

Inspection report for Kings Park Children's Centre

Local authority	Wiltshire
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Linked school if applicable	King's Park Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	YMCA Little Fir Tree Nursery

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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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 two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with representatives from the local authority, the management team, centre staff, advisory board members, parents, volunteers, health, education and social care professionals. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

King's Park Children's Centre is a phase two centre located in the grounds of King's Park Primary School. The centre itself is in a large detached bungalow which is situated between the school and the 'YMCA Little Fir Trees Nursery'. "The school manages a maintained nursery on the same site as the YMCA Little Fir Tree Nursery". The children's centre was established as part of Wiltshire's only Sure Start project in 2004 and was designated on 1 April 2006. It was managed by King's Park Primary School then Barnardo's until April 2011 when '4Children', a national charity with a focus on children, young people and families, took over the management of the centre along with 15 other children's centres in Wiltshire. A co-ordinator leads and manages a team of outreach and support workers across both King's Park and Canberra which is the other children's centre in Melksham. She is supported by a cluster manager and a county manager.

Most families are of White British origin but there are an increasing proportion of Polish and Turkish families living within the reach area. There is also a significant proportion of teenage parents. The reach area for the centre consists of eight super output areas, ranging in levels of deprivation from 21% to 87%. Melksham has a long history as a manufacturing town surrounded by villages that support employment through farming. Although unemployment is not significant, it is increasing and the level of qualifications and skills among the population is low. There are 685 children aged five years or under living within the centre's catchment area.

Services provided by the children’s centre include parent and toddler groups, baby massage, parenting programmes, family learning and healthy cooking sessions, open play activities, adult education programmes, advice on finances and outreach support. Most children enter early years education with skills and knowledge below that expected for their age.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 judgements 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

King’s Park Children’s Centre is an outstanding centre. The pursuit of excellence is firmly embedded in all of the centre’s activities and it makes a significant difference to the lives of families, regardless of where they live in the reach area. Parents were unanimous in their praise for the work of staff at the centre. As one parent explained, ‘It is a massive part of my life and I am a big fan of the children’s centre.’ The centre is extremely effective in raising the aspirations of parents and the achievement in learning and development of children from their starting points. Children’s readiness for school is boosted well through the good quality activities at the centre and the supportive links made with the adjacent nursery, local schools and agencies providing specialist help. By organising high quality opportunities for parents to support their children’s communication, literacy and language skills, the levels of attainment on entry into the local Reception classes is improving. However, the reasons why some learning activities at the centre have been chosen are not always made clear enough to parents. They are not always directly linked to the specific needs of individuals or used to inform future sessions. Families, particularly those in need of intervention and support, are improving their economic well-being through the excellent advice, guidance and support offered in relation to obtaining benefits, improving housing conditions and managing finances. Adult learning take-up rates are good. Nevertheless, the centre recognises that more needs to be done to offer a broader range of courses, including accredited literacy and numeracy courses to increase further routes into employment.

Excellent working arrangements with health partner agencies result in rapidly

improving health outcomes for families in the reach area. The centre is not complacent and is firmly focused on the continuing trend in the decrease in child obesity and highlighting the problems associated with excessive alcohol intake. Proactive outreach workers diligently work with families in circumstances that make them most vulnerable. This early intervention has led to a clear improvement for those children subject to the Common Assessment Framework process and those subject to a child protection plan. Families and staff develop an excellent understanding of risks and how to keep themselves safe.

Leadership, management and governance arrangements are outstanding. The centre exemplifies high-quality practice in safeguarding and equality and diversity, and takes a lead role in establishing dynamic working relationships with partners. The early years advisory teacher and the nominated officer from the local authority are exceptionally well involved and offer proactive support and challenge to the centre. The methodical use of available information data, coupled with the robust analysis of the services offered, ensures that the centre achieves outstanding results. The excellent outcomes of the services offered for families demonstrate the centre's outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure that parents always understand why the activities planned have been chosen and have been planned to meet individual needs identified and evaluations are used to inform future evaluations.
- Develop further the opportunities offered to adult learners to support them in improving their literacy and numeracy skills so that they can further access training and employment.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

Excellent partnership working ensures that the centre is having an outstanding impact on community health. Trends in local data show that breastfeeding rates have increased from 39% in 2009/10 to 45% in 2010/11. Obesity of children in the local Reception classes has decreased from 17% in 2009/10 to 12% in 2010/11. Centre staff are highly effective in engaging with families to promote healthy lifestyles. A recent survey revealed that 100% of the families who had attended the 'Fun with Food' course considered that the course had encouraged them to eat more healthily at home. Excellent links with other agencies ensure early notification of families in the community who may benefit from the work of the centre. One of the top health related issues for Melksham is alcohol-related admissions to hospital. During the run-up to Christmas, the centre ran its own alcohol awareness campaign and 80% of parents who got involved in this reported that they had a better understanding of alcohol units and limits.

