

Inspection report for Redvales Children's Centre

Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	384139
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY310019 Fisherfield Farm Nursery Ltd

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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre coordinator, development and project workers at the centre, health and social care partners, representatives from the advisory board, the senior quality outcomes teacher and day-care manager. They met with representatives from the local authority and parents.

They observed the centre's work, accompanied outreach workers to a visit in the community and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Redvales Children's Centre is a phase one centre which was designated in 2006. It operates from within a multi-use building located in the residential area of Bury in Manchester. The centre offers universal and targeted services, to provide the full core offer, with the support of key partners on site and at venues in the community. The centre has been awarded the Golden Apple Award for the promotion of healthy eating.

The area the centre serves is culturally diverse and includes families of White British, Eastern European and Asian heritage. The proportion of disabled children and those with special educational needs is low. Families within the community experience high levels of social and economic disadvantage. Recent data show that the population of children aged nought to five years of age is 925. Over half of these families are living in the lowest ranked 20% to 30% most disadvantaged areas in the country. The number of lone parents is high but the number of young parents is low. A growing number of families are living in workless households that are dependent on benefits.

Children whose circumstances make them most vulnerable generally enter childcare and early education with skills and knowledge well below those expected for their age. On-site childcare is provided by Fisherfield Farm Nursery Ltd for up to 51 children under eight years of age and, of these, not more than 27 may be under two years of age. Separate arrangements are in place to inspect this provision and reports can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

The centre is one of three centres in the Bury East area. Governance of the centre is provided by the local authority in conjunction with an advisory board which consists of a range of professionals and partners. The centre is open from 8am until 6pm, Monday to Friday, 52 weeks of the year, with occasional evenings and weekends to meet users' needs.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

3

Main findings

Redvales Children's Centre is a satisfactory centre overall. The centre is well known in the borough due to its long established practice in delivering a range of Bury-wide training programmes. Engagement from families in the immediate reach area is generally low as the centre is mainly used by those living outside of the reach area. As a consequence, the centre has not adequately focused all of its services on the families in their reach area that need their services the most. As a result, this aspect of the centre's work is inadequate.

This centre promotes equality and diversity satisfactorily. It is an inclusive centre and all users feel welcome and valued. Users of the centre demonstrate high levels of satisfaction and this is endorsed by the centre's evaluations of its services. Several local parents stated that they would recommend the centre to others in the area, and some described the centre's work as simply, 'fantastic'. Overall, the leadership, management and provision of the centre are satisfactory. Consequently, the majority of outcomes for children and their families engaged with services are satisfactory.

Attention to promoting safeguarding is high priority. Good safeguarding arrangements are in place. Consequently, parents say they feel safe at the centre. Healthy diets and lifestyles are

well promoted but health outcomes are variable. Although the percentage of mothers sustaining breastfeeding is slowly increasing, figures are still well-below national expectations.

Data on the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile suggest children's achievements are well-below national averages. The uptake of funded childcare places is low therefore some opportunities for early intervention work may be missed. Partnerships with local schools are developing. Adults are encouraged and supported in learning new skills such as sewing, baking, first aid and English Speaking for Other Languages (ESOL). Achievements are recognised and well celebrated, but there are very few opportunities for adults to develop the basic skills and qualifications that they need to enter the workforce.

Users of the centre are encouraged to develop positive relationships but too few families are involved in decision making and governance of the centre. The parent's forum ceased some time ago and there are no longer any parents on the advisory board. Some parents confidently express their views and their ideas are used to shape some services to meet their needs. The 'You said, we did' noticeboard keeps parents informed of the centre's response to their ideas. Overall, however the extent to which parents are able to contribute to the decision making and governance of the centre is inadequate.

The new centre coordinator has quickly identified the strengths and weaknesses of the centre's work. She has clear plans in place to improve the systems used by the centre staff to help measure the impact of their work. In addition, the coordinator is focused on the need to target the centre's services more efficiently to those most in need in the area. These improvements have yet to have an impact; therefore, capacity to improve is satisfactory. The centre receives satisfactory levels of support from the local authority. However, the advisory board is not yet effective in providing the centre with sufficient challenge to hold the centre to account for its work.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve outcomes further by partnership working to:
 - increase the numbers of women sustaining breastfeeding
 - secure parental involvement in the governance of the centre
 - increase the uptake of free childcare places
 - develop programmes for school readiness
 - promote increased adult learning opportunities to improve routes which can lead to employment and economic stability.

