

# Inspection report for Riverside Children's Centre

Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	362552
Inspection dates	22–23 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Susan Smith HMI

Centre governance	The Local Authority
Centre leader	Mrs Judy Wright
Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school if applicable	N/A
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Ladybird Day Care Nursery

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.

The centre's full day-care provision is delivered by Ladybird Day Care Nursery which is located within the Kirkley Children's Centre. The Nursery has separate inspection arrangements to the children's centre and was last inspected in July 2008. The report of this inspection is available on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, representatives from the Local Authority, health and social care staff, centre staff and parents.

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

## Information about the centre

Riverside Children's Centre was designated in September 2005 and is run directly by the local authority. It is one of three centres serving the south Lowestoft community. Lowestoft is a coastal town with high levels of social disadvantage and deprivation. The reach area has high levels of unemployment, teenage pregnancies, drug dependency and alcohol issues. The local population is mostly White British with smaller percentages of other minority ethnic groups including Asian, Portuguese and Eastern Europeans. The percentage of families where English is not the first language is increasing.

The centre premises are used to provide a range of activities including meetings, consultations and community activities. Riverside is the base for a team of midwives and a family support team. In January 2010, after a major refurbishment, the Social Care Assessment and Family Support Team for South Lowestoft moved into the centre. Accommodation is now available to provide the Care Management Team with

purpose designed rooms for supervised access and assessment. It offers the full core offer that includes a range of services such as childcare and learning, links to local health and employment services, family support and outreach, and support for local childminders.

## 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**

**1**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**1**

## Main findings

Overall effectiveness of the centre is outstanding. This is because activities are of a high quality, meet the core offer very well and result in many excellent outcomes for users. Everyone involved in the centre holds a shared vision which leads to a passionate belief in the work that is going on. Its inclusive approach ensures that the many drop-in sessions are at full capacity with enthusiastic parents and carers and their equally enthusiastic children. The centre provides a realistic balance of universal and targeted services. The thriving Young Parents’ Group provides excellent opportunities for social interaction and further education. Many centre users went out of their way to tell inspectors how much they enjoyed activities and about the outstanding practical and emotional support they have received. Inspectors agree with their views.

The ethos of the centre’s work relates to the importance of helping parents to develop attachment with their children. Through this culture the centre engages successfully with its users, including those from particularly vulnerable groups, and has an extremely positive impact on their lives. The work of the family support team is underpinned by a strong belief in empowering parents. This approach raises the aspirations of parents and enables them to take responsibility for their lives.

A key strength of the centre is the way in which all partner agencies cooperate to deliver cohesive support and a full range of services. All partners who spoke with inspectors were quick to praise the centre’s open and proactive approach. The care, guidance and support offered to all families, including those who are hard-to-reach or facing difficulties, are of exceptionally high quality. Consequently, those who are introduced to the centre through outreach and home-based support are keen to continue to benefit from the full range of provision.

All staff have a clear understanding of their role in safeguarding vulnerable families. They work very effectively together to reduce the risk of harm and prevent difficulties escalating. This strong teamwork and cohesive approach is consolidated through the co-location of key personnel at the centre, including, midwives and the Social Care Assessment and Family Support Team.

Leadership from the centre manager is exceptional. Drive and ambition at all levels are strong and teamwork and morale among staff are extremely positive. There are clear lines of responsibility and the senior management team meets regularly to discuss the centre's work and its plans for improvement. There are good systems in place for gathering the views of users, and many positive changes are brought about as a result of users' suggestions. This promotes a very inclusive service which places equal value on everyone contribution.

The centre collects a wide range of data. This includes data related to events, courses, and visitors to the centre, referrals from health and outreach workers, as well as data from the local authority. Staff use this data accurately to identify need and whether targets have been met. However, the system for collecting data with regard to adults who successfully gain or undertake further training and employment does not currently give the centre a clear picture of the impact the centre is making.

The highly skilled and qualified staff are totally committed to meeting the needs of the users and improving their life opportunities. They are enthusiastic, committed, hard working and absorbed in providing the highest quality of service to the community in which they work.

Given the outstanding leadership and effective action planning, the centre has excellent capacity to build on its outstanding provision and further improve outcomes.

