

Inspection report for Rowley Springfield Sure Start Children's Centre

Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	362557
Inspection dates	6–7 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Deborah Udakis HMI

Centre governance	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Centre leader	Carol Thompson
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Springfield Playgroup EY371219

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 Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Early Years Inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with outreach workers, integrated services providers, senior managers from the local authority, health and early years professionals, parents, Children's Centre leaders, activity group facilitators, and members of Advisory Board.

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

Information about the centre

Rowley Springfield is a phase 1 children's centre providing the core offer. The children's centre provides a range of integrated services that include health, family support, adult training and early year's advice and guidance. There are twenty one children's centres provided by the local authority, Rowley is one of 2 children's centres serving the Rowley ward. The manager also has responsibility for the children's centre located in nearby. The local authority holds the centre to account through strategic management. The children's centre has a well-established Advisory Board.

Statistical data for the Rowley district indicates that the area is one of high social and economic disadvantage. The percentage of workless households and those dependent on workless benefits is broadly average. Children start nursery with attainment below expected levels. The population is predominantly White British with an increasingly diverse population from minority ethnic backgrounds.

A playgroup, Springfield Playgroup, operates within the centre. This is run by the Early Years service. The playgroup was last inspected in February 2009 and the inspection report can be found on the Ofsted website www.ofsted.gov.uk

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

Rowley Springfield is a well-established and effective children’s centre that users say is ‘at the heart of the community’. The leadership and management have undergone changes in the last 2 months but have quickly settled and continue to inspire trust and encourage and promote high quality services. The centre’s Advisory Board includes good representation from parents and carers who are extremely keen to be involved. However, the Advisory Board does not routinely provide support, guidance and advice to the centre or act as a ‘critical friend’.

The outcomes for users are good and improving rapidly. Exceptional multi agency partnerships and the highly effective outreach support ensure that there are positive improvements to the well-being of children and their families through the delivery of a highly cohesive package of integrated services. For example, immunisation rates are above national average, breastfeeding take up rates have increased; the number of children classified as obese is relatively low, and proven success of the work of the Citizens Advice Bureau has reduced users’ debt and increased the take up of welfare entitlements.

Evaluations and the collation of data provide valuable evidence in respect of user satisfaction rates. However, while data collation is systematic, it is being further developed. The current analysis of data does not consistently provide clear indicators of the centre’s performance or evidence to support improved outcomes for children and their families.

Safeguarding and assessment arrangements are outstanding and showcase the extremely successful multi agency working. Community cohesion is well promoted through the warm welcome visitors receive on arrival. The children’s centre provides an inclusive and proactive outreach to families and has increased its use by the community by 11% in the last year. Equality and diversity practices and procedures are very effective and support the work of the centre. The children’s centre provides excellent value for money. Staff are confident, skilled and knowledgeable. They are effectively deployed within the centre and the highly effective multi agency working reduces any duplication of work.

The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the

wider community is outstanding. This is supported by the vast amount of written evaluations and comments from parents and carers about the positive impact the work of staff is having on their lives. A parent commented; 'SureStart has been really, really brilliant, not just for the child but for the whole family'. The support for families has not been affected by the transitional changes which have occurred as a result of reorganisation. One parent said, 'I don't know where I would be without SureStart and my son would not be doing as well as he is without the support he received.' All parents who contributed their views had nothing but the highest praise for the support they have received from the children's centre.

The centre management team is strong with a commitment to further improve services to meet the needs of the community. The existing strong infrastructure provides a platform to drive forward improvement and ensure that improvements are sustained.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the extent to which users contribute to decision making and governance of the centre
- Ensure that senior leaders evaluate the longer term impact of the provision and are able to provide evidence in respect of improving outcomes for children and users.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Children and their families are provided with invaluable support and detailed information to promote their good health. There is clear evidence of improving outcomes as the uptake of breastfeeding increases and low levels of child obesity are recorded. Maternity Support Workers employed by the health service are well integrated into the centre team. They are experienced and trained in breastfeeding support. Maternity Support Workers identify potential breastfeeding mothers at the ante natal stage, and make contact with breastfeeding mothers soon after the birth of their babies. This support is then continued into the community. Breastfeeding rates at birth are showing signs of significant improvement and breastfeeding support is well received by parents. One parent described the support she has received when breastfeeding as 'brilliant'. Users receive positive practical advice about their physical good health. For example, in the Young Parents group they discuss and attend workshops regarding sexual health, drug awareness, and child safety.

Safeguarding arrangements at the centre are exemplary and children are very secure within the centre. The use of the Common Assessment Framework and Team Around the Child processes are firmly embedded throughout children's centre and its partner agencies. The excellent use of these assessment processes and the sensitive arrangements that are in place to support information sharing between agencies

ensures that appropriate early intervention strategies are identified and implemented. Children on child protection plans and their families receive high quality support and monitoring from staff and as a result most children are successfully removed from child protection plans.

