

Ofsted
Agora
6 Cumberland Place
Nottingham
NG1 6HJ

T 0300 123 1231
Textphone 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/ofsted
lasend.support@ofsted.gov.uk



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Mel Meggs
Strategic Director Children and Families
Directorate for Children and Young People
Civic Centre
Ground Floor
1 High Street
Kirklees
HD1 2NF

Carol McKenna, Kirklees Clinical Commissioning Group Chief Officer
Paul Harris, Local Area Nominated Officer, Kirklees Council

Dear Ms Meggs and Ms McKenna

Joint area SEND inspection in Kirklees

Between 7 and 11 February 2022, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC), conducted a joint inspection of the local area of Kirklees to judge the effectiveness of the area in implementing the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014.

The inspection was led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors from Ofsted, with a team of inspectors including an Ofsted Inspector and a children's services inspector from the CQC.

Inspectors spoke with children and young people with SEND, parents and carers, local authority and National Health Service officers. Inspectors visited a range of providers and spoke to leaders, staff and governors about how they were implementing the SEND reforms. Inspectors looked at a range of information about the performance of the area, including the area's self-evaluation. Inspectors met with leaders for health, social care and education. Inspectors reviewed performance data and evidence about the local offer and joint commissioning.

As a result of the findings of this inspection, and in accordance with the Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) has determined that a Written Statement of Action is required. This is because of significant areas of weakness in the area's practice. HMCI has also determined that

the local authority and the area's clinical commissioning group are jointly responsible for submitting the Written Statement of Action to Ofsted.

In reaching their judgements, inspectors took account of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on SEND arrangements in the area. Inspectors considered a range of information about the impact of the pandemic and explored how the area's plans and actions had been adapted as a result.

This letter outlines our findings from the inspection, including some strengths and areas for further improvement.

Main Findings

- Area leaders have had mixed success in implementing the 2014 SEND reforms. Long-standing gaps in sufficiency of special school places have limited the support available to children and young people. Families have experienced barriers in accessing the support they need in a timely manner. Leaders now have plans in place to increase the provision of special school places. Their understanding of the areas needing improvement is largely accurate. They have placed a stronger emphasis on SEND in key improvement strategies across Kirklees. Nevertheless, much remains to be done for these plans to enhance the lived experience of children and young people with SEND.
- There are weaknesses in how well professionals identify the needs of children and young people with SEND. For example, the different elements of the Healthy Child Programme (HCP), a series of screening, health and development checks for young children, are not implemented consistently. This limits opportunities to recognise additional needs at the earliest opportunity.
- In some areas, leaders are building the expertise of their workforce effectively. For example, the early years team provide SEND training for staff in early years settings. This is beginning to improve how children's needs are met and assessed in these settings.
- Many parents express dissatisfaction with their experience of the SEND system in Kirklees. They feel they have to fight to get the help that they need. Families of children and young people with SEND are frustrated with the long waiting times for the services they need. The disruption caused by COVID-19 has increased these waiting times.
- Leaders recognise the importance of co-production (a way of working where children, families and those that provide the services work together to create a decision or a service that works for them all) and have made some steps towards this. Leaders have developed a productive relationship with the parent carer forum, Parents of Children with additional needs (PCAN). Leaders have worked closely with PCAN in the development of the revised online local offer. During the pandemic, PCAN members met regularly with the local

commissioning team to explore alternative ways of supporting children, young people and families. Leaders accept that systems to capture the voice of children and young people are not in place fully. This remains a priority for development. The restrictions caused by COVID-19 have made this more difficult.

- There are inconsistencies in how well young people with SEND are prepared for adulthood. Support from the Adult Pathway Team arrives too late for some families and the transition to some adult health services is difficult for young people with SEND. In contrast, children and young people in specialist settings benefit from effective careers guidance. This helps children and young people with SEND to move into further education and training.
- Despite recent improvements, children and young people with SEND in Kirklees in mainstream settings have been more likely to be suspended from school than their peers nationally. Other educational outcomes for children and young people with SEND, particularly those at SEND support, are too often below those of which they are capable.

