and universal groups are wholly representative of the local community. Parents and children influence the provision; for example, a recent evaluation showed a preference for more 'messy play' and, as a result, more painting and craft activities have been offered. Excellent outreach work offers bespoke and empowering support for those families most in need so their outcomes improve rapidly, and they are well prepared to sustain these improvements. The centre provides a wealth of information through displays around the building, ranging from user success stories to displays about Mr Right/Mr Wrong which educate women about domestic violence. Parents readily come to the centre to 'have a chat' or to use the sensory room with their children. Many appreciate the flexibility of the centre because it enables them to visit should they feel isolated or in need of help.

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	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

Leaders are highly effective in inspiring and delivering exceptional services for families, especially those most in need. Aspirational targets are routinely met because of concerted planning and sophisticated evaluation. The advisory board is fully involved in all aspects of governance and is highly effective in evaluating the centre's work, using the skills of each partner agency to bring additional expertise to the process. The police officer representative contributed to the 'staying safe' aspect of the self-evaluation form, for example. The local authority provides excellent

challenge and support to promote development. Centre leaders and 4Children staff work extremely collaboratively to implement well-constructed processes that provide exemplary management of staff and volunteers. Highly effective partnership, working with an exceptional range of agencies, broadens the range of services on offer, and comprehensive evaluation assures that all have worthwhile impact. Some practice is innovative, such as the use of counsellors who are trained, but not yet fully qualified, or the week-long Parents' Forum sessions. Staff make excellent use of the premises to deliver as many services as possible, and detailed analysis of cost ensures the centre provides outstanding value for money.

Exemplary safeguarding procedures thread throughout all the centre's work. Partner agencies include safeguarding in their own evaluations and work very well with staff to provide support or escalate issues of concern. Procedures for checking adults working and volunteering are rigorous so those working around children and vulnerable adults are safe to do so. Inter-agency working with health and social care is highly effective to protect children. The centre's tenacious and frequent contact with vulnerable families ensures continual review and implementation of protection procedures which are thoroughly quality assured by 4Children. Excellent use is made of the Common Assessment Framework and outreach assessment to provide early intervention strategies that successfully prevent concerns escalating further.

Inclusive practice is wholly embedded throughout all services. Engagement of all target groups is tracked very well and comprehensively monitored. Service evaluations make special note of the engagement of ethnic minority families, for example to ensure inclusive engagement. Assessment and data show outcomes for the most vulnerable families are increasing rapidly. The centre ensures families, including disabled adults, have easy access to the centre, and accompany parents if needed so all may benefit from the superb provision on offer.

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 secure 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

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

None.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Studley Green Children’s Centre on 11 and 12 December 2012. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

Thank you for welcoming us to your children’s centre when we visited recently. We were very impressed with the work the centre in doing, and judged every aspect to be outstanding. There are many, many strengths to your children’s centre, and a few are explained below.

Leaders make excellent use of all the information available so they can make sure all families living in the centre’s catchment area know about the centre and use its services. As a result, the very large majority of those who would most benefit are using the centre.

All staff at the centre are extremely friendly and knowledgeable. Almost all of you are confident to turn to them for help and support when times are difficult. We were very impressed with the high quality of this care, which helps to improve families’ circumstances and prospects.

Many of you are involved in the centre, through giving your views about groups, sharing your ideas, and being a part of the Parents’ Forum and centre advisory board. Some of you have become volunteers, and help the staff deliver the centre’s work. The extent of your involvement is a particular strength of the centre.

The centre works extremely well with many partner agencies. These make a positive difference to families’ lives. The extensive range of different services cover all aspects, including health, debt and benefits advice and help with finding

employment. As a result of all the services on offer, lots of families see very great improvement in their health, safety, financial situation, and general well-being.

The centre is very good at identifying the priorities to make its services even better. As part of the inspection process, we always give a centre ideas of how it can improve even further. The centre already works well with health services to support mothers to breastfeed successfully. We have asked the centre to help even more women keep breastfeeding beyond the six-to-eight week mark.

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