

Inspection report for Rothwell Children's Centre

Local authority	Leeds City Council
Inspection number	365836
Inspection dates	26–27 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Peter Stacey

Centre governance	Leeds City Council
Centre leader	Joanne Harrison
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Rothwell Children's Centre full day care

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 one additional inspector and an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with staff and senior managers from the centre, parents and carers, members of the advisory board and local authority representatives. Inspectors also met with a number of partners, including those from health, community support, Jobcentre Plus, welfare rights and housing as well as childminders. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Rothwell Children's Centre is a phase 2 centre, running activities across three sites. The centre is located in south Leeds. The centre serves a mixed area in terms of social and economic disadvantage and provides a full core offer of services. At the last annual review the centre had 1170 children from birth to five-years-old in their reach area. The local authority and an advisory board, half of which consists of parents, provide governance for the centre. The local population is predominantly of White British heritage with a mix of minority ethnic second and third generation families and new families that have recently moved into the area. Local authority data indicate that there are a total of 367 families registered with the centre of which 40 are lone parents. Across the reach area there are 595 workless households and 6.8% of the population claim unemployment benefit. Children moving into primary education have skill levels that are generally below typical age-related expectations.

The centre is managed by a centre leader who reports to a cluster manager who, in turn, has responsibility for the five children's centres within the south Leeds area. The cluster manager reports to a service manager within the local authority.

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

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

'This centre has changed my life', 'Without the centre I would be lost', 'My life now has a purpose', are words used by parents and carers to describe the impact that Rothwell Children's Centre has had upon their lives. The centre plays a significant role within the community, helping parents and their children develop their skills. It is also bringing together all residents within the reach area so that they feel the centre is there to support them and to do what it can to improve their lives. The strong support and commitment of all centre staff and the services provided have ensured that the life chances of people living within the locality have improved significantly and that the aspirations of families have been raised.

Provision is good overall, with an outstanding range and quality of activities and services, delivered both within the centre and through the particularly effective outreach work carried out by family support staff. The importance the centre gives to reaching out into the community and developing positive relationships with all users is a key element of its success. Staff are highly competent with good levels of skills and knowledge that allow them to provide a good quality service of support and guidance to all the families they meet. In return, parents are confident to ask for help and support before they reach a point of crisis.

Regular feedback is given to parents on the progress that their children have made during the activity sessions. However, on occasion, parents do not receive specific information to help them build upon this good work when they are with their children in the home. A range of health courses and personal development activities are organised by the centre that are enjoyed and appreciated by parents. The centre recognises there is scope to increase these very important learning opportunities particularly in literacy, numeracy, information technology (IT) and employability skills. Several parents stated that their reading, writing and number skills were poor and this prevented them from helping their children as much as they would like.

All staff, partners and volunteers have a clear vision to provide a service that aims to meet fully the needs of every family. This strong focus upon continually working to

improve the service through monitoring and review, demonstrates a good capacity to improve. The very effective engagement of the community through active involvement in the work of the centre encourages considerable user 'ownership'. Families feel that the centre will strive to provide a service that is intended to fully meet their needs.

The children's centre demonstrates a genuine commitment to ensuring the voice of the community is heard and this influences the ongoing development of services in a meaningful way. This, coupled with the centre's flexible approach to service delivery and particularly strong outreach work, ensure that the very good range of services provided is highly responsive to the changing needs of the community. Equality and diversity are promoted well, with robust systems in place to identify and tackle any forms of discrimination at an individual, community or multi-agency level. Centre users comment that they are treated with dignity and respect and that there is genuine concern for the welfare of children, parents and staff. The children's centre works hard to ensure that the specific needs of individuals are met.