## **What does the centre need to do to improve further?**

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- improve further the system for collecting data with regard to adults who successfully gain or undertake further training and employment

## **How good are outcomes for users?**

<b>1</b>
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Evidence through case studies and discussions with partners and parents demonstrate the very positive impact of partnership working to promote children's and families' emotional well-being and their physical health. All of the activities the centre provides are well attended and popular. Several parents spoke with conviction about how their emotional health and, in particular, self-confidence have been

supported. Comments such as 'I don't feel like a nothing anymore', and 'It makes you feel more relaxed and able to face the world with your children' and 'It's like getting the community back' illustrate the impact the children's centre has had on individuals within the Riverside area.

The centre makes an outstanding contribution to the safety and welfare of its users. Robust systems for security in the building ensure that parents and children remain safe when attending activities. As a result of the very good relationships between centre staff and users, parents have the confidence to speak out about any issues that concern them at home, in the centre or the local community.

The rich and varied range of high quality activities such as Mucky Ducks, The Inbetweeners, Baby Play and Young Parents Drop-in makes an outstanding contribution to children's development in their early years. Parents' and children's enjoyment is evident through the consistently very high attendance at drop-in activities. Children are happy and confident in their interactions with adults. An increasing number are achieving 78 or more points on the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and six or more points in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development. The good early years' provision means that children are well prepared when they move to school or other early years' settings.

Exemplary personalised support ensures even the harder-to-reach families are helped to access both targeted and universal services. An extensive range of information, advice and guidance is available to users on a range of issues such as support for health and well-being issues, housing, benefits accessing employment and training.

Centre users are active advocates of the centre's benefits. The aspirational environment of the centre has resulted in users contributing confidently to the development and delivery of services. The use of volunteers within the centre is a good example of the commitment to developing users' confidence and to support them to move into further training, education or employment.

The recently appointed Personal Development Coordinator is already having a significant impact. Personalised support through home visits is instrumental in equipping individuals with the skills required to apply for work or training. In addition, the signposting of learning opportunities and employment is strong and effective. There are several excellent individual cases of parents being helped into accredited training and employment. Formal systems are in place to collect data on adults who successfully gain or undertake further training and/or employment when having contact with the centre coordinator. However, this is not the case where no direct contact is made. As a result, the centre is not always able to gain a wider picture of its impact.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for users*

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How good is the provision?**

<b>1</b>
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Services work extremely well together and meet regularly to devise coordinated strategies that results in integrated actions and individual plans. These lead to timely, high quality multi-agency support that is precisely targeted and effective outreach services which play an important role in preventing families from falling into greater difficulty.

There are highly effective systems in place to provide early notification of pregnancy which means that services can be signposted early and multi-agency support put in place where appropriate. Staff have exceptionally high expertise and professional knowledge to successfully help families improve their health, well-being and achievement. Support for parenting is of high quality and well coordinated.

For families facing complex difficulties, the assessment of need and follow-up multi-agency support is excellent. The use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is embedded in the culture of the centre and ensures that a tailored package of support is put in place. A key strength of the centre is the use of Video Interaction Guidance (VIG). This highly effective programme explores effective moments of interaction between a parent and their child through collaborative video review. Parents are empowered to set their own goals and targets and assess their own progress. The use of VIG has resulted in improved outcomes for them and their children.

Senior leaders and staff constantly seek ways to identify the needs of specific groups and to tailor activities accordingly. For example, a breastfeeding café was introduced recently to encourage breastfeeding and a 'Hello World' session to invite families from the very varied ethnic mix into the centre. The centre employed a qualified social worker to work with fathers and encourage them into the centre. A number of initiatives, such as running a football tournament in partnership with health and Saturday morning sessions, have been very well attended. The biggest success has been in changing the culture of the centre so that the needs of the father are given

greater consideration in all areas of its work. This has resulted in an increase of participation by fathers across a range of activities, with particular success being evident with young fathers.

Assessment is used effectively to record children’s progress and inform teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. These strengths mean that the centre very effectively promotes the learning and personal development of children. Parents also talk highly about the positive impact of the play sessions on their own learning and enjoyment.

Close working partnerships, joint training sessions and flexible deployment ensure that staff provide an excellent range of activities to develop individual users’ confidence and self-esteem.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community</b>	<b>1</b>

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

**1**

Leadership and management at all levels are effective in promoting outstanding quality multi-agency support for the most vulnerable and outstanding quality universal services. The centre manager is highly respected by professionals and parents. The centre uses its resources very well and there are clear examples of activities being adapted or developed in response to parents’ requests and needs. The centre manager and staff are responsive to parents who use the centre and there is a strong commitment to supporting families’ welfare and health needs and to promoting equal opportunities.