Risk assessments are skilfully completed, including safety and safeguarding audits. Parents and carers receive advice on safety and access home safety equipment such as fireguards and stair gates. The arrangements to ensure the safety and well-being of children are outstanding, understood by all partner agencies and are highly effective. Users unanimously report that they feel safe at the setting and that they have a strong sense of belonging. The most vulnerable children are quickly recognised and effective packages of support put in place for the whole family.

Children make good progress in all aspects of their development and there are effective strategies in place to further promote their learning particularly in respect of communication, language and literacy. All children accessing early years provision are assessed using the 'Wellcomm' speech and language tool. Children who have speech and language delay receive timely interventions within the early years setting or via the Speech and Language therapy service. Assessments carried out this year show that all children are at expected development levels in their speech and language. There has been significant improvement in childrens progress in communication, language and literacy as a result of the implementation of effective strategies to support childrens learning. Improvements in assessments in the Early Years Foundation Stage show that children are making good progress and they are narrowing the gap between the lowest and higher attaining children.

The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop trusting and strong relationships is good. Opportunities for users to contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre are good overall. Parents' views are regularly obtained through face to face meetings, evaluations and satisfaction surveys. Parents are very keen to be actively involved in the children's centre and many are volunteers supporting various groups. Dads have a consistent presence in the children's centre and the Dad's group has proved extremely popular.

Highly effective joint working between centre staff and the Citizens Advice Bureau ensures that new mum's are made aware of entitlements and grants. The effective use of counselling and advice has maximised incomes of families, ensuring they are supported to access benefits they are entitled to and reduced the debts of many users. Users' employability is improved as a result of the good quality training courses available. For example, the Young Parents programme and the Princes Trust training for young parents are highly successful at improving self esteem, confidence and self belief. This is leading to some users finding permanent employment.

<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	1
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?

1

Excellent assessment arrangements are in place. They are firmly embedded and carried out by skilled and highly competent staff in collaboration and partnership with parents and carers. The exemplary use of assessments covers the whole range of need including health, safeguarding, domestic violence, isolation and mental health and ensures that children and their families receive timely interventions and support. Highly skilled assessment of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities results in personalised interventions with good support ensuring effective inclusion. Users are involved in assessing their child's starting points and documenting their play and learning through the 'All about me' booklet which is used to support parents and carers with English as an additional language and at 'Play n Stay' sessions. The Parents as Partners in Early Learning (PPEL) is used with parents and carers to assess the engagement of parents in children's early learning and is having considerable success in engaging parents in their child's development.

The success of home visiting and outreach working is instrumental to the achievements of the centre. Staff employed at the centre provides a wide range of good quality on-site and outreach support to children and families. They work with ease across different agencies with a clear aim of providing a seamless service to users. Partner agencies hold the centre in very high regard and talk positively of the high calibre multi agency working arrangements. Parents and families talk proudly of the work of the centre in terms of reducing isolation and encouraging positive outcomes for families and communities. Outreach workers are experienced at breaking down barriers and working collaboratively to target users. Targeted support within the community is showing success with positive engagement with teenage parents, expectant mothers, mental health survivors, and survivors of domestic abuse. Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Users from different age groups and ethnic and religious backgrounds express high satisfaction with the way the centre and partners engage with them.

All prospective parents are made aware of the benefits of breast feeding including the close skin contact between mother and baby when they are born. Breastfeeding support is well-established and is having a positive impact on the emotional health of children. Parent and child bonding are also encouraged through baby massage, baby

club activities and the baby clinic. The family support team offers highly regarded support to families where there is additional stress, such as issues of mental health and domestic violence, to ensure that the parents are still meeting the children's emotional needs. The highly effective multi agency work ensures there are effective links with Child and Adolescent Mental Health services, safeguarding and health provision. The centre carries out its duties to support vulnerable children and families discreetly and professionally. The work of the centre is invaluable to many of the users.

The access to good quality, varied and accredited learning opportunities is having a constructive effect on the life chances of children with some positive outcomes for parents and carers seeking employment. Educational and training opportunities at the centre are popular with users and take up of courses is good. Crèche provision is available for most courses to enable parents to take up training opportunities safe in the knowledge their child is being well cared for. Parents said that they have benefitted a great deal from the courses. For example, parents who have attended the Positive Parenting Programme spoke confidently of having developed their parenting skills and how they have implemented strategies to safely manage their child's behaviour. Another parent spoke of the good quality learning opportunities she had received at the children's centre as a parent then as a volunteer completing National Vocational Qualification Levels 2 and 3 in Childcare and Education which has led to her current employment.