Safeguarding is given a high priority with established and frequently updated policies and procedures in place to ensure the safety and protection of both families and staff. Staff have a good understanding of child protection policies and procedures and are particularly effective in identifying potential risks, referring to other agencies quickly and appropriately where necessary. This is facilitated further by the excellent partnerships which exist across agencies locally, ensuring a seamless, coordinated approach to service delivery.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Find ways to communicate more effectively and regularly to all parents the progress made by their children in the activity sessions, so that parents are able to build upon these learning experiences in the home.
- Further develop the current adult learning programmes provided by the centre and its partners to include more courses and learning opportunities covering functional skills (literacy, numeracy and IT) and employability training to respond more fully to the needs of parents.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Rothwell Children's Centre provides a welcoming environment that allows both children and their parents to develop a good range of physical, emotional and intellectual skills. Children particularly enjoy the imaginative outdoor play area which they use daily and they derive great pleasure from the good range of safe play equipment available. The indoor activities are well planned and supervised to develop children's learning and help them develop new skills. Parents are supported well to

develop their understanding of parenting as evident in the baby massage and breastfeeding groups. Children also benefit from the centre's work with parents to encourage them to be more aware of healthy eating. This aspect is also reinforced by visual displays on walls and information literature made available within the centre.

All parents seen during the inspection commented that they and their children feel safe and all areas of activity are risk assessed to ensure that the safety of users is given the highest priority. Safety in the home is promoted well and a significant number of families have benefited from the help and advice that is made available. Centre safeguarding procedures are well established and reviewed regularly and there is good involvement of visiting speakers and specialists to reinforce the safety message. Parents achieve qualifications in a number of health and safety related subjects including first aid and food hygiene.

Children achieve and make good progress in their activities and this is evident in the well organised and user-friendly 'creations' session where the children and their parents develop their confidence through stimulating exploratory play. Parents attend a number of personal development courses that improve their self-esteem. "The 'STEPS' course was really good and I got so much out of it", was a message given by a number of parents during the inspection. For a significant number, this is a much valued activity and allows them to return to learning in a supportive non-threatening environment. However, there is scope for the provision of further courses in literacy, numeracy, information technology and wider employability skills to allow a wider group of parents to improve their functional skills, to advance themselves and to help with developing the skills of their children.

The centre contributes significantly towards pulling together all generations in the community to be involved in constructive activity. Activities such as the 'Tea time club' and the fun days are events that are important in bringing families together in an enjoyable, supportive setting. Parents are very keen to be involved in the life of the centre, taking over the organisation of some activities and playing a prominent role on the advisory board. Children's behaviour in the sessions is good and the confidence that they develop allows them to make better choices and improve their decision-making skills.

Parents and their children receive good support in learning about other cultures and there is good emphasis upon promoting respect for the welfare of others. Teenage and lone parents develop their parenting skills and independence, while other parents work well with the Jobcentre Plus adviser to improve their employability. Parents improve their understanding of their own economic independence through the good availability of information within the centre.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

<p>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</p>	<p>2</p>
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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 users 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 users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	2

How good is the provision?

2

The centre, supported very well by a range of external partner organisations, identifies effectively the potential users of centre activities and there is a good approach to assessing the children's learning needs. Available information and data from a number of sources are used well to plan a service that meets the needs of users. Families with specific needs for support are identified at an early stage and there is a well-planned approach to delivering a programme of activities that meets these needs.

Staff interact well with parents and their children and resources are used effectively to stimulate children's learning. As one parent stated enthusiastically, 'My daughter loves it at the centre and can't wait to get here'; this shows the impact of the centre on both the child and the parent. The training to improve parents' skills is particularly useful in developing a positive approach which is then passed on to the child. When achievements are made by children or their parents, the centre organises presentations to celebrate success. These further motivate the participants.

The outreach work undertaken by the centre is particularly effective and this plays a major role in identifying needs and encouraging participation in the centre activities. The centre is very much the heart of the community and a wide range of activities engage a number of families and community members who had previously been marginalised from involvement in other types of local work. The centre managers give serious consideration to parents' suggestions for new or adapted activities.

Good support is provided to parents and children on a range of health-related issues that include healthy eating, smoking cessation, weaning, breastfeeding and speech and language development activities. Children moving into primary school are supported well through this transition stage. The centre is able to provide a flexible response to meet individual needs and there is particularly good support available to families in times of crisis. The centre makes very effective use of a range of support services and agencies to provide targeted support. Effective information, advice and guidance are readily available.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	2
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	1
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?