Children are exceptionally well looked after in the centre and parents benefit from parenting skills activities, particularly in the areas of behaviour management and

safety, both in the home and outside as they travel around. Child protection arrangements are excellent and any signs that a child may be at risk are addressed swiftly by the well-trained staff who work cohesively with other agencies to provide the best possible support when it is needed most.

Although attainment on entry into school is below age-related expectations, children in the reach area are achieving well. There has been a significant narrowing of the gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the highest, at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage profile which has been effectively reduced by 12%. This is partly because of the strong focus on early language and communication skills and the parenting programmes which help the children make good progress from their starting points. The involvement of Jobcentre Plus, the local college and a range of charitable organisations have a good impact on improving families' economic well-being. A few adults have moved into employment or further training. Eligible parents are being well prepared for future changes to their benefits and are planning ahead to deal with any reduction as a result of targeted advice. The successful volunteer programme equips parents well for employment but involvement in developing further literacy and numeracy skills are less successful.

Parents are involved in every aspect of centre life and their positive contribution is outstanding. Parental involvement in the advisory board effectively ensures that centre users contribute to its management. Others give feedback on services more informally through 'the listening ear' or other evaluation tools. Staff are excellent role models and build extremely strong relationships with families, and as a consequence, everyone is very respectful of one another. The centre's excellent community links are very well established through its proactive involvement with many organisations. The centre works sensitively and collaboratively with local agencies to access required services for its families, and is held in very high regard.

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

The centre is exceptionally successful at reaching almost all families in its reach area. As a direct result of pro-active work to engage with local families and provide an outstanding range of services, around 96% of its reach area accesses activities and support provided by the children's centre. These levels have increased rapidly over the past year from 86.1% and reflect the concerted effort to match services at the centre to the needs of the community. All families receive careful and sensitive assessment by staff at the point of contact. Initiatives have been so successful in building the confidence and abilities of parents that some have gone on to become volunteers. As one parent explained, 'volunteering is very rewarding' and has made 'such a difference' to her life.

Groups such as 'Stay and play' and 'Rhythm and Rhyme' deliver activities planned to promote good learning and development for children and their parents. Good steps are taken to improve children's language and literacy development. Story sacks which contain books, puzzles, games and toys are very popular activities to borrow. In fact, 85% of parents who use these resources feel that they have helped them spend more time reading and playing with their children. 'Let's Talk', a six week course promoting children's language development, is well received by all parents who attended. One parent was delighted with these sessions because 'watching you talk to my child has made me get down to his level to do the same'. 'Let's Play and Learn' sessions are very well received by parents who consider it them an 'amazing godsend'. They learn to play alongside their children as they develop different skills through model-making, exploring textures such as snow and ice, and playing outside. Although these sessions are well planned and thoroughly enjoyed by both the adults and the children, the intention of the activity is not always made clear to the parents and does not routinely link to the specific needs of individuals or used to inform future sessions.

Parents benefit from courses provided such as parenting, 'baby massage' and the 'First Year Club' which is targeted at first-time mothers. Family learning events which include opportunities to learn to cook healthily are popular. The success of the 'Dad's Play' held monthly on a Saturday can be summed up by one parent who explained that it was 'nice to have time with my daughter on my own'. A charity which supports adults to consider future employment prospects organises regular meetings at the centre. The launch of the accredited qualification for customer service by the centre has been a great success but opportunities for adults to work towards improving their literacy and numeracy skills so that they might access further training and employment are limited.

Families are provided with excellent care and support. There is a wide variety of informative literature about services available to families, including breastfeeding, domestic violence, sexually transmitted diseases, contraception and support with debt. The very effective partnerships ensure that vulnerable families and target groups are identified and very ably supported at times of crisis. The exceptional knowledge and expertise of the outreach workers and those specialists who advise

families ensure that the support is personalised. All parents spoke highly of the help and support they had received with one describing it as 'a life-saver'.

