

Inspection report for Sunderland Children's Centre Ryhope

Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	362583
Inspection dates	24–25 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Lesley Clark

Centre governance	Sunderland local authority
Centre leader	Jackie Royce
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Ryhope Infant School, Shaftesbury Avenue, Sunderland, SR2 0RT
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Linked school if applicable	Ryhope Infant School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Early Days Ryhope Infant School

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 registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 3 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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 the extended services area coordinator, the senior leadership team, the early years focus group, the family support and outreach focus group, the health team focus group, the volunteering and pathway to employment focus group, parents, partners and volunteers.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at sessions in operation at the children's centre and at nearby locations, as well as a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Ryhope Children's Centre serves a predominantly White British community. It is located in three rooms in Ryhope Infant School, a shared community room and a community association building is a short walk away. The centre has been working to provide the full core offer for children's centres in a deprived area since 2006.

Two-thirds of the population live in owner-occupied housing, one third live in housing association rented properties and a very small proportion live in privately rented accommodation. The catchment area changed in 2009, extending the reach area to the south as well as the east of the city. The majority of working adults are in low-paid employment. Around 40% of the population has no qualifications. Just under

10% of families are lone parents with dependent children; 6% of the population are under four years old; and 60% of the children who live in the area live in the bottom 30% according to the deprivation index.

Governance of the centre is provided by the local authority, in conjunction with the advisory board and includes providers, members of the local community and users that attend the children's centre. An extensive range of health, family support and education services are provided, with partnerships with associated professionals in social care and employment.

Childcare is provided through different types of 'play and learn' sessions at the centre and Early Days and nursery provision at Ryhope Infant School. Attainment on entry to early years provision is well below the level expected. The findings of the Ofsted inspection of Ryhope Infant School in the same week were taken into account for this inspection. This report can be viewed at 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

Ryhope Children’s Centre is well led and managed and highly regarded by the families who use its services. Parents and volunteers report very positively on the support they receive. In many instances, their association with the centre has transformed their lives. The contribution to leadership and management made by the early years team, the community and family support team and the health team, is impressive and has a very positive impact on outcomes for users. Three areas of the centre’s work are outstanding. Users, adults and children alike enjoy and achieve exceptionally well, both educationally and in their personal, social and emotional development. This is because the range of services, activities and opportunities are outstandingly well-matched to their needs. Outstanding partnerships with other agencies give the centre the flexibility to tailor its services to suit individuals.

Since the centre opened, there has been a steady increase in the numbers of families accessing its services. Managers have a good understanding of the needs of local families. There is a strong emphasis on promoting equality and diversity within its very largely White British community. A strength is the inclusion of fathers and of children and adults with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The centre acknowledges that it is not fully reaching a small sector of the population who are hardest to engage.

The centre provides a good range of services. Safeguarding and security procedures are good. Users have confidence in the centre to help them and they receive very good advice about how to keep themselves and their children safe. The centre has thriving early years and family support groups, which have a very positive impact on the health and well-being of users. While the centre has some success with smoking cessation for pregnant mothers who are over 20 years old, it has limited success with those who are under 20.

A strong senior leadership team plans for, monitors and evaluates all centre developments. They have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and are taking effective action to remediate these. The

advisory board supports this well. Although parents are represented on the board, they are not fully involved at a strategic level in shaping the direction of the children's centre. The centre has good capacity for sustained improvement because it can demonstrate that it is making a big difference to the lives of many children and adults, and that each year it reaches out successfully to more and more people. It has a strong commitment to bring about further improvements.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Further extend the work in the reach area to more fully include and to provide the necessary support for those who are hardest to engage.
- Target the under 20-year-olds to encourage and support them to stop smoking during pregnancy.
- Further involve parents at a strategic level in shaping the direction of the children's centre.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Parents and children know that to be healthy they need to 'eat well and move more'. Popular sessions such as 'Busy Bodies' help parents and children to play together energetically, bouncing on musical mats, for example, or doing the hula hoop. As a result, the proportion of children under the age of five who are obese is below the national average. The proportion of mothers initiating breastfeeding is slightly below both the local and national average, but an above average proportion sustain breastfeeding because of the good support they receive. The centre has more success with helping pregnant mothers who are over 20 years old to stop smoking than it does with those who are under 20. Families benefit from the excellent mental and emotional health support they receive.

Children and users feel very safe at the centre and comfortable to discuss any concerns or issues they might have. Users talk to staff readily on courses and feel they are listened to. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities or who have a child protection plan are kept safe from harm because staff are vigilant in ensuring they are not at risk. The common assessment framework is used very well indeed to identify those known by the centre to be most at risk and to safeguard them. This is aided by excellent partnership working between health and social care. Users access a wide range of leaflets and expert guidance. Family and parenting support is improving parents' skills and reducing incidents of harm or accidents to children. After a brief gap in health visitor services, due to staffing changes, outreach in terms of safety information has improved dramatically. Currently, 100% of families on the centre's list have a safety pack. There has been a reduction in the number of accidents as a result. Parenting programmes are helping parents to manage their children's behaviour well and to respond with positive rather than negative

strategies. The centre has yet to fully reach those who are hardest to engage. The centre has narrowed this down to two streets, but it has still to re-engage with people who have moved from houses which were demolished during the past year.

