

Inspection report for Revoe Children's Centre

Local authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	362550
Inspection dates	29-30 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Sarah Drake

Centre governance	Revoe Community Primary School Governing Body
Centre leader	Catherine Woodall
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Revoe Community Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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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 primary school 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 senior leaders and managers, members of the governing body, and representatives of the local authority and a wide range of outside agencies. They also spoke informally with centre staff and many users. The inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centre's operational plans, evaluations, key policies and safeguarding procedures.

Information about the centre

Revoe children's centre is an integral part of Revoe Community Primary School. It operates from a single site within walking distance of the town centre and is run by the school's governing body. It opened as a Phase 2 centre in September 2007. The school's headteacher is the centre leader and has been involved in all stages of its development over the past three years.

Eighty-eight per cent of families that use the centre live in an area identified as one of the 10% most deprived in the country; this percentage has been rising over the past two years. Many who move into the locality do so at short notice and then move away within a short period of time. Sixty-one per cent of children aged 0 to 4 years live in households dependent on workless benefits. The majority of those that are in work do so for low wages. The community has high incidents of crime, drug and alcohol abuse. Eighty per cent of the local population are White British; the others belong to a range of minority ethnic groups, predominantly Bangladeshi, Indian and Polish, and speak English as an additional language.

On entry into the nursery the majority of children have skills well below those expected for their age with significant weaknesses in their communication, social and personal development.

The centre offers a range of childcare and other services, including a social 'drop-in' facility for parents, from 7.45am to 5.45pm, only closing for two weeks at Christmas. It offers 32 part-time or 16 full-time nursery places for two-year-olds on a sessional basis. Parents and carers may choose to pay for extra sessions beyond the 15 hours currently funded through the nursery pilot scheme. The range of integrated services available at the centre includes health, family support, early years advice and guidance, and access to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and basic skills training. Through the centre's many partnerships, including Homestart, it provides access to a wider range of services offering support and advice about debt management, substance abuse, domestic violence and guidance on employment.

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

Revoe children's centre acts as a vibrant hub for the local community, providing a good quality resource that families feel confident to go to for advice and support. This confidence stems from the very warm welcome that all staff offer to all those who enter, and a reputation in the community for 'helping to sort things out'. Strong partnerships with a wide range of agencies, particularly health workers, lead to a swift response in times of specific need and ongoing support to help improve the well-being of young children.

Good quality leadership and management mean that staff work well together as a flexible, positive team in which each member is valued. They, in turn, treat all who use the centre with respect, creating a harmonious community in which people of different ages, ethnicity and life experience build good quality relationships within a safe, supportive environment. Users of the centre greatly appreciate the way that, as one said, 'the staff won't judge you. They will sit you down and help as best they can.' Sterling efforts on the part of the outreach worker provide many families in need with the all important first contact that introduces them to a lifeline of support. Good quality practice and procedures promote the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.

The broad range of good quality activities and courses is well adapted to the changing needs of those who use the centre. Staff seek families' views about the quality of provision but users do not play as full a part as they could in shaping future services. The leaders' and manager's evaluation of the centre's performance is accurate but largely based on case studies and feedback from activities. Newly established systems are increasing the collection of measurable information. As yet, staff do not analyse this with sufficient rigour to help identify, for example, where the centre is meeting needs well and where it could do better. Nonetheless, and despite changes in key personnel over the past year, all involved with the centre praise the fact that 'it has gone from strength to strength' in that time.

