

Inspection report for Rowley Fields Sure Start Children's Centre

Local authority	Leicester City
Inspection number	365722
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Reporting inspector	Jackie Cousins AI

Centre governance	The local authority
Centre leader	Jackie Comber
Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school if applicable	Imperial Avenue Infant School 120014
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	N/A

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.

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 additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the head of the children's centre, the childcare and early learning manager, the family support manager, the headteacher of Imperial Avenue Infant School, the early years teacher, three health care workers, a group of parents and carers, the Chair of the Advisory Board and a representative of the local authority. The inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Rowley Fields Sure Start Children's Centre is situated in an area of significant disadvantage. The reach area covers urban areas, bringing a diverse range of families to the centre. The large majority of families who live in the surrounding area are from White British backgrounds. A small minority of families are from Asian and African, or from Western and Eastern European groups. A few are in the early stages of learning to speak English. The area around the centre has high levels of unemployment, families receiving benefits and workless households. Much of the area immediately around the centre is characterised by terraced housing.

The building was completed in 2008, when it was designated as a children's centre. Since then, staff have worked to operate as an integrated centre and, in partnership with Allextion and Wingfield Nursery, it provides the full core offer including early education and childcare. Most children enter childcare and early education with skills that are lower than those expected for their age. The centre operates in one main building and other activities take place at various community venues within the reach area. It is led by the head of centre supported by the senior management team. The advisory board comprises representatives from the local authority, local councillors, health providers, staff from the centre and a number of neighbourhood partners including infant and primary schools.

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 users and the wider community

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

Rowley Fields Children's Centre offers children and adult users a satisfactory and improving level of assistance. Over the last year, the centre has been through a period of considerable restructuring and relocation. Most staff only started work at the centre in the last year, but the centre leaders have now established a solid team of staff. As a result, their morale is high and they are committed to developing the centre. Improvements to provision and outcomes are satisfactory. They include the successful establishment of sessions to promote parenting skills where users learn about how to develop their children's communication skills. Good partnerships give rise to some interesting projects in which children and adult users can become involved. In one project, for instance, they explored imaginative ways of working with shredded paper.

A significant strength is the good-quality care and guidance that staff give children and adult users. As a result, users respect each other and say that they can discuss their worries with staff whenever they need to. One carer said, 'There is always someone available to talk to at the centre or on the end of the phone.' Parents and carers say they feel safe at the centre. The centre meets the emotional needs of users well because staff regularly give them highly individualised support. One user summed up their thoughts when they commented, 'Without these people I'd be lost.' Baby massage sessions are much appreciated and help users develop strong bonds with their children. Adult users value the centre's guidance which helps them to develop healthy lifestyles effectively. The centre provides a satisfactory level of encouragement to help parents, carers and children keep fit. During the school holidays, for example, sports activities were successfully led by staff in various local parks and so users not only took part in physical exercise in open spaces but also walked to different parts of the local area.

Children make sound progress in their learning because staff plan interesting sessions. The 'Stay and Play' sessions allow children to develop their senses thoughtfully because resources stimulate them to touch and explore materials. They

learn to make marks effectively using paint and brushes. Children's interests are followed up and so, for instance, they learn about light and shapes through the inventive use of an overhead projector. Children learn to communicate successfully at the centre because staff place a high priority on developing language skills. This is as a result of staff being effectively trained in this area of learning. Assessments for children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage for 2010 in the local area show that the proportion attaining average levels of skill improved last year. Also, the gap between those children who live in challenging circumstances and the rest is reducing steadily.

The head of centre and the senior management team work well together. They are beginning to drive change effectively. A thorough development plan sets specific targets for improvement and so leaders can easily measure developments. The centre does not always provide completely for the needs of users whose backgrounds are Asian. It is in the process of building a new outreach venue which it hopes will encourage this group to engage more fully with the centre. It does not always measure its impact on users methodically. This is because data is not always evaluated consistently. The centre meets its statutory responsibilities for the promotion of equality and diversity appropriately. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to promote users' understanding of our multi-cultural society. This is because leaders' monitoring of the centre's activities is not effectively developed. Self-evaluation is systematic, and the centre is beginning to gather evidence of its impact on users over several years because leadership and governance are sound. The centre has a satisfactory capacity to continue to improve in the future.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure data is used more methodically so that the centre measures the impact it has on its users.
- Analyse the make-up of the local community in detail so that all users' needs can be fully met.
- Make sure leaders monitor activities more thoroughly to ensure that users' understanding of our multi-cultural society are promoted more deeply.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

Children eat fruit and vegetables regularly at the centre as a result of effective use of snack time. For example, children enjoy eating black and white grapes and have a drink of milk or water because of thoughtful modelling by staff. Immunisation rates for children are average because of sound support from the centre's staff. The emotional health of users is promoted well through personalised support offered by the centre's staff. An above-average proportion of mothers take up breastfeeding and average levels continue to feed their children for at least 6-8 weeks. The centre helps users to carefully develop healthy eating habits through cooking sessions. For instance, one parent knew that cheese and eggs were healthy foods due to

perceptive input from the centre. The centre's staff assisted thoughtfully in the creation of an eating plan for a child with additional medical needs and, as a result, she now eats a healthy diet and does not like processed foods. Fitness levels of children are promoted appropriately through the use of the outside areas, but climbing and construction resources are rather limited. This means that, for instance, children do not consistently develop upper body strength through physical development activities.