Children make outstanding progress from their starting points. The proportion reaching expected levels for their age increases considerably each year. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and others reduced by 16.4% in 2009. Children are exceptionally well prepared for school. The 'Early Days' and 'Play and Learn' activities provide a seamless link with the Nursery and Reception classes. Children develop into confident learners who ask lots of questions and persist at tasks. Many parents go on to become volunteers at the centre because the centre actively involves users in helping others, for instance in breastfeeding classes. A good proportion of volunteers go on to paid employment as a result of the work experience, training and qualifications they gain at the centre. Parents are ambitious and have high aspirations for themselves and their children. Users clearly enjoy learning at the centre and are proud of their achievements. For example, one group produced high quality Christmas cards and animatedly discussed how to make them at home with their children. The very positive responses to questionnaires at the end of courses confirm users' high levels of enjoyment.

Children behave well because they are active, happy and busy. They have lots of activities to choose from which stimulate their curiosity. They learn to share and take turns, and know that they have to be gentle with babies or else they might hurt them. Users demonstrate their ability to make choices, choosing to access courses and training because they want to change their lives. Children and adults with communication difficulties are able to make their preferences and views known because the centre fully includes them in all activities. The centre's role in the life of the community has developed apace in the four years since it started. A group of parents manage the 'Inspiration' fund which involves them reading through applications each month for funding for community activities. For example, this funded a fishing trip for dads and disabled children. The involvement of parents at a strategic level in governance is underused. Although they are part of the advisory board their input is not as extensive as it should be.

Children make good progress in developing skills for the future. Their well-being is improving because parents are increasing their economic stability and independence. Good information, advice and support enable users to access the training, courses and services they need. Take-up rates for these are good and improving steadily. As a result, users are gaining in confidence, with increasing numbers moving from informal to formal learning each year. For example, in 2009, 41 out of 100 parents gained qualifications and 8 gained employment.

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	1
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 works very well in partnerships with other agencies to ensure that assessments, such as those carried out under the common assessment framework and assessments of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are accurate and well-informed. The information is used extremely well to ensure that children's interests are taken fully into account when planning learning activities. On-going assessments and daily observations, collated into informative 'learning journeys,' demonstrate children's excellent progress. The achievements of adult users are recorded and analysed. A good proportion gain accredited qualifications and have aspirations, because centre staff have accurately gauged their potential. The centre does not reach the hardest to engage groups as extensively as others and so although the centre's work is very positive for all who access its services, it misses a small but significant part of its reach area.

Highly effective links between the children's centre, 'Early Days' provision and the nursery promote children's learning and development exceptionally well. Users confirm how much they enjoy and benefit from the services offered. There is a large uptake for parentcraft courses. Parents comment appreciatively, saying, 'It's a great place to come and we learn a lot.' The 'Getting to know your Baby' group is very effective at helping parents understand how important are the social and emotional well-being aspects of their children's development. The centre promotes personalised learning extremely well and activities are of high quality. For example, the 'messy play' sessions provide parents with a fund of ideas to use at home as well as providing highly enjoyable learning experiences with their children. The centre promotes individual learning and support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities especially well.

The quality and range of services offered by the centre are good and reach the needs of the greater part of the community. The integrated service approach works very well indeed, ensuring that children and families in difficult circumstances get high quality individual support and care. For example, users have a named adult with whom they can develop a trusting relationship and who oversees the whole package of support they and their children need. Services within the centre are adapted to meet the changing needs of the community.

The participation rates are good and improving.

The good quality care for young children, parents and other users is carefully tailored to their needs. It is well coordinated and flexible so that parents get a complete package of care. For example, because a proportion of staffing is also employed on a flexible basis, provision can be adapted at short notice to cater for families' changing needs. Individual users speak very highly of the support they and their families receive. In 'play and learn' sessions, for example, staff chat to parents informally about their children's sleep patterns and eating habits, so that users feel comfortable with talking about small concerns and worries. This relaxed approach in turn helps staff to identify when users actually need greater help. The centre is especially good at guiding and supporting children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Users receive good guidance and support on health and safety issues and on accessing support. Staff model good practice in day-care sessions. The Child and Family Support Service offers information to families around benefit advice and debt management, and can support families through times of temporary crisis.

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	1
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	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Leaders and managers at all levels make a good contribution to ensuring the centre runs smoothly. Governance and accountability arrangements are clear. Service provision is well planned and partners are closely involved in promoting good quality integrated provision. The leadership and management team analyse the provision and outcomes rigorously. Leaders have an accurate view of the centre's strengths and areas for improvement. The centre has identified precisely where it needs to target its efforts but recognises it still has some way to go to reach those who are hardest to engage. The detailed development plan is shared with the advisory board and makes clear the priorities for action. This is underpinned by very good use of data. The centre is aware that although parents are part of the advisory board, their involvement is very much at the local rather than strategic level.