The effectiveness of the local area in identifying children and young people's special educational needs and/or disabilities

Strengths

- Leaders recognise the importance of early identification of needs for children and young people with SEND. They have expanded the role of the early years team to better support practitioners across a wide range of settings. This is helping early years staff to identify additional needs promptly and effectively.
- In specialist provision for children and young people with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, staff are quick to determine any previously unidentified needs. They unpick underlying learning requirements and put the right support in place.
- Leaders have prioritised the early identification of children and young people who have SEMH difficulties across all ages. Leaders have provided training which is helping staff to better identify needs.
- In those instances where the needs of young children are identified early, parents told inspectors that this enabled the right support to be put in place. Such early identification supports children's progress and wider development.
- Staff from specialist provision work with teachers in mainstream schools to help them to identify and meet the needs of children and young people with sensory impairment and/or physical disabilities. This expertise is helping teachers in mainstream schools to improve the support available for children and young people with these needs.

Areas for development

- Many parents express concern that their child's special educational needs are not identified in a timely or accurate manner. In some cases, parents have paid for private health assessments to overcome delays. This contributes to frustration for parents and delays in children and young people's needs being identified.
- Children and young people's needs are not identified consistently in the primary phase of education. This is placing increasing pressure on the system when children and young people arrive at secondary school. There are delays in children and young people receiving the support that they need.
- Practitioners supporting children and young people aged 0 to 19, including practitioners formerly known as health visitors, do not currently offer an antenatal review to all expectant parents. This service has been significantly affected by COVID-19. This is limiting opportunities for the early identification of SEND and other vulnerabilities.
- Leaders do not ensure that the elements of the HCP are implemented consistently in line with national benchmarks. These include those checks at the two and two and a half-year point. In addition, children across the area are not offered routine screening for hearing impairment at the point of school entry. This reduces the ability of professionals to identify children with SEND at the earliest opportunity.

The effectiveness of the local area in meeting the needs of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities

Strengths

- Leaders have worked with PCAN to ensure that the website used to promote the Kirklees local offer is accessible and has a wide range of relevant information. The website is now used more widely than before by parents to get information about services for children and young people with SEND.
- Families benefit from impartial guidance from the Kirklees SEND Information and Advice Service (KIAS). Effective leadership has improved the support KIAS provides to parents. This is reflected in the increased use of this service in recent years.
- Leaders worked with parents to improve access to specialist equipment, such as orthotics, spinal jackets and wheelchairs, for children and young people with SEND. Families and health practitioners appreciate that access to equipment such as wheelchairs is much better than it was previously. Children and young people with physical disabilities have ready access to important equipment that supports their care and independence.

- Leaders and professionals have jointly commissioned occupational therapy support for children and young people with sensory needs. This is enabling children and young people to have their needs met locally. Many parents told inspectors how high-quality support for visual and hearing impairments had improved their children's lives.
- Leaders have commissioned services jointly to improve mental health support for children and young people with SEND. This includes training for school staff and provision of an online counselling service that children and young people can access directly. School staff value the quality of this training. It is helping them to better understand the challenging behaviours that children and young people can present when their needs are not met. Leaders have introduced additional services to support children and young people with SEND who are in crisis. This is reducing hospital attendance through better service provision being available in the community.