Users of the centre reflect the community it serves. Users say that the centre is warm and welcoming and that it is a safe and secure place where they can meet, make friends and play with their children. A parent explained the excellent support and welcome they have received having moved into the community. They said, 'I was involved from the outset and they helped me to get clued up on the area pretty quickly'. They also referred to having a 'sense of belonging', and 'feeling that you can fit in'. The achievements of the centre are celebrated through displays, fun days and user and community events. Visits by high profile politicians help to promote and celebrate the work of the centre. The local authority's 'Annual conversation' specifically focuses on the effectiveness of the centre in engaging with users and ensuring services are matched to needs. This has resulted in the provision of flexible services including English as a Second Language (ESOL) courses to meet the changing needs of the community.

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	1
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	2

The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	1
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How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The leadership and management of the centre are good. The governance and accountability arrangements are clear and effective. The staff have clear lines of accountability and responsibility and the management of the centre is effective at all levels. As one parent says, 'organisation is spot on'. Professional supervision is effective and all staff have regular one to one meetings with their managers. Appraisals take place every 6 months and there are clearly defined expectations of personal performance. There is an existing advisory Board and Executive Committee. Users play a role in the governance of the centre through formal membership of the Advisory Board. Parent and user representation on the Advisory Board is good, but they have limited experience of participation in the centre's decision making process.

The centre's development plan includes key performance indicators and targeted and specific points for action. The centre manager sets clear objectives and priorities for co-ordinators and staff to ensure that the centre meets its targets and goals. Targets and priorities are well understood by staff and partner agencies and are regularly reviewed and updated. There are clear policies on promoting equality and diversity, including the promotion of inclusive practice, including for children with disabilities.

The centre's safeguarding arrangements are highly commendable. All staff have been fully trained at the appropriate level in child protection procedures and they demonstrate a high level of awareness and understanding. Protocols and practices for referrals are well known and the safeguarding of children and their families is a high priority across the work of the centre. There is a common purpose among all staff who work at the centre and key partners to improve outcomes for children. The centre meets all the requirements regarding the safe recruitment of staff and records are very well maintained. All staff employed at the children's centre are subject to an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. The centre also diligently records CRB checks undertaken by partner agencies for staff working at the centre. Excellent multi agency partnership working arrangements securely safeguard children. The highly effective assessment processes ensure that children and families receive timely and supportive interventions. The centre makes a positive contribution to community cohesion with its focus on meeting community needs, empowerment and reducing social isolation.

There is effective use of collated data which is used to analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of the services provided and to identify any gaps in provision. This helps to shape and improve services and activities when viewed with responses and suggestions from users. This important feature of evaluation is evolving to provide evidence of long term impact on outcomes for children and their families. This is integral to the centres guarantee of providing continued value for money and informs the delivery plan, the local authorities 'Annual Conversation', and commissioning

arrangements.

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	1
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	1
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

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

Springfield Playgroup EY371219

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Rowley Springfield Children's Centre on 6-7 October 2010. We judged the centre as **Good** overall.

Your children's centre is at the heart of the community and is relied upon for the well-being of large numbers of people. The strong leadership and highly successful teamwork means families are provided with a wide range of good services tailored to meet their particular needs.

The centre is making a very positive difference to children's well-being and learning. It is particularly making a significant difference in helping children to experience a safe start to childhood. Children are having good opportunities to develop their play and learning within the centre and this is helping them to prepare for their next steps into nursery. They make good progress in their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Thank you for contributing to the inspection. Your comments prove invaluable to inspectors. It was great to see that fathers are contributing strongly to their child's care and activities in the centre. Inspectors think that with the centre's encouragement many people now make a positive contribution to the centre services and the life of the community. Parents and families were unanimous in their praise of the work of the centre's and in particular the support workers. Parents were really keen to tell inspectors about how well staff supported families, helped to raise self-esteem and confidence and encouraged them to achieve. The care, guidance and support of families and children are excellent. This is largely as a result of the extremely successful close partnerships that staff forge with parents and the way they engage parents in the work they do with them. The incredible work of the staff from across the different agencies ensures that parents access the right services as quickly as possible. Several parents and carers believed that their contact with the centre has been life changing. Professionals working in multi-agency teams and voluntary organisations have developed excellent working partnerships with the children's centre. They spoke with very high regard about the children's centre and the work of its support staff.

The leadership and management of the centre understand the needs of the families extremely well. They have really good systems to monitor that staff are doing a good job and that the services on offer are making a positive difference to people's lives. They show that they are determined to improve the lives of users even more. Inspectors have no doubt that the good work will continue.

We have asked the centre to make some improvements by improving the extent to which users contribute to decision making and governance of the centre. We have also asked senior leaders to evaluate the longer term impact of the provision and to provide evidence in respect of improving outcomes for children and users.

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