

Inspection report for Springboard Children's Centre

Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	406973
Inspection dates	24–25 October 2012
Reporting inspector	Cliff Rose HMI

Centre leader	Anna Sharpe
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Trinity Road Cirencester Gloucestershire GL7 1JU
Telephone number	01285 640964
Email address	Anna.sharpe@gloucestershire .gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Watermoor Church of England Primary School URN 115614
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Springboard Children's Centre URN 510039

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: November 2012



Corporate member of
Plain English Campaign
Committed to clearer communication

361

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100080.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

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

No.100080

© Crown copyright 2012



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 HMI and one additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with parents, centre managers and frontline staff. They also met with a number of partners and representatives from the local authority. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Springboard Children's Centre was designated as a phase 2 centre in February 2008. It is directly operated by Gloucestershire County Council as one of a cluster of four centres in the Cotswold district. The centre is housed in a modular building on the edge of Watermoor Church of England Primary School's grounds in Cirencester. It has its own early years provision on site. Neither the early years provision nor the adjacent school were included in this inspection.

The children's centre fulfils its core purpose by the provision of a range of services including child and family health services, advice on parenting and access to specialist services, for example antenatal and postnatal groups.

The reach area is semi-rural and includes parts which are in the 30% most deprived in the country. Cirencester is the largest town in the Cotswold area. Housing in the town is mixed, with some very large private housing as well as several large estates of social housing. The children's centre is adjacent to one of the social housing estates. There is little public transport between Cirencester and many of the surrounding villages in the reach area. An army barracks is situated close to the town.

The population is predominantly White British. Unemployment is low in the district at 1.5%, but considerably higher in the social housing estates, for example 3.6% in Watermoor.

There are approximately 1,370 children under five years living in the reach area. The child poverty rate in the district is roughly half that for England as a whole. When children join Early Years Foundation Stage provision, their skills are at broadly the levels expected for their age. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities when the children enter early years provision are typically at the level 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

Springboard is a good children's centre. Parents appreciate the effective support available and have good relationships with staff, enabling them to discuss any matters of concern and to use the centre as their first port of call for advice and guidance. The centre has a welcoming atmosphere. As one parent commented, 'Everything is clean, comfy and nice.'

The centre successfully guides families to healthier lifestyles and to a greater awareness of safety issues. The centre's policies and procedures to safeguard children are comprehensive. Staff undergo regular safeguarding training and have a good knowledge of the subject and awareness of reporting procedures. However, although vulnerable adults feature among the centre's target groups, and staff strive to protect and support them, the centre's safeguarding policy documents lack specific reference to vulnerable adults.

Parents have contributed well to decision making and governance through participation in the advisory board and parents' forum until very recently. Currently however, there is no parental representation. The centre has well-advanced plans to recruit new parents into these bodies to replace those who have recently left.

Good partnership working is central to the centre's success in identifying and engaging with families from its target groups to provide the support they need.

The centre has a good capacity to improve. Committed leadership and well-motivated staff share a clear vision for the development of the centre. The self-

evaluation process is rigorous and self-critical. It draws on evaluation of the provision and the views of users and partners and leads to development plans aimed at continuous improvement. The report and progress against action points are reviewed monthly and a rag rating system employed quarterly to ensure that actions are taken within the planned timeframe. The centre has demonstrated a steady improvement in outcomes.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Include explicit reference to vulnerable adults in safeguarding policy documents to formalise actions and procedures which are already in place.
- Proceed with the planned campaign to recruit current users to both the parent forum and the advisory board to ensure that parents are fully engaged in decision making and in the further improvement of the provision.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Families adopt healthy lifestyles as a result of engagement with the centre. The percentage of mothers breastfeeding their children at 6 to 8 weeks has increased overall since 2009/10, despite a marked fall in 2011/12 compared with the year before. The centre is training two breastfeeding support volunteers to augment existing support. Families enjoy outdoor activities and report that they eat more healthily and use a wider variety of ingredients in cooking. The obesity rate among children in the district entering the Reception year at school has fallen steadily since 2007/08 and is now significantly below the national average.

Children are very safe. Parents 'know' their children are safe in the centre and report increased awareness of home safety. The centre conducts thorough risk assessment of activities and shares this with parents to increase their understanding. For example, on the cookery programme the risks associated with knives, heat and children in the kitchen are all addressed. Parents and staff report improved child behaviour and calmer parents resulting from their 'mellow parenting' programme and home visits. The centre provides reduced price stair gates for home installation by families in the reach area. Accident and emergency admissions for children under five-years-old in Gloucestershire were 15% lower than the average in 2012.

Children and parents thoroughly enjoy and benefit from participation in centre programmes. Children learn to socialise with their peers and benefit from specialist support such as the visiting speech therapist. They are well prepared for transition to school. The percentage gap between the lowest achieving 20%, as indicated by the point scores in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile, is well below the national rate and has reduced from 29.8% in 2007 to 26.0% in 2012. Pass rates for parents engaged in adult literacy are high. The centre's good initial assessment and tracking on its programmes shows good progress by most users.