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 management team provides high-quality professional supervision for all staff in this outstanding centre. Together with '4Children', senior managers and the co-ordinator for the children's centre ensure that the centre runs with smooth precision. Regardless of whether they are a member of staff, a volunteer, a child or a parent, the management team encourages everyone to aim as high as possible. All associated with the centre are extremely clear about the aims and priorities of the centre. These are firmly underpinned by the high-quality data received from the local authority, social services and health agencies. The centre coordinator provides inspirational leadership through a number of very effective strategies. All staff are well qualified and encouraged to develop themselves in areas that interest them and benefit the centre. Staff supervision and support are individually tailored to need. There are excellent opportunities for individuals' development and staff performance is carefully aligned to the well-constructed '4Children' model. The senior management team, along with the advisory board, is passionate in its efforts to improve life chances for families within the local community. The shared use of services and expertise with other local children's centres, particularly Canberra, provides excellent value for money because it enables valuable resources to be shared across the community. Self-evaluation is based fully on robust measureable outcomes for activities and the impact on the families. The high-quality improvement plan is firmly based on the exact needs of the locality and its target groups. The local authority provides excellent challenge and support to promote development.

Excellent partnership working with professional workers as well as the voluntary sector ensures all parts of the reach area are provided for, especially users from targeted groups. For example, a class that focuses on helping parents to develop the skills required for looking after their children has succeeded in gaining the attendance of all those families identified as needing support. Both the local authority and the centre proactively seek the views of its service users. Evaluations are sought at the end of each organised session and parents are encouraged to use 'the listening ear' to share their views and suggestions informally via post-it notes. Equality of opportunity is excellent with services meeting the needs of all very well, including disabled children and adults and those with special educational needs. The

centre is a wonderfully warm, welcoming and friendly environment. As one parent explained: 'it doesn't matter if you don't have any money'.

Safeguarding is outstanding. Staff are extremely vigilant about safety and take very prompt action to minimise any potential risks in activities. All legal requirements in relation to safeguarding are adhered to and carefully quality assured by '4Children'. Leaders ensure the safe recruitment of staff and robust checks are made on all adults working in or with the centre by '4Children'. The close partnership with health and social care is highly effective to protect children. Families who are most in need receive exceptional support during their time of crisis through the exceptionally effective use of the Common Assessment Framework and inter-agency involvement.

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

The most recent inspection report for King's Park Primary School (November 2012) and the YMCA Little Firs Nursery School (December 2008).

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the King's Park Children's Centre on the 23 and 24 January 2013. We judged the centre as outstanding.

As part of the inspection, we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's documentation, and talked with a range of children and adults, including parents, staff and partnership workers. We were pleased to speak to some of you about the centre's work and to listen to your views. We really enjoyed talking to you around the centre and in the various activity sessions you were engaged in. You expressed your views very clearly and we appreciated you telling us how things really are.

We are delighted to tell you that the centre provides outstanding outcomes to you and your families through the range of high-quality activities and services it offers. We are pleased that excellent attention is given to ensure you and your children stay safe. The way the centre offers you care, guidance and support during times of crisis is particularly impressive and we know many of you consider the centre as 'a lifesaver'. We were also delighted to hear how you have benefited from coming to the centre, increasing your confidence and becoming involved in the many worthwhile activities available to you.

The centre is good at helping you increase your knowledge about play and how children learn through the many activities they offer. We have suggested that the centre helps you to better understand what skills they are developing with their children and that some of the activities are better suited to meet individual needs. The centre provides excellent parenting sessions and exceptional support to new mums and dads. Many of you are gaining confidence when cooking and are using new ideas to ensure your families are benefiting from a healthy diet. There have been impressive results in the work the centre is doing to tackle obesity in young children.

We judged that the coordinator of the centre is an inspirational leader who is deeply passionate about the work of the centre. She is extremely well supported by both the cluster and county managers, members of the advisory board, the early years advisory teacher and the local authority officer. Centre staff are very well qualified and work very hard to make the centre as good as it can be. Centre staff are very effective at finding out what they do well and have lots of ideas to improve what they do so that even more families can benefit from its activities.

The centre sets challenging targets in order to improve services to you and makes excellent use of resources. It was also good to hear about those of you who have undertaken training to increase your confidence and develop your skills, which may help you secure employment in the future. We have suggested that the centre runs more literacy and numeracy programmes for adults so that more of you can benefit from further learning opportunities.

We know that you love your centre and the work that it does and we agree. Thank you once again for your welcome and your willingness to share your views with us. We wish you every success in the future.

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