

Inspection report for Reydon and Southwold Children's Centre

Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	365834
Inspection dates	20–21 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Sheelagh Barnes

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Fran Bishop
Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school if applicable	Reydon Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Brambles 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.

An inspection of the maintained nursery was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with parents, staff, outreach workers, health workers and a representative of the local authority.

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

Information about the centre

This is a small, rural, phase 1 children's centre providing the full core offer. It shares a site with the village primary school. Most services are run on this site, but there is also some outreach provision at other venues in the Kessingland area. The centre base site is open five days a week all year round. Local childcare provision is provided by Brambles, which also shares the site, and which was inspected in January 2010. Some children attend the Nursery attached to the primary school. The centre is funded by local authority and children's centre monies. The local authority has maintained responsibility for the governance of the centre. The centre leader also manages two other centres, which are situated several miles away. The area is identified as having deprivation in the highest 70% cent, compared to nationally. The great majority of families in the area are White British. There is a small Traveller site in Kessingland. The proportion of families where no-one is in work is approximately one sixth and another sixth are in receipt of childcare working tax benefits. There is no Jobcentre Plus surgery on site, but parents and carers are 'signposted' to provision in the nearby town. Levels of attainment of children on entry to early years provision is broadly in line with that expected nationally. Two children attend the centre who are looked after, two have a child protection plan, seven children have a statement of special educational need and also eight parents or carers who have

special needs and/or disabilities. Ten children have been assessed under the Common Assessment Framework (CAF).

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

The overall effectiveness of the centre is excellent. The analytical and reflective leader sets ever higher standards for the centre. Resources, including accommodation and staff time, are maximised fully so that their use is highly efficient. The development of data analysis and other information to measure impact of the actions taken has been an extremely good and well managed tool. For example, the centre staff regularly monitor the uptake of various leaflets for adults. When this identified, for example, that a lot of leaflets were taken around health issues, the centre arranged a first aid course, which was immediately oversubscribed. As a result, a second course is planned. The impact of the constant cycle of evaluation and reflection, planning and delivery, is that all aspects of provision and organisation at the centre are at least good and many are outstanding.

Lines of governance are clear and understood by all. There are extremely good systems to ensure that the views of users are taken into consideration and used to shape services the centre offers. Centre leaders have worked with systematic determination to constantly improve the outcomes for all users, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. For example, they have exceeded targets set for them by the local authority and have made contact with all of the families in the reach area defined as vulnerable, when using social services definition.

Equality of opportunity and celebration of diversity is outstanding. The centre has been pro-active in going out to the people in parts of the community who are reluctant to come to the centre base. They have set up a mobile provision at the local Travellers’ site. This has already established contact with a half of the families with young children in the seven months that it has been running. Safeguarding is good. Care, guidance and support offered to users are excellent. The commitment of

all staff, combined with outstanding links and partnerships between professionals leads to a very efficient service.

The leader's analysis of the centre had identified that the provision for those who wish to prepare for or to seek work was not as rigorously managed and monitored as other things the centre offers. As a result, there is a now a new development plan to raise the profile of the work. The new link person from JobCentre Plus is working with centre staff to give the provision higher profile, to monitor it effectively to measure the impact and to adapt it to the needs of users more effectively.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- In conjunction with the local authority and JobCentre Plus,
 - a) implement plans to develop provision further for adults to prepare them for work.
 - b) Refine the collection and analysis of data to measure more accurately the impact of this work.

How good are outcomes for users?

1

Health outcomes for users are excellent. The high focus placed on this aspect of the centre's work is reflected by the good numbers of mothers who cease smoking during pregnancy. The increasing proportions of infants being breastfed and maintaining this beyond the six to eight week checks and above average birth immunisation rates. Parents and carers have a good awareness of the importance of healthy eating and exercise, which is reinforced by the excellent range of leaflets and displays offering information about a wide range of health issues. Parents learn practical ways to exercise with children, including baby yoga exercises. Evaluation shows that a good proportion of parents who attend are continuing exercises at home.

Safety outcomes for all users, including children and babies in the centre, are good. Care is taken to ensure the physical safety of infants and children, for example, by checking all activities and equipment to ensure they are fit for the purpose and age of the children who will use them. Child protection is given high priority and staff training results in high quality provision. Looked after children and those with a child protection plan are monitored rigorously.

Early Years Foundation Stage performance data shows year-on-year improvement. The proportions attaining the levels expected of children at the end of the foundation stage are now slightly above the national outcomes. The gap between the lowest attaining 20 % and the rest is being systematically reduced. The percentage of parents claiming the childcare element of working tax credits in the reach area is higher than other local children's centres. It has increased significantly in recent

years as the centre has given advice on this. Information on transition is very good, and includes a pack for each child to inform the setting to which they transfer of their achievements.