The positive impact of the centre is evident in, for example, the rising numbers of

families who use it, the rising incidence of smoking cessation and breastfeeding in the area and a marked improvement in the skills that children develop by the end of their Reception year in school. These successes are due to the hard work of a large number of different professionals who support families. It is through the vision and determination of the centre's leaders and manager that all the agencies work together so effectively. The centre has proved itself to be responsive to changing circumstances and successful in providing services that enhance the well-being of local children. It has good capacity to improve further.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve self-evaluation and action planning by making use of all available data to assess the impact of the centre's activities and identify key areas to target for improvement.
- Increase the involvement of users in shaping the future development of the centre.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

The centre hums with activity and purpose throughout the day. By far the largest proportion of attendances is to midwifery and baby weighing sessions which provide a natural opportunity for users to sample other activities. Local authority data show that Revoe has the highest figures in the area for accessing health related sessions. However, despite improvements made, there is still some way to go before families adopt fully healthy and safe lifestyles. Healthy eating and cookery activities are popular and provide parents with helpful tips about budgeting as well as improving the family diet. Some users are already saving to meet anticipated Christmas bills. Members of the dads' club recently won a national competition to raise awareness of the benefits of breastfeeding. Children in the nursery experiment with a range of healthy foods and have good access to outdoor, physical play. On-site access to an optician ensures that children's skills development is not inhibited by any visual impairment.

Families' awareness of how they can take steps to improve their children's safety improves from the day they first register with the centre since the welcome pack they receive includes a safety starter pack, water bottle and head thermometer. Users say that they feel physically and emotionally safe while at the centre due to the safety procedures and the ease with which they can speak with staff. This includes members of minority ethnic groups who say they have encountered no prejudice. Staff vigilance ensures that children play in a safe manner. Close liaison between different agencies associated with children at risk from harm, and those subject to Common Assessment Framework processes, means there is prompt action when necessary and also successful support that keeps children safe within their own family.

Those who access the centre's activities are very positive in their evaluations. Many

comment on how much their self-confidence has increased through learning together. Some successfully achieve certificates, for example, in literacy, numeracy or speaking English that enable them to move on to further training. A recent level 2 tiling course proved very popular with the men and women who took part. Attending such courses also helps users to grow used to the need to arrive regularly and on time, and not to give up at the first hurdle. Such activities, alongside well-informed advice regarding benefits and tax credits, are proving effective in helping the centre's users to develop economic stability. Parents are proud of their own and their children's achievements. One commented that after a few weeks in the nursery her two-year-old, 'is already speaking much better'. Most children's skills on entry to the nursery are still well below those expected for their age, although the gap is narrowing. This has a positive impact on their readiness to attend school and makes a good contribution to the school's rising trend in skills development by the end of the Reception Year.

Parents' increasing confidence is leading them to initiate activities. For example, those attending the baby club now also meet on an additional day. Some users have carried out charitable fundraising activities. Others act as volunteers in school and across the centre, including as volunteer interpreters for those who speak English as an additional language. Users treat the centre and each other with respect. They and their children live up to staff's high expectations of behaviour. They are supportive of each other and first time users often approach the centre on the recommendation of a friend or neighbour. Users do express their views about, for instance, what courses they would like to attend, but very few contribute to decision making about how the centre should move forward over a longer period.

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	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	2

How good is the provision?

2

The welcoming atmosphere and ease with which families can approach the centre are key to its success. Staff are skilled at sitting down for an informal chat with users and guiding the discussion so that the needs of the family become clear. They are

also skilled at gaining parents' confidence and permission to bring in other agencies to provide the right level of support. Any 'Request for service' from another agency, for example for families new to the area, leads to a swift response from the outreach worker who establishes the immediate need and sets in motion a well-coordinated response. In the words of one professional, 'If the centre wasn't here, where else would the families go?'

Regular family tracking meetings, with input from the different professionals, ensure that all keep track of families' crises and successes and that their needs are reassessed in a timely fashion. This leads to provision that is well tailored to individuals' needs and having a positive impact on children's and adults' health, well-being and skills development. Staff willingly and persistently reach out into the community, for example, conducting home visits and holding case conferences in families' homes. They are very successful at gaining the trust of those in the most challenging of circumstances and ensuring that they can benefit from the services on offer. Staff do not have precise enough knowledge about those groups they are not managing to reach because they do not yet analyse with sufficient rigour the data they collect.