The centre uses and manages its resources well to meet users' needs. It gives good value for money. The environment is very welcoming and safe and users' views are taken fully into account. For example, the centre use the community association

building so as to cater for those parents who find school inhibiting. Staff are deployed effectively and with sufficient flexibility to meet users' changing needs. As a result, services are sustainable because the number of users is growing steadily each year.

The centre promotes equality of opportunity well. As a result, users gain in confidence, have raised expectations of themselves and gaps between different groups are closing. Children who are vulnerable or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are especially well provided for. Through links with the health team, volunteers are matched with families and this provides additional informal support. The centre pursues ambitious strategies for those groups of users who may be subject to discrimination. Consequently, users with disabilities are proactive and feel their contributions are valued. The centre's publicity is designed to be 'men-friendly' and uses positive images of minority ethnic groups.

Safeguarding is very thorough and all regulations are met. The centre's policies and procedures are in line with government and local requirements. All staff and volunteers have appropriate checks and these are up-to-date. All staff working in the centre receive suitable training in first-aid and child protection. They know what actions to take in the event of a safeguarding issue. The centre has a good track record of early intervention and multi-agency cooperation. The identification of and support for emotional health and well-being is a notable strength. Staff have suitable training and awareness so as to ensure that victims of domestic violence get the support they need. All courses, training events and adult/child activities are fully risk assessed.

Outstanding partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of services. This stems from the leadership and management team, and a team of specialists, who in turn lead a group representing key partner agencies in providing early childhood services for children and their families. The result is a highly effective 'joined up' approach, which gives the flexibility to meet known and unforeseen needs. This excellent partnership working enhances opportunities for users and has a very positive impact on improving outcomes.

The centre regularly asks users for their views and uses these to shape the provision. Users express strong levels of satisfaction, saying the services are 'brilliant', 'fantastic', and 'gives us one-to-one with our kids and helps us to interact with others'. Users say that the centre reaches out to them and helps them gain in confidence, agreeing that 'it is a bridge for real life'. Through using volunteers the centre is reaching out to engage those who are not accessing the services. This is developing well, although there is still some way to go to fully include all those who are hardest to reach and/or need a lot of support.

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	2
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understood	
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

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

The findings of a concurrent inspection of early years, childcare and nursery provision at Ryhope Infant School contributed to the children's centre report and judgements.

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 Ryhope Children's Centre on 24–25 November 2010. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you very much indeed for taking the time and trouble to talk to us and tell us all about your children's centre. A special 'thank you' goes to all the mums, dads and volunteers who came in specially to see us. Those of you we spoke to told us how much you like coming to the centre and how much it has helped you. Some of you

explained how you became volunteers and went on to help others and give them support. You said lots of positive things about the centre and how much it has helped you and changed your lives. Your views have been taken into account in this inspection.

Your children's centre gives a good quality service to everyone who uses it. It does some things outstandingly well. It helps children and adults to learn with a great deal of enjoyment and success. We especially liked the 'messy play' and 'busy bodies' sessions. What a lot of fun you have playing with your children! Your centre is extremely good at helping everyone to learn new skills. Because of this, children are very happy learners and many of you go on to gain qualifications and sometimes jobs. Your centre can do all this because it has excellent partnerships with lots of people. This means that it can give you and your families exactly the right support you need even if your circumstances change at short notice.

Your children's centre tries to improve its service each year and to reach out to everyone in the local area. While it reaches the vast majority of people it still has to extend its services to those who are the most difficult to engage. It also has problems keeping track of people who have moved on because their street has been demolished. So we have asked it to make sure that it targets everyone so every single person who needs help, support and guidance knows where to find it and can have the same benefits that you all enjoy. You can help by recommending people you know who need some help to come to the centre.

Your centre is well led and managed. It is welcoming, friendly, safe and secure. Those in charge give a lot of thought as to how to give you the right sort of service. This is why some activities are in small groups and some in the large community association building. They take notice of what you say. For those of you who are on the advisory board we have asked the centre managers to involve you more in planning for the future because you have some really good ideas.

As a result of your centre's work, there are fewer children under the age of five who are obese in your areas than elsewhere in the country. This is really good. Similarly, mothers who choose to breastfeed do so for longer than many other mums and so this helps children to get off to a good start in life. Your centre is less successful at getting pregnant mums who are below the age of twenty, to stop smoking. We have asked them to target this age group so as to help protect unborn babies.

It is good to see how more and more people use your children's centre each year. Your children are making outstanding progress because you and the centre help them. The people who manage your centre know what to do to make it better. This is why it is improving each year and gives you lots of different things to go to with your children.

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