There are many opportunities for families to play and have fun together, such as in yoga and massage sessions and these are well attended. Good information is provided for parents and carers on child development. The positive behaviour of children and infants and the extent to which adults are involved in the centre is excellent. The centre takes note of the comments from users to develop services further. Parents who have used the centre regularly are keen to signpost other parents to the services, as they feel strongly about the benefits of attending. Users contribute very effectively to the governance of the centre through the advisory board and the parents' forum. Local childminders are involved in shaping the planning of groups. For example, following a suggestion, staff embraced the idea of offering more physical play for children during a music group by planning more movement.

Children and families using the centre treat each other with high levels of respect and parents form sound and supportive relationships with one another. Early intervention by family support workers ensures the needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are met. Their families are assessed and ongoing support is offered which empowers parents and carers. Children who need it are assessed under the common assessment framework and integrated support is given by the various professional agencies involved in the centre. Parents are given practical and manageable steps to help them to deal with their children's behaviour and to establish positive routines in the home. Families undergoing crisis are supported sensitively.

The centre leader recognises that the uptake of adult courses and accreditations to prepare for work is an area for development. Although there is a notice-board with job of the week, many informative leaflets and open access to a computer and telephone line, no formal, regular activities currently take place on site to support parents back to work. The centre leader and new link officer have already prioritised plans to develop the service further. There are clear and accurate records of all of those who have been helped on a one-to-one basis by centre staff, including improving their qualifications and readiness for work. However, there is no overall information on the total numbers of parents who have attended the courses to which they have been signposted and no record of whether they have attained accredited qualifications in numeracy or literacy, for example.

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	1
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	1
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

The main key to the high quality of provision the centre offers all its users, is in the high quality of assessment. The analytical approach of taking the views and actions of users into consideration on a regular basis and using the evidence gathered to review and refine practice ensures a constantly evolving service. Staff actively use the guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage as a starting point in assessment and have very good knowledge of the expectations of the framework. Users' health and welfare needs are assessed effectively. There is very strong work with other agencies to complete CAF's. Staff actively assess the needs of parents, carers and families during group times, following up the next week if needed. Case studies show that the learning and employment needs of adults are being rigorously assessed in the most vulnerable of cases.

There is a clear cycle of planning for groups, starting with observations of individual children's starting points. Resources are of high quality and are monitored to ensure they promote all six areas of learning. Most resources are easily and attractively accessible in low-level baskets presented at floor level, to babies and children. Staff offer knowledgeable advice to parents about promoting children's learning at home and supporting parenting skills. As result, parents report that they are more confident about doing things such as messy craft activities with their children at home.

All families in the reach area, including vulnerable families have received a package of information about the centre. Group sessions are offered at other venues to reach parents who are unable to travel and to promote cohesion within smaller parts of the rural reach area. For example, 'Jump and Jiggle' in a local village hall is attended well and parents form long-term friendships with others in their local community as a result. A regular mobile service has been established on a local Traveller site. Outreach provision is of the same high quality as that offered at the centre site.

There are excellent systems to ensure that the centre engages well with users and ensures that the services it provides meet their needs. Staff actively celebrate the achievements of children and parents alike in scrapbooks of photos. Parents access these readily and are proud to look back and note the progress their child has made since joining the centre. Comments boxes are well-placed where families can make suggestions. There is also a 'Suggestion Tree'. Parental views are taken into

consideration through the advisory board and the parents' forum. Parents and carers are asked their views during visits to the centre and home visits. The centre evaluates parents' views regularly through annual evaluation discussions with the local authority. It has a clear system to reflect back to parents how it has acted on their suggestions. It promotes equality of access to services for working parents; for example, by offering evening 'Baby Connect' classes and assessing the need for Saturday groups for fathers.

The centre provides high quality information about preventative treatment. Families say they receive positive and tailored support when they need it. They are confident in approaching staff for support because they know they will be listened to and that what they say will be treated as confidential. The quality of care offered to families in times of crisis, such as parental separation, terminal illness, housing issues and financial needs, is excellent. There is high quality personalised support for families identified as being vulnerable. The centre provides outstanding support for parents in accessing benefits. The proportion of parents accessing working tax credit is higher than other local children's centres because of the work the centre leaders have done in this area. Staff actively following up queries from new parents about seeking benefits. They provide high quality written information about all available benefits and parents say that until this they had 'no idea the benefits that were available to them.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

Governance arrangements are clear, effective and understood by all. Monitoring by the local authority is thorough and service level agreements are well defined. Management of the various health, social services and educational bodies that work together is integrated outstandingly well. Appropriate numbers of parents and families direct the work of the centre through a wide range of formal and informal channels. Partnerships with other agencies are excellent and enhance the impact of the centre's work greatly.