- Improve provision by ensuring the range of services is sufficiently targeted at the needs of families, especially target groups in the reach area.

- Improve leadership and management further by:

- developing monitoring and evaluation systems through setting measurable targets with clear success criteria
- ensuring the advisory board acts as a critical friend in challenging and holding the centre to account for improving its work.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

The mobile gym for ladies only is extremely popular, and this opportunity has increased due to users' requests. Through attending this activity, parents set good examples to children about the importance of physical activity. The centre effectively promotes healthy eating in all its activities and families have regular access to low cost fruit and vegetables. As a result, obesity levels of children when they enter Reception Year are below the national average at 8%. Dental decay in the area is high. The centre staff have recognised this and run regular dental health campaigns to raise awareness of the importance of helping children to brush their teeth properly. One mother said, 'I now give my children fruit instead of crisps'.

Parents stated that attending 'Baby Massage' has enhanced their relationships with their baby. The 'Diversity' group enables any parents who feel low or isolated to develop their understanding of the importance and value of play with their children. The 'Basic Parenting' group prepares new parents for parenthood by offering them practical advice and tips. For example, how to dress and undress babies for bath time and sterilise bottles. Most evaluations record increased levels in parents' confidence. A parent who had attended the 'All About Me' sessions stated, 'I have learnt to bring out the positives in my children's personalities'. However, the numbers of women sustaining breastfeeding, although slowly rising, are still well-below national expectations.

Users develop a satisfactory understanding of how to keep their children and themselves safe through regular advice on safety. The parents 'Pledge tree' confirmed changes some families had made at home to keep their children safer. For example, 'Always unplug hair straighteners' or 'Move cords from blinds out of children's reach'. Children subject to a child protection plan are well supported through Common Assessment Framework processes. Staff have established trusting relationships with parents who confidently share and discuss their issues. For example, 'Holding families' sessions provide effective support for those who have issues such as substance misuse. Asylum seekers and looked after children receive good levels of support to enable them to benefit from what the centre offers.

Data show the centre is slowly narrowing the achievement gap between the lowest 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest from 28.8% down to 25.5%. A parent remarked that her child was, 'very shy and awkward around others but now is confident', after attending groups at the centre. Adults have access to a satisfactory range of courses which can help develop their basic knowledge and skills. Opportunities are available to work as a volunteer or apprentice at the centre and the coordinator is eager to further improve routes which can lead to further training and employment.

While a few parents have a voice at a locality level, too few are involved in decision making particularly regarding governance and at a more strategic level. As a result, this aspect of the centre’s work is inadequate.

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	3
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	3
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	3
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	4
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.	3

How good is the provision?

3

The popular ‘Food for Thought’ café draws families and members of the community into the centre. Here, families experience healthy food and use this as a place to socialise with others in the community. The centre offers a satisfactory range of activities but it cannot be said to be meeting the needs of families in the reach area because the percentage of engagement of target groups is low. The centre acknowledges that with the current engagement of 33% of families in their reach area that it needs to do more to ensure families, who may be in need, do not slip through the net. As a result, this aspect of the centre’s work is inadequate. These activities include some joint sessions delivered by the local cluster centres. The ‘Bumps and Babies-Messy Play’ session is used well to develop integrated partnership working, particularly with the health teams. For example, the health visitor, development worker and peer breastfeeding support worker worked well together to help families with young babies enjoy exciting tactile exploration opportunities, while at the same time offering advice and support to help with their young children’s needs.

‘Stay and Play’, ‘Bumps and Babies’, ‘Active Dance’ and ‘Kids Rock’ are popular services. The ‘Dad’s Club’ is thriving and they meet regularly at the weekend. Fathers regularly enjoy creative activities and football with their children. The centre recognises the important role fathers play in their child’s development. A few fathers attend activities at the centre and they are welcome at all groups.

Children have access to good quality childcare and education. The child-led ethos promotes appropriate challenges for children to explore and learn both indoors and out. Children’s

independent skills are well promoted. The centre is now able to offer some free entitlement places to two-year-olds. However, the centre’s data suggest the uptake of childcare places in the area is low. The centre is beginning to deliver sessions at a local school and, although current attendance is low, it is eager to increase engagement.