2

The clear focus of the managers and leaders of Rothwell Children’s Centre is in meeting the key priorities of engaging people within the area and in ensuring centre-organised activities are very effective in helping families make progress and improve their lives. The local authority helps to provide a coordinated approach to ensure that support services are not duplicated but come together to identify and meet the needs of the community. The advisory board is proactive and provides a good level of skill, knowledge and awareness to ensure that the service is of a good standard as well as looking to continually improve the quality of provision. Centre management is good with a motivated staff team who strive to improve their own competence through training and development opportunities.

The centre provides good value for money. Resources are managed effectively to ensure that facilities and equipment are used well and that the centre is kept clean and tidy. The centre is very welcoming. This is recognised and appreciated by parents and their children. One site, the Rose Lund centre, in particular, has been developed well to play a strong role in the community, reaching out to all generations in the area. The centre collects feedback frequently from parents and carers. The staff review these comments to consider how they may be able to implement improvements to the service they provide. Self-evaluation is good and managers, staff, partners and parents have a good knowledge of how effective the service currently is and of what it needs to do to improve further.

Clear, well-documented procedures to promote equality and diversity are embraced by staff and centre users. This helps to ensure that everyone is treated with dignity and respect and that specific individual needs are supported well. Visual posters and centre documentation strongly project the importance of respect. The centres are accessible for users with mobility difficulties.

Safeguarding is given appropriate focus and importance. The facilities are secure and physically safe for users. The record of Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks is up to date and reviewed frequently. All staff have undertaken relevant safeguarding training and this helps to ensure that the children and their parents feel safe. Risk assessments are undertaken for all areas and activities and incidents regarding accident or injury are recorded. The centre has designated staff who lead on

safeguarding and health and safety and both these issues have a prominent role on the agenda at all staff meetings.

The outreach work undertaken to identify potential users and support families in the community is particularly strong and is significant in ensuring very few families miss out on being informed about, or involved in centre activities. Likewise, the partnership working that takes place with a range of organisations and support services is excellent. A high level of coordination and motivation from the individuals concerned is significant in ensuring that good quality information is made available to help plan and deliver good quality services to local families that meets their needs very effectively.

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 extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	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 evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	1
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	2

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Rothwell Children's Centre on 26 and 27 January 2011. We judged the centre as good overall. We found the range of services and activities, including outreach, to meet the needs of your community to be particularly strong, as is the way in which the centre works with its partners.

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome, for talking with us and contributing to the inspection of your children's centre. Those of you we spoke with told us how much you enjoy coming to the centre. You said that you feel your children are well cared for, that they are safe and that they develop their skills in a well-structured and stimulating environment.

The centre provides good support to all of you that use it. You said that staff quickly respond if any families are in crisis and they offer you help that you appreciate. We found that staff have a good understanding of child protection procedures, that they are well trained and care genuinely for the welfare of your children. Some of you told us how the support you have received at the centre has made you better parents. The health care, family support, children's centre and childcare staff work closely together to support you.

You and your children really like the play and stay sessions and those that attend adult learning classes state how much they enjoy and benefit from these opportunities. Your children behave well and you all learn more about how to stay healthy and be safe. We also found that your centre has a major role in the wider community and for many local residents, events like the 'Tea Time Club' and the fun days make a significant contribution in bringing all generations together.

You told us that the services and activities at the centre meet your needs. You help the centre improve its services through the membership of parents and carers on the advisory board and by taking responsibility to organise a number of events. The centre listens to you and asks you what you think of the services and activities they offer. They change how and when they do some things because of what you say.

Leeds City Council helps the centre make sure it knows who lives in the area so that the staff can try and make sure everyone finds out about what the centre can offer them. The staff work hard to make sure that everyone is made welcome and the centre is accessible to families and children with disabilities.

The local authority, centre manager, all the staff and yourselves are keen to further improve the centre and all have a good idea of what could be done. Your centre could be even better if more courses were provided for parents with a need to improve their reading, writing and number skills together with skills to help parents to be more successful in applying for work opportunities. The centre also needs to ensure that all parents are fully informed of what their children have achieved during their activity sessions so that you are able to build on this when the children are at home. Your centre has continually been improving over the past few years and with

everyone working so hard to make the centre even better, we are confident that it will continue to further improve.

Thank you very much for sharing your views with us. Best wishes for the future.

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