The centre leader sets very high targets for improvement. She has recently completed her National Professional Qualification for Children's Centre Leadership.

Her wholehearted enthusiasm and systematic approach, combined with high aspirations successfully inspires staff. All levels of leadership are efficient and self evaluative. As a result, the centre exceeds some of the targets set for it by the local authority. One of these is the proportion of vulnerable groups it has successfully made contact with during the course of the year.

Safeguarding systems are good. Child protection policies and procedures are all fully in place. Criminal record checks and safe recruitment systems are excellent. The staff are trained to a high level in paediatric first aid, child protection and risk assessment. The centre is bright, clean and attractive. The environment for learning is extremely good. The use of the accommodation is managed effectively to ensure space is maximised. Staff time is used very efficiently and the centre provides excellent value for money.

Systems for ensuring equality of opportunity and equality are outstanding. A small but growing number of black and minority ethnic families have moved into the area recently and statistics show that virtually all of them have been contacted by the centre. Provision and support for children and adults with special educational needs and/or disabilities is excellent. Inclusive practice is promoted well as parents engage in 'Sign and Rhyme' sessions, learning to use sign language with their children. One parent, who was particularly interested, was directed to further sign language training by the centre and is now running other local groups. The centre effectively uses an inclusive practice policy and checklist. The centre leaders are determined to maximise user engagement. For instance, where groups, such as the Traveller community at Kessingland, had difficulty in accessing the provision at Reydon, a mobile centre was developed to travel to them. This has already had inspiring success rates. Analysis of narrowing the gap data for the most disadvantaged parents has not been as rigorous as for children in the past. However, the needs of adults in the most vulnerable families are catered for exceptionally well. The centre leaders now plan to ensure that provision for and monitoring of raining to prepare adults for work is as exceptionally good as other aspects of the centre's work.

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	1
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	1
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key	2

agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	1
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	1

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

The findings of the inspection of Brambles, (January 2010) and the section 5 inspection of Reydon Primary School (January 2011).

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 the Reydon and Southwold Children's Centre on 20–21 January 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

Many thanks to all those of you who gave up time to come and speak to us about your children's centre. It was very helpful to us and we agree with you about the excellent work the centre does. We also read many of the positive comments you had made in response to questionnaires the centre sends to you. We saw how many of your suggestions have been taken note of and changes already implemented. This shows us that centre leaders listen to you and try constantly to adjust what is done to meet your needs.

This is an outstandingly well-run centre, where staff time and resources are managed efficiently to achieve the best possible outcomes in many aspects of its work. The lines of governance are clear and understood by all. There is excellent communication and a cooperative ethos between all members of the many professionals who work at the centre. As a result, provision is exceptionally well

organised and efficient. Outcomes, such as the impact on health and positive relationships are excellent. The provision for care and welfare is outstanding and the support provided for those of you who need it in times of crisis is also excellent. Equality of opportunity is given the highest priority, and diversity celebrated well. Targets that the local authority has set for the centre have been far exceeded such as the proportions of families in need that staff have contacted and helped. This is due to the high aspirations of all, especially the centre leader.

An area that the centre leaders had already identified to develop further is in the provision for those of you who may wish to prepare for, or to seek work. We agree that the quality of this provision is not yet at the same high level as some of the other things the centre does. There have been recent changes to the links with JobCentre Plus, which the centre leader hopes will result in a higher profile and a more systematic, planned approach to this service. We have asked the centre, the local authority and JobCentre Plus to all ensure that stronger links result in better and more visible provision. We have asked the centre to monitor and analyse the outcomes in the same rigorous and effective way as all other aspects of its provision. This way, the impact of what is done can be measured and the information used to ensure that systems are refined and effective.

One of the things several of you commented on favourably is the high level of security and safety of the centre. You are happy that you can bring your children here and know they will be looked after well. One of you said it was a 'sanctuary' from the day to day concerns of parenting. We agree that the safeguarding systems are good. Child protection is given the highest regard and staff are fully trained and alert at all times.

The staff all work together very effectively so that the centre provides excellent value for money. We know from your comments how pleased you are with the centre and we could see by your children's faces when they came into sessions how much they enjoy it too.

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