Governance arrangements are well established through the advisory board and the lines of accountability are clear to ensure good value for money. The advisory board serves all three centres in the South Lowestoft cluster and has good representation from partner agencies and parents. It is chaired by a parent and has good representation from the parents in the Riverside area. Members of the advisory board receive reports on a regular basis to raise their awareness of the centre’s work and developments. They have a good understanding of the centre’s strengths and areas for development.

The centre manager and senior leadership team provide excellent leadership with high expectations for the community firmly at the heart of the centre's work. The advisory board and staff share their aspirations and are motivated and proactive in taking services out to the hard-to-reach and vulnerable. Together, they set ambitious targets based on good self-evaluation and comprehensive data. This leads to very good quality action planning which is supported by excellent partnership working.

The local authority very effectively supports the centre's self-evaluation and action planning by providing a comprehensive data set based on national indicators, local data and the centre's returns detailing reach numbers. The centre is making very good use of the specialist software to collect and collate data.

The centre gives the highest priority to safeguarding. Users' safety and well-being are protected by the robust and consistently implemented policies, procedures and practice adopted by the centre. Protocols and practice for making referrals and sharing information between agencies are effective, with good evidence of how collaboration between agencies has reduced the risk of harm to children. There are effective procedures in place within the centre to ensure all staff and volunteers have appropriate recruitment checks and these are kept up-to-date. Training of all staff, particularly in relation to child protection, is a considerable strength.

*These are the grades for leadership and management<*

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>1</b>



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

The Ofsted report for Ladybird Day Care Nursery conducted in July 2008 was taken into account.

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](http://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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Riverside Children's Centre on 22–23 September 2010. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

Leadership and management at the centre are exceptionally good. The extremely positive staff team have drive and ambition; they meet regularly to discuss the centre's work and plan for improvement. All staff place the utmost importance on you and your families and always provide a listening ear for you. They are passionate about creating an extremely warm and welcoming environment where you feel at home and are able to talk freely about things that matter to you or are causing you concern. As a result, you value the centre, which means you have no hesitation in using the services regularly. You are actively encouraged to contribute your views and your feedback is used constantly to develop the services provided to ensure they reflect any changes in your needs.

The centre offers a very good range of services and activities for all families in the area, which are led by highly skilled and dedicated professionals. All centre staff are extremely good at signposting and referring you and your children to other activities and services they think you would also benefit from and enjoy. You told us over and over again that coming to the centre had increased your confidence and self-esteem. This is because Centre staff and professionals from different agencies work extremely closely with you and with each other to find out exactly what help and support you and your family need and making sure this is provided.

You told us that you think that the centre is a safe place for parents and their children. Inspectors agreed with this view and think that staff work very well to ensure the health and safety of all who use the centre. The centre is also very good at helping children in need to be safe by working well with other agencies such as

the health service and social care. They are helping you to keep yourselves and your children healthy by encouraging new mothers to breastfeed and by promoting healthy eating.

The centre also provides excellent resources, including high quality staff, to help your children enjoy their learning through play and so develop their full potential. They also help you to support your children's learning and development at home by providing services which help you bond with your children, such as baby massage. They encourage you to engage in play with your children from a very early age at sessions such as 'Baby Play' and 'Mucky Ducks'. You told us the centre has helped you develop closer and more effective relationships with your children. This was very evident when we visited you.

You told us you have also been helped to learn new skills and achieve qualifications. Several of you have become volunteers at the centre and run some of the groups that parents really enjoy. Others have been successfully supported back into employment as a result of excellent guidance from the Personal Development Coordinator. However, data collected by the centre does not give a clear picture of its success in this area.

We have asked the centre to improve further the system for collecting data with regard to adults who successfully gain or undertake further training and employment.

The leadership team has appropriate plans in place to address this issue and we have every confidence that it will be successful.

We would like to thank everyone who came to speak with us. It was a privilege to be able to talk with you. Your honest and open discussions with us helped us immensely during the inspection. We are very grateful for your help and we wish each of you every success for the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).