Children in the centre are well behaved and build good relationships with each other. Parents report that this is reflected at home. Parents from the target groups, particularly those who volunteer in the centre, benefit from increased self-confidence and gain qualifications and employment. As one parent said, 'I have achieved pleasure knowing I am good at something.'

Child poverty rates in the area are low and decreasing further. Families from target groups in the area are becoming less dependent on workless benefits. The centre strongly encourages all families in the reach area to access their two-year-old funding entitlement. Over a third of families using the centre are engaged in training, adult learning or relevant activities and they are well subscribed.

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	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
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

How good is the provision?

2

The good range of programmes and services including outreach meets the needs of users well. Parents highly value the programmes. The access for isolated families and those with children with disabilities is good and is achieved by a combination of outreach and assistance with transport. The centre prioritises programmes to meet the needs of its target groups and is adept at identifying them through the universal programmes and signposting them to the most appropriate programmes of support. Currently, there is no provision aimed specifically at fathers, although there has been in the past and more is planned for the near future. However, fathers do engage in the universal provision.

The well-trained centre staff use initial assessment well to tailor the programmes to the particular needs of each user. Good celebration for small initial steps through events and displays encourages both children and parents to persevere and to join in more of the available programmes. The centre prioritises activities well to meet the

needs of target groups. In particular, families with children with disabilities are able to access early intervention programmes enabling their children to be better prepared for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Close coordination and collaboration with other services enable the centre to guide users to offer a wide range of appropriate support. Parents are able to access onsite crèche facilities when they engage in adult education. Parents report being well supported in times of crisis. The centre supports and promotes national campaigns such as smoking cessation and incorporates them into its other programmes.

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	2
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	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Governance and accountability are clear cut and well understood by all staff. Day-to-day management and professional supervision of the whole cluster are carried out by the centre manager and her deputy. Between them they line manage all the other centre staff and are answerable to a local authority service manager. She in turn is accountable to central council staff who commission the service. Staff development is good with opportunities to gain further qualifications and experience, matched to the business plan.

The evaluation of programmes and services is thorough and rigorous. It involves feedback from users, reflection from the staff involved and increasingly the use of data by managers and leaders. The evaluation is used to inform the overall self-evaluation of the centre. Partners are also consulted on the centre's self-evaluation.

In addition to its own directly managed early years provision, the centre influences the other provision in its reach area through an early years forum, which it hosts.

The centre provides good value for money. It achieves good outcomes with limited resources, managing expensive aspects such as travel from isolated areas. It also identifies those in most need from the pockets of deprivation in an otherwise well-to-do area. Managers exploit staff resources well by moving them within the cluster to cover absences or to use their expertise. The take up of programmes and services is high, particularly from families in the centre's target groups. Close collaboration with other services ensures that there is no unnecessary duplication of effort or expenditure.

The centre promotes equality and diversity well. Staff are good at identifying and monitoring achievement gaps and taking actions to close them. Staff have introduced more outdoor activities in order to encourage boys to engage better and improve their performance. The well-focused provision, concentrating on the needs of the target groups, contributes to good social inclusion. Staff incorporate the celebration of cultural diversity into the programmes by including activities around events such as Diwali and Chinese New Year.

The centre gives safeguarding the highest priority. Cooperation with other agencies to safeguard children and vulnerable adults is central to the centre's work. All staff are subjected to Criminal Records Bureau checks and appropriate records are kept.

The centre works particularly closely with other council and health services to safeguard children and support families. It also works with a wide network of other agencies and voluntary organisations, either cooperatively or through mutual referrals, to ensure that families access the most appropriate programmes for them. Additionally, the centre advertises the available services through leaflets in libraries and doctors surgeries and through its own outreach programmes.

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	2
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	2
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	2
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

The centre's early years provision was inspected in 2010, when it was found to be good overall with a number of outstanding features.

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 Springboard Centre on 24 and 25 October 2012. We judged the centre as good. Those of you we were able to meet told us how friendly and supportive the staff are and how welcoming the centre is. From what we saw you are right.

The centre does almost everything well. The activities are well planned to meet your needs. You receive high quality support to keep your families safe and protect your children's welfare. Staff in the centre are very knowledgeable about child protection and how to help vulnerable adults, but we have asked them to make sure that their policy documents about vulnerable adults are as good as those about child protection.

The centre has been good at getting your views through the parent forum and having parents on the partnership board, but the parents who were on those bodies have recently all left. We have asked them to get more of you involved by joining either of these.

The advice and guidance you receive are valuable and are provided through a combination of activities and programmes in the centre, through home visits or one-to-one support. The staff in the centre also guide you toward other agencies for specialist help and have a lot of helpful information for you to use.

We thank all of you who were able to talk to us about the help you have received from Springboard, which you clearly value. We also wish you and your families every success in the future.

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