

# Knowsley- Kirkby Children's Centre Group

c/o The Pride, 2 Simonswood Lane, Kirkby, L33 1ZF

**Inspection date** 4–6 February 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b> Previous inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
		Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Outstanding	1
The quality of practice and services		Outstanding	1
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This is an outstanding centre.

- Kirkby families are firmly at the heart of everything that is done in the children's centre group. Careful thought is given to what, how and where highly effective activities or services are delivered. Managers and staff are constantly looking for ways to improve their services so that the opportunities and life chances of families can be enhanced. Staff occasionally miss opportunities, for example, to include key vocabulary and home learning activities in session planning to make certain parents receive the information.
- The group is highly successful in its quest to register and work with the vast majority of the families whose circumstances make them vulnerable or who are reluctant to use the centre. Information held by partners such as schools and health, and about who is using services and activities is closely scrutinised by managers. This is used efficiently to identify families who are not registered so that they can be contacted as soon as possible. Families who have registered with the centre group but who do not use it are contacted to find out why and what changes could be made to involve them.
- There is an excellent balance of targeted and universal activities in the centre group. Universal activities are very well used and are valued by the group as a useful gateway to families in the area. These activities all have a very clearly defined purpose linked to the identified priorities for children and families. A focus on healthy eating and children's speech and language development is evident throughout every activity offered to children and parents.
- The highly skilled and qualified senior management team welcome a challenge and are highly creative when problem solving. They are led by a perceptive and inspiring centre manager. When families were experiencing an unacceptable wait for Portage support, the centre took swift action, and negotiated with their partners to provide prompt support and advice from centre staff and health partners until a Portage worker became available.
- The impact of the group's work is scrutinised closely by managers and the advisory board to ensure that families' outcomes are the best they can possibly be from the services they use. Senior staff and managers have a very clear focus on ensuring that all services are of the highest possible quality and all are involved in carrying out frequent observations of those services.

**Information about this inspection**

The inspection of this children’s centre group was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. The centres that form part of this children’s centre group are The Pride SSCC, Northwood SSCC, Eden SSCC and The Star SSCC.

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty’s Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with parents, the centre managers and staff, and representatives of partner organisations and the advisory board.

The inspectors visited The Pride Children’s Centre, Northwood Children’s Centre, Eden Children’s Centre, The Star Children’s Centre, duty desk, Southdene Community Centre, Acorn Children’s Centre and a sample of schools and private and voluntary childcare providers.

They observed the centre’s work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

**Inspection team**

Joanne Smith Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Bob Busby

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Jacki Hughes

Additional inspector

Parm Sansoyer

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the group

Kirkby Children’s Centre Group operates from four main sites and two satellite sites across Kirkby. The group is managed by the local authority. Private day care providers run nurseries on each site. Playdays EY462781; Little Gems EY345926; Kids in Bloom at West Vale EY428653; Tiger Tots EY357150; Kids in Bloom at Southdene EY337278 and Kids in Bloom at Northwood EY428639. These are subject to separate inspections and their reports can be found on the Ofsted website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Kirkby Children’s Centre Group originally operated as four independent centres and became a group in 2012. The group serves the close and settled community of Kirkby town. All of the centres’ buildings are within a two mile radius. Despite this public transport is not easily available between centres.

The group is an integral part of the local family assessment team and offers parenting advice and support, parent and child activity groups, adult learning and health appointments alongside one-to-one work for families. Adult and family learning and some of the family support work are delivered by commissioned partners.

There are around 2,926 children aged under five years living in the area served by the group and the very large majority are from a White British background. The area served by the group is in the top 30% of the most deprived areas in the country and over half of the families live in areas within the top 5% areas of deprivation. Worklessness is high and many adults have poor levels of literacy and numeracy. There are several large employers in the area, however, wages are low and some families who are employed are living in working poverty. The number of families dependent on workless benefits is significantly higher than national average figures. Around 4,000 children under 11 years live in households dependent on workless benefits.

Families with children under two years; where parents have mental health difficulties; where there are substance misuse concerns with parents; families where there is domestic abuse and families where there is significant criminality are the centre’s priority for their targeted work. Children enter early years provision with skills and knowledge below those expected for their age.

### What does the group need to do to improve further?

- Enhance the already strong planning for parent and child sessions offered at the centres so that key vocabulary and activities, which can be used by parents in the home, are even more clearly identified and shared with parents by staff.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

### Outstanding

- The group tirelessly promotes a culture of learning for children and adults. They and their partners are very successful in identifying the most vulnerable two-year-olds and ensuring their parents know about the free nursery place to which they are entitled. Consequently, almost all of them take up their nursery place and begin their journey to become ready for school.
- Leaders monitor the group’s performance extremely well. Detailed reports, especially for participation and engagement of target groups at individual centre level are produced, analysed and acted upon. Activities are re-modelled and venues changed based on this almost forensic analysis. Leaders are forward thinking and seek out ways to attract and retain families’ engagement with the group. A baby weigh clinic is offered in the evening to help

fathers and mothers who have returned to work to take part in this activity, which is very important to families in the Kirkby community.

- Staff and partners are relentless in their pursuit of breaking down barriers to information sharing so that the most vulnerable families are known and the services to support them are highly relevant. Professionals across a wide range of services work very closely together to promote activities effectively. As a result, an outstanding number of families, including those expecting children, access services and activities provided to support their needs and improve their lives.
- The group works extremely well with adult education partners to provide a flexible range of courses to benefit families and improve their chances of gaining employment. Courses are developed in close consultation to provide good progression routes, for example, developing the ‘Looking after me’ course as a follow on for women who have benefited from the ‘Freedom’ programme. There is an excellent mix of accredited and non-accredited courses on offer to adults. The centre has worked closely with adult learning partners to make as many courses as possible accredited. This is inspiring adults to continue in their learning. As a result of careful matching of courses to individual and local need completion and success rates on courses are high.