Adults and children say they feel safe at the centre. They freely share their worries because staff develop strong relationships with them. One parent said, 'Staff are always friendly and helpful.' Users have developed a satisfactory understanding of how to keep their families safe through 'Save a Life' training. Families understand everyday dangers, such as the need for a fireguard, because of the centre's use of expert advice. Risk assessments are completed appropriately but do not regularly involve users' ideas. This means that they are not fully aware of a few safety issues. No bullying or racial incidents have occurred at the centre in recent years. Users who are the subject of domestic abuse are supported well through assertiveness training. Those experiencing difficulties show improved levels of confidence. For example, some adult users have applied for further education because of support from centre staff. Effective liaison between agencies ensures child protection plans and the Common Assessment Framework are used thoughtfully.

Children develop independence because of sound levels of staff expertise. Careful use of resources helps them to develop satisfactory writing and painting skills. Children's communication skills are promoted successfully because of rigorous guidance from staff. Referrals to speech and language therapists are slightly below the local average. Children are prepared for school appropriately, especially in their personal development. Their move to the next stage of education is smooth because of thoughtful transfer arrangements. Children's progress from their starting points in key areas of learning is sound. Occasionally, planning does not identify a key learning objective for the main activity of the session. This means a few children are not fully challenged in all learning activities.

Adult users' skills are developed effectively through parenting classes where they learn, for example, about baby ailments. A reasonable number of users have completed courses which developed their understanding of how to keep their babies safe. The self-confidence of some parents who speak English as an additional language has developed well since their involvement with the centre started. For example, they have developed the confidence to access the health services in England.

Children work productively with others in the centre because of sound expectations of staff. Their personal development is supported well as a result of careful staff guidance. Children's behaviour is satisfactory and they handle apparatus thoughtfully as a result of support from staff. The centre works adequately with all parts of the reach area. Users contribute to the wider community suitably, for example, by recycling materials carefully. The centre provides a satisfactory range of

opportunities for users to offer their views, for example, through the parents' forum. Parents do not regularly attend the advisory board and so they are not fully involved in making decisions at the centre.

Children develop basic skills satisfactorily from below expected levels on entry to the centre because of the sound use of resources. For example, stimulating inside areas have been set up to encourage children to learn about ice and winter. A considerable proportion of parents have taken up local childcare places because of the encouragement given by the centre's staff. Take-up rates are satisfactory for low income and minority ethnic groups. Some users have been able to study for qualifications as a result of the centre's assistance. The centre does not rigorously collect information about users and so it does not have a full understanding of exactly how many have successfully returned to paid employment.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable 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 users 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 users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	3
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	3

How good is the provision?

3

Children's individual personal needs are assessed suitably and so they learn to cooperate and develop positive attitudes to learning. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are assessed astutely by well-trained staff. Their additional needs are met thoughtfully. For example, one child who was reluctant to use her left hand was encouraged to do this successfully because activities were planned which required two hands. Children's and adult users' health needs are assessed rigorously by the health specialist. Childminders are encouraged effectively to engage with the centre. The staff use their local knowledge to provide satisfactory assessment of the needs of users in the local area. However, the centre does not have a detailed evaluation of training available locally and so users do not know about all the courses that they could take which would lead to an accredited qualification.

The children's achievements are celebrated through good use of displays. Effective

use of questioning by staff helps children of all abilities to develop basic skills adequately. They enjoy singing due to the use of staff expertise. Children's literacy skills are promoted effectively through the use of the toy and the book library. Parents and carers value the centre and its resources. Children's attainment is not monitored effectively in key areas of learning and so a few parents do not receive detailed information about whether their children's development is in line with national expectations. Constructive feedback is used appropriately by staff and so parents learn about what they are doing successfully and could do to improve.

A sound range of services includes breastfeeding drop-in sessions every fortnight. The services offered improve children's life chances because key skills are enhanced carefully by staff. Services are integrated well, and good-quality Early Years Foundation Stage education and day care are available locally to the centre's users. Outreach services are used suitably to support different groups of users. The planned use of a new outreach venue will allow the centre to offer users who originate from Asia a wider range of services. Information about users' satisfaction is beginning to be collected, but an annual survey was not used rigorously last year and so staff do not know in detail about what users are happy with or would like to improve.