Areas for development

- Leaders have been slow to implement key roles to coordinate the provision of SEND services since the reforms of 2014. Although the roles of the designated medical officer and the designated clinical officer have been created, these roles have had little impact on strategic planning. Leaders do not use data consistently to inform the delivery of key services.
- Leaders have experienced challenges over time in providing sufficient provision to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. For example, availability in special school settings does not meet needs in Kirklees. In addition, access to education psychology services is too often limited.
- Leaders have experienced disruption to the SEND Assessment and Commissioning Team. This has resulted in delays to the issuing of new education, health and care (EHC) plans. The paperwork for annual reviews is not completed and returned promptly. Sometimes, these reviews are not returned before the next annual review is due to take place. This creates uncertainty for parents who worry that professionals may not be acting on the advice provided in these reviews.
- Health reports are not consistently received before final EHC plans are produced. This affects how consistently the health needs of children and young people with SEND are met.
- Children and young people with SEND do not consistently receive the support they need promptly. Waiting times for access to important health services are too long. This includes access to child and adolescent mental health services, neurodevelopmental pathways and speech and language therapy. The average waiting time for autistic spectrum disorder is 90 weeks. A waiting time of 194 weeks currently exists for young people aged 19 to 25 waiting for a diagnosis

of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Such delays mean that important needs of children and young people with SEND are not met over time. These delays cause distress for many children, young people and families.

- Children and young people with SEND who are open to the youth justice service have to wait too long for access to some health services, such as speech and language therapy. These children and young people are placed on generic health waiting lists due to professionals no longer working directly in the youth justice service. This delays some young people receiving the help they need.

The effectiveness of the local area in improving outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities

Strengths

- In special provision, and in some further education provision, children and young people are making very good progress. They are securing relevant qualifications and gaining self-confidence. They are supported to learn how to manage their feelings and behaviour. There is a focus on next steps with effective careers advice to prepare young people for the experiences of a work environment.
- Young people with SEND on more advanced level 3 courses in post-16 settings are achieving improving outcomes, particularly those on SEND support.
- Parents are highly appreciative of the guidance offered by the visual impairment team. This support has helped children and young people to develop confidence and independence.
- Leaders have developed projects which prepare young people with SEND for work. Up to 20 supported internships are available in the council and in local hospitals. Young people with SEND are very enthusiastic about the support they receive during their work placements. This support gives them confidence as they plan their next steps.

Areas for development

- Over time, outcomes for children and young people with SEND have not been good enough. Between 2017 and 2021, outcomes at key stage 4 have been particularly weak for young people at SEND support. Young people at SEND support also achieved weak post-16 outcomes in level 2 qualifications. Figures for the progression of young people at SEND support to further education, employment and training were poor in 2019 and 2020. They improved in 2021. Over time, the area's ambition for children and young people with SEND has not been realised in their educational outcomes.

- Despite recent improvements, too many children and young people with SEND in Kirklees are suspended or permanently excluded from school.
- A lack of timely response has had a negative impact on the progress and independence of children and young people with SEND. School special educational needs coordinators spoke of occasions where they have called urgent reviews but received no response from the area. This has contributed to problems with attendance at school for some young people. Failure to amend EHC plans has undermined independent travel arrangements and access to support for some young people with SEND.
- Some health professionals informed inspectors that transition to some adult services is difficult. Young people with SEND have to begin the referral process once again to access some adult health services. This can cause delays and frustration for young people with SEND.
- Leaders do not use data well to measure the effectiveness of the provision of health care services. As a result, they do not have a clear picture of the effectiveness of SEND services and provision.

The inspection raises significant concerns about the effectiveness of the area

The area is required to produce and submit a Written Statement of Action to Ofsted that explains how the area will tackle the following significant weaknesses:

- The poor delivery of the HCP which does not support the identification of SEND in children at the earliest opportunity consistently.
- Weaknesses in the area's ability across services and within settings to identify and meet the needs of children and young people with SEND who are in mainstream settings.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Kirtley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted	Care Quality Commission
Katrina Gueli, Regional Director	Manir Hussain, Deputy Chief Inspector, Primary Medical Services, Children Health and Justice
Deborah Mason, Ofsted Inspector	David Roberts, CQC Inspector



Cc: Department for Education
Clinical commissioning group
Director of Public Health for the area
Department of Health and Social Care
NHS England