### The quality of practice and services

### Outstanding

- Sophisticated tracking and monitoring systems are used by the children’s centre teacher to support private and voluntary childcare providers in their work, especially with the most vulnerable children. In addition, work with the child development team means that inequalities for disabled children and children with special educational needs are reduced effectively because they receive the right support in the most appropriate way. As a result, the vast majority of children make significant progress in their learning and development from very low starting points. Irrefutable evidence clearly demonstrates that children who have used centre services are better prepared for starting school than their peers.
- Support for parents to improve their employment prospects is very good. Over a third of the courses on offer are functional English or mathematics courses. This is a deliberate response to low literacy and numeracy levels in adults and based on knowledge of the needs of local employers. The vast majority of adults who start a course finish it and progress to other courses and use their skills to find move into volunteering or employment work.
- The volunteering programme is a particular strength of the centre group. Volunteers are working in a wide range of activities, including leading activity sessions in the centre group, such as the ‘Dad’s group’. There is significantly increased confidence in those who take up volunteering and excellent outcomes are seen, for example, attending job interviews for the first time in many years. Volunteers have raised aspirations and have gained further qualifications enabling them to move into employment, such as classroom support assistants and a school site manager post. They receive a thorough induction and are very well-trained, often alongside centre staff, to fulfil their roles.
- Almost all adults supported by the group develop an excellent understanding of their responsibilities for their children’s well-being and how to promote their learning. This is evident in parents’ self-assessment of their progress following involvement in any activity and the detailed analysis of these by the centre group. Parents speak very highly of the group and of the significant impact it has had on their families’ lives and on a personal level, especially around building their confidence and self-esteem.
- Valuable meetings such as the multi-agency ‘family first’ allocation meeting are transparent and informative, sharing expertise and using an all-inclusive approach to supporting families. Families are offered an exceptionally wide range of support through joint strategies with partners. The impact of the public health midwife working with the centre group staff in identifying and meeting the needs of the most vulnerable mothers-to-be as early as possible is significant in preventing problems from escalating and is typical of the centre group’s work.
- The extra thought given to helping families have what most families take for granted is

astounding. At Christmas, the centre group secured funds to buy tickets for children to visit Santa in the local town centre. Parents did not have enough words to express their gratitude to the group for giving them and their children such a magical experience without the stigma of looking different. This thoughtfulness extends to everyday activities, such as making sure that the children of teenagers, who are still attending school and college themselves, are collected from home so that the young person can walk with their friends.

### **The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management**

### **Outstanding**

- Management at all levels is extremely robust. Performance management and self-evaluation are rigorous. Service managers honestly evaluate their impact based on secure evidence on a quarterly basis. The whole process is very well embedded, highly valued and seamless in monitoring the centre group’s impact, feeding into the self-evaluation process and informing the service development plan. The annual review is a valued part of the process and attendees include managers up to the level of director as well as the chair of the advisory board.
- Local authority managers and the advisory board have a depth of understanding of the centre group’s performance that is exceptional simply because of the excellent information sharing process and performance management tool designed by the centre group manager. The centre group manager is highly skilled at analysing the wealth of information available to him, much of which he has tailored to enable him to make accurate assessment of the group.
- The centre group buildings are a haven for families. They are resourced with very high quality equipment and furniture. The most valuable resource, however, is the staff team. The entire team is driven to provide the very best for the families they work with whatever their level of contact with families.
- Staff are empowered to make suggestions and take responsibility to put into practice their ideas. Staff training and development are given the highest priority. Many managers, at all levels, have completed national leadership qualifications which create a level of staff and performance management that is exceptional. As a result of this any under performance is quickly identified and tackled in both centre group staff and in commissioned services, such as the on-site childcare provision.
- Work with victims of domestic abuse is exceptional. Participants in the ‘Freedom’ programme are supported and nurtured by highly skilled staff. Past participants of the programme are free to re-visit whenever they feel they need to and this is made all the more possible because it is a rolling programme with a set day and time. Women have made such significant progress that they have been empowered to speak to audiences of student social workers at a university and they have given feedback to police about how their treatment by the police affected them when they were at their most vulnerable.
- The centre successfully works within the requirements of the local authority policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and families. There are very strong and open communication systems with partners sharing relevant information in a timely manner. Communication in the referral centre is excellent with information sharing being given the highest priority. Case files, including for those using the Common Assessment Framework, looked after children and those subject to a child protection plan, contain clear, detailed and evaluative information. There is highly effective identification of issues, appropriate referrals, regular reviews and monitoring. Cases are closed in a timely manner significantly reducing the risk of families becoming dependent on the centre.

**What inspection judgements mean**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
Grade 1	Outstanding	Practice consistently reflects the highest aspirations for children and their families and as a result inequalities are reducing rapidly and gaps are closing.
Grade 2	Good	Practice enables most children and their families to access good quality services that improve children’s wellbeing and achieve the stated outcomes for families.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	Performance is not as good as it might reasonably be expected to be in one or more key areas.
Grade 4	Inadequate	The needs of children and families in its area are not being met and/or the leaders and managers are not providing sufficient challenge to bring about improvement to the quality of services.

**Children’s Centre Group details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	80507
<b>Local authority</b>	Knowsley
<b>Inspection number</b>	430096
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority
<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	2956
<b>Centre leader</b>	Alistair Scott
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 443 3257
<b>Email address</b>	Alistair.scott@knowsley.gov.uk

**This group consists of the following children’s centres:**

- URN 23240 The Pride Children’s Centre
- URN 21053 Eden Children’s Centre
- URN 22210 Northwood Children’s Centre
- URN 23749 The Star Children’s Centre

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