Children and adults are inducted well into the centre and this can include a home visit. Children transfer to the next stage of education smoothly because transition arrangements are carefully supported. Children's weight is watched regularly as a result of weekly clinics held at the centre. Users are encouraged to add solids to a baby's diet because weaning sessions are used effectively. The centre provides good support for families in crisis and helps them to access the benefits for which they are eligible. Individual families are helped due to committed levels of care from staff. The staff provide sound advice on smoking cessation, drugs awareness and alcohol misuse.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	3
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Leaders understand satisfactorily the centre's strengths and areas for development. Links between long-term planning and service provision are satisfactory. Development planning sets detailed targets and so it is easy for leaders to measure

improvements. Performance management is used adequately to drive improvement. The centre's leaders ensure quality training for staff and so they develop their skills thoughtfully. Governance and the role of leaders in monitoring provision and outcomes are not yet fully established and so they are not regularly evaluating the quality of all aspects of provision and outcomes. This is because many are new to their position and so they are only just starting to evaluate data on outcomes carefully. Senior leaders and other agencies are beginning to work well to improve provision. All partners understand their roles well. Accountability arrangements are clear. The centre works adequately with the wider community. The accommodation is used suitably by a variety of groups. Day-to-day management of services and the centre is sound. Several users commented that, 'The centre is always clean and tidy.' Financial management is effective.

Safeguarding procedures are sound. The centre keeps detailed records about staff which contain valuable information on, for example, their qualifications and courses attended. Records indicate that all staff working at the centre have been subject to an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. A health and safety issue was reported to the advisory board which they plan to deal with quickly.

Partnership working is a considerable strength of the centre's work. The staff are proactive in sharing information. Inter-agency working is steadily growing and staff carefully identify those families and children who are at significant risk. Protocols and practices for referrals are used carefully by staff. The centre's analysis of how the most vulnerable are supported is well evidenced through case studies offered by the centre's leaders. Provision is integrated effectively and so funding for two-, three- and four-year-olds is used astutely to promote learning for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The centre makes parents feel welcome and relaxed. It is informed adequately about different groups of users but at present it does not fully meet the needs of users who originate from Asia. The centre meets its statutory duties suitably. It treats all groups who attend the centre equally because staff respect users from different backgrounds and ages. The centre offers sound value for money.

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 extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	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	3
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	3
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community 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

The inspectors took into account the inspection findings for the linked provision at Avenue Infant School which took place at the same time as the children's centre inspection. The inspection judged the school's overall effectiveness as satisfactory. Provision and outcomes for the Early Years Foundation Stage were judged to be good.

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 Rowley Fields Sure Start Children's Centre on 2 and 3 February 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you for assisting the inspection team to find out about your children's centre. We found it useful to speak to some of you. You and your children develop satisfactorily as a result of the centre's support. Your children's communication skills are promoted thoughtfully as the staff are well trained in this aspect of learning. The children learn to use their senses carefully because inside resources are used in interesting ways. These resources are set up so that it is easy for you and your children to explore them. This allows children to develop their independence methodically. The children behave well at the centre because staff offer guidance successfully about how to manage certain situations. The centre helps you prepare your children successfully for nursery or school as a result of the way it is organised.

The care, guidance and support offered by staff are of good quality. As a result, you and your children feel safe at the centre. Some of you learn productively about how to keep your families safe because of courses offered by the centre staff. You feel it is useful to have access to health visitors and other health experts through the children's centre. This regular availability of health experts in a relaxed environment has enabled you to develop healthy lifestyles successfully. You told us you appreciate the baby massage sessions because they help you to bond with your children. Also, you said you find the messy play sessions valuable as they allow your children to explore a variety of materials in a suitable space. Some of you have been able to gain paid employment or study for qualifications as a result of the centre's assistance.

The centre has had many changes of staff this year but now it has successfully created a solid group of staff who are keen to make the centre even better. The head of the centre and the childcare and early years manager have an effective plan to bring about improvements. Staff listen to what you have to say and are altering services provided appropriately. You said you and your families really enjoyed the holiday activities which the centre's staff led in different parks in the local area.

We have asked the head of the centre and senior staff to look at how they can make things even better. The most important thing for the centre to develop is its use of data so that it can measure its successes in detail. We have asked the centre to improve the way it considers the needs of different groups in the area, so that it can meet everybody's needs more effectively. We have also asked the centre's leaders to develop everyone's understanding more fully of the different cultures we have in our society.

It was a real pleasure to meet some of you and your children. I hope you continue to thrive and enjoy your time at Rowley Fields Children's Centre.

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