Parents told the inspectors the activities are interesting and rewarding and give them confidence, help support their children’s learning and promote good parenting skills. However, opportunities for those seeking to improve their educational qualifications, undertake training or find paid work are limited and not promoted well enough by the centre. The presence of Jobcentre Plus has decreased in the centre but they have provided a telephone kiosk which users access to seek general advice. The centre is regularly provided with job vacancies.

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	4
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	3

How effective are the leadership and management? **3**

The new coordinator is committed to extending services and providing the very best life chances for local children and their families. However, more work remains to be done to monitor and evaluate the needs of the whole community to ensure the centre has the resources, information and the data it needs to set measurable targets with clear success criteria, and encourage more local families to attend and engage with the services at the centre. The new centre coordinator has improved professional supervision arrangements and reviewed and updated all policies and procedures. She has started to attend meetings and build links in the community. Operational management is therefore satisfactory. Governance is supportive but the role of the advisory board is still gathering momentum and is not yet effective in acting as a critical friend in challenging and holding the centre to account for improving its work. Taking all this into account, the centre provides satisfactory value for money.

The centre was originally described as the ‘flagship’ because it was the first centre to be built and it is still regularly used to deliver Bury-wide services. This common practice keeps the centre very busy and reduces some of their resources available to local families. However, new cluster arrangements are starting to prevent the duplication of work.

Good safeguarding practice is adopted across all areas of the centre’s work. The premises are safe and secure. Training for staff is up to date. Fire evacuations procedures are well

recorded. A single central record evidences good vetting and recruitment procedures and checking of partners is robust. The Common Assessment Framework is used well to target specific support for families. Case studies evidence some sensitive multi-agency work.

Equality and diversity are promoted satisfactorily. Staff speak confidently about families' differing cultures and their growing understanding of known barriers as to why some families are not engaging with the centre's services. Bilingual staff offer effective support for some families. Crèche facilities enable those with young children to attend training. The centre actively tackles any discrimination and they are proactive at recording incidents and looking at ways of reducing repeat incidents.

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	3
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	3
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	3
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	3
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.	3

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

Fisherfield Farm Nursery Ltd childcare was inspected on 13 February 2012 when it was judged good overall. This inspection has contributed to the children's centre report and judgements. The full report can be found on the Ofsted website.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Redvales Children's Centre on 15 and 16 February 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Most of you were very positive about the centre. You told us that you find the staff friendly and welcoming. You enjoy visiting the centre, attending activities and meeting other families. You enjoy healthy eating in the popular café.

The new coordinator and her team are fully committed to improving outcomes for families in the area. They ensure good safeguarding systems are in place for you. Partnerships are developing and are particularly strong with health and social care partners. We have asked the centre to work on improving all partnerships to promote stronger integrated working for you. In particular, to work with schools to help ensure your child is well prepared for entering the next step in their education. We have asked the centre to look at improving partnerships with further education to ensure you get good support to develop your skills which can enable you to enter the workforce.

We know a minority of mothers are sustaining breastfeeding and some of you have been successfully supported to do this. We have asked the centre to work closely with their health partners to make sure more of you are given sufficient support to enable you to continue to breastfeed once you have decided to do this.

We found that some of you enjoy 'Baby Massage'. You told us about the benefits of using massage to improve your relationship with your baby. We know some of you look forward to sessions such as the 'Stay and Play', 'Bumps and Babies - Messy Play' and the 'Kid's Rock.' We have asked the centre to increase opportunities for you to be more involved in the decision making and monitoring of the centre's progress. We hope that some of you will be interested in doing this. We have also asked the centre to work more closely with the advisory board to ensure it can more successfully promote improvement of the centre's work. We have asked the centre to ensure it has clear targets which can easily be monitored so that you can see what the centre has improved and where further work needs to be done.

Although a range of parenting programmes run from the centre to help develop your skills, we noted that only a small percentage of families attend from the reach area and quite a few local parents are not taking advantage of free childcare places. Therefore, we have asked the centre to look at ways it can encourage more local families to access services and benefit from the services that it provides for you.

We would like to thank everyone who was willing to speak to us. We are very grateful for your help and wish you every success in the future.

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