Close working with the arts team leads to activities in the local park that engage members of the community in enjoyable, self-created activities. A toddler group which runs at the local mosque provides resources and guidance about playing with children. Staff also build on the ESOL course for those who have not previously experienced formal tuition. A Speak Easy course helps parents to talk with their children about sexual health at an early age. The children's centre teacher oversees the plans drawn up by activity workers to ensure they provide purposeful learning as well as enjoyment. Parental requests guide the programming of activities so, for example, an eight week well-being course has been mounted in collaboration with Blackpool and Fylde college. The effectiveness of the provision is summed up in the words of one parent, 'I have been using the centre for over three years and have received loads of help in all sorts of areas, as much as they could possibly give me.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

All who work at the centre are clear about their roles, responsibilities and

accountability. Their flexibility means that, for example, activity workers help with the registration of new users so that the outreach worker can deal with priority referrals. Lines of governance are clear. Members of the governing body and its community sub-committee understand their different roles; one as provider of the centre's services and the other to offer advice and support. Arrangements for staff training and supervision are secure. Action planning dovetails appropriately with that of the school, providing a cohesive approach to driving forward improvement. Self-evaluation is accurate. For example, the leader and the manager have identified, correctly, the need to improve the centre's use of data in order to highlight strong and weaker areas of provision and target actions. They are also keen, despite some previous lack of success, to involve users more in the centre's strategic development.

Rigorous vetting processes ensure the suitability of staff and volunteers. All activities are risk assessed. Minor, necessary adjustments have been carried out to ensure all policies comply with current requirements. The centre is accessible to those with disabilities and some information is available in languages other than English. However, while this is on open access it is not all that easy to locate.

The strong partnerships that the centre has built with a very wide range of agencies underpin its success. Members of the midwifery, breast-feeding promotion, family learning, mental health, training and employment and many other teams speak highly of the centre and its staff. They confirm its pivotal role in providing the joined-up support that contributes to families' improved well-being. The centre opens its activities to childminders and even lends resources to a local private nursery. It is joining forces with three other schools to buy in the much needed services of a speech and language therapist. All staff work hard and successfully to improve the well-being of local children and their families. The centre provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services	3

and activities	
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	2
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

Revoe Children's Centre Childcare inspection report, January 2008
 Revoe Community Primary School inspection report, June 2008
 Brief discussion with inspectors in school at the time of this inspection.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Revoe children's centre on 29 to 30 September 2010. Thank you very much to all of you who talked with us. You helped us to understand how well the staff support you in so many different ways. No doubt you will be pleased to know that we judged the centre as good overall.

You told us that one of the best things about the centre is the way that staff make you feel welcome. We agree with you because if they did not do this well you would not want to visit the centre and would miss out on all the courses, activities and advice that you can find there. Another thing that the centre does really well is working with all the other agencies, like the midwives, health visitors and opticians, to make it easy for you to receive advice or keep your important appointments.

Through activities such as the healthy eating and cooking courses, the staff help you to improve your families' diet and also to save money. Staff also help you to make sure that you keep your children and yourselves safe. It was good to hear that you feel very safe in the centre. We were pleased to find out about the courses some of you have attended which have led to you gaining certificates. Well done! Congratulations also to your dads club who won a national breastfeeding awareness competition.

It was good to hear that the staff help you feel relaxed and grow in confidence so that you can talk about your difficulties. They are very good at listening to what you say and pointing you in the right direction for help, such as advice on housing or guidance about getting back into employment. We know you find useful the advice staff give you about managing your children's behaviour. You also said that you are delighted with the progress your children make in the nursery.

You told us that staff ask you for your views about what courses you would like and then do all they can to organise them for you. We have asked them to try to persuade more of you to become involved in deciding what needs to be done to make the centre even better. We do hope that you will find the time and confidence to do this and help to improve things for others in your community.

We have also asked the centre leader and manager to make better use of the information they have about the different groups of people who use the centre. This should help them to work out who they need to work even harder to reach. It is good to hear how well supported those of you who are new to learning English feel. I enjoyed my visit to the toddler group at the mosque.

This comes with both the inspectors' best wishes for the future.

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