

Inspection report for Rubery Nursery and Children's Centre

Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	365723
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Anna Coyle

Centre governance	The governing body of Rubery Nursery School
Centre leader	Mrs Jean Shiner
Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school if applicable	Colmers Farm Infant School Colmers Farm Junior School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Rubery 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.

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff and members of the governing body and the advisory board, and parents and carers of the children. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Rubery Children's Centre is located within Rubery Nursery School. This phase two centre was designated in September 2008 and provides the full core offer with a linked childcare provider, early learning, health and family support services. It serves a mixed area of housing with pockets of deprivation. The majority of families are of White British backgrounds with the rest coming from a range of minority ethnic communities. Almost all adults and children speak English as their first language. Many families are in workless households and receive benefits. Unemployment rates are high. Most children enter childcare and early education with skills that are below those expected for their age. Governance is provided by the governing body of Rubery Nursery School. The re-established advisory board also works alongside the governing body to oversee provision and support the setting.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

Rubery Children's Centre makes satisfactory provision for children and families. It is improving rapidly and emerging from an interim period involving long-term staff absences. Adults and children who attend the centre benefit from good quality care and support. The advice and guidance they receive helps them to improve the outcomes for their children and themselves. Specifically tailored support meets the needs of individual families well. All those spoken to were enthusiastic about the centre's provision. Comments such as, 'We are here almost every day and really enjoy coming' and 'It is a really welcoming environment' were typical of the positive views expressed. Senior leaders are ambitious and have high expectations of the centre and its staff. They are dedicated to the success of the centre and drive forward improvements with a strong sense of commitment.

Outcomes for users are satisfactory. Activities are appropriately matched to the needs of those who attend the centre. Children make good progress and achieve well in personal, social and emotional development and they behave well. Procedures for tracking the development and progress of children are being introduced systematically but are not fully embedded. Discussions with users and case study evidence show that the centre's provision for promoting healthy lifestyles is having a good impact on children, adults and families. For example, support for mothers in breastfeeding and weaning of their babies is successful. Good opportunities for counselling sessions benefit adult users. Signposting arrangements to Jobcentre Plus are not sufficiently developed to support adults back to work and there are only a few opportunities for adults to access training providers. Even so, links with a 'Gateway' adviser are supporting adults effectively to write curricula vitae and consider options for their future employment.

A good range of activities held in the centre support good health outcomes such as for breastfeeding, weaning and the promotion of healthy eating and healthy lifestyles. However, the centre has limited access to data about its reach area and, in particular, key health authority and community data. As a result, staff are unable to demonstrate the success of activities and the impact they have on outcomes for children and adults, especially for those who are hard to reach in the wider

community. Evidence to show the extent to which vulnerable groups are accessing centre activities is similarly limited. Safeguarding procedures are secure and users say that they feel safe when they are in the centre.

The centre provides a warm and friendly environment in which parents and carers get along together well. 'Parent and Toddler' sessions enable children and adults to enjoy playing and learning together. Parents and carers use these sessions to share experiences and to support each other over a cup of tea. Friendships are forged that extend beyond the centre. Well qualified, knowledgeable and approachable staff are trusted by parents and carers. Their advice and support in addressing a range of parenting and welfare concerns are actively sought and acted upon. Sound attention is paid to the safety of the centre's environment and the specific activities provided. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory, and those special educational needs and/or disabilities and the few who speak English as an additional are supported well.

The views of parents and carers are sought regularly through evaluations of activities, questionnaires and parent focus groups. The centre has started to analyse the information gathered. This has guided changes made to provision such as the forming of the 'Bumps and Babes' group. Increasing user numbers and the development of new activities as a response to evaluation information shows that the centre has a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement. Monitoring of the centre's work and of the progress towards achieving the improvement priorities is satisfactory. However, the roles and responsibilities of the governing body and re-established advisory board are not sufficiently defined to help them hold the centre to account for the services it provides. The centre's improvement plan is related closely to that of the Nursery School. Priorities are reasonably clear but a few areas, such as those identified for assessment, are too broad to allow the centre to measure how well it is progressing towards them. This is further hindered by the lack of basic reach area data and limited partnerships with health professionals.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Obtain more community and health data from the local authority and use it with the centre's other available data to improve services, especially for the hard to reach in the wider community.
- Create stronger partnerships, particularly with health professionals, Jobcentre Plus and training providers to help adults return to work.
- Develop the roles of the governing body and the advisory board so that they have clearly defined responsibilities and procedures for holding the centre to account.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

All users, including adults and children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, benefit from integrated services. The centre's 'Forest School' activities, healthy eating road shows, workshops and community cooking sessions promote healthy living well. Activities such as these have a direct impact on users' lifestyles. For example, one parent stated that they buy more fresh fruit as a result of it being available during a tasting session at the centre. Home birth visits, weaning sessions, 'Family Fun Days' and monthly breakfast and lunch cafes benefit users' parenting skills well and help them build friendly relationships with each other. The centre actively promotes the use of drinking cups to help lower the levels of infant tooth decay by reducing the use of bottles of sugary drinks. Immunisation rates are high and a particular strength is the successful support provided for users' mental health through regular counselling sessions. Outcomes relating to smoking during pregnancy and breastfeeding are proving harder to improve because the links with health professionals are not securely established. Children participate eagerly in outdoor activities, such as when using wheeled toys and large balls, and joining in with music and movement and sponsored walks. These promote children's physical development effectively.

Users say they are confident that the centre is a safe environment where they are able to share their concerns with staff. Systems to support families who are the most vulnerable because of their circumstances are effective. Children subject to the Common Assessment Framework are monitored closely. Case studies show that some users, such as those who have experienced issues related to drug or alcohol abuse, or have been subject to domestic violence have received effective support. Targeted support that includes parenting advice is provided when needed and has resulted in positive outcomes being noted for both children and their parents and carers. Appropriate risk assessments ensure that activities at the centre and trips out are safe. Regular events, including the successful 'Fit Mums', 'No Smoking Days' and 'Healthy Setting Week', contribute to parents' and carers' good understanding of how to keep themselves and their children safe and healthy.

Adults who attend the centre value it as a place to meet and to seek help if they need it. Parents and carers report that they and their children enjoy attending the centre. They especially like outdoor activities and say that, 'We love the forest and making dens with our children'. Children are inquisitive and they participate eagerly in activities. The centre's records show that children's knowledge and skills are below the expectations for age when they enter the Early Years Foundation Stage but they are improving and the gap is closing between the lowest achieving children and their peers. There is ample evidence to indicate that they make good progress and achieve well in their personal, social and emotional development.

Parents and carers contribute to the centre's decision making and governance by joining the parents' forum or advisory board, although both are newly convened and are not yet fully developed. Adults who attend the centre are signposted to some

training and adult education provision but this is limited because the links with organisations such as Jobcentre Plus are not sufficiently developed to help users. The centre is aware that it does not follow up this work to evaluate how effective it has been and to check if more access to adult training is required in the reach area to help users to seek employment.

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	3
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	3
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	3

How good is the provision?

3

Assessment procedures are satisfactory and staff are quick to identify children and adults who may need additional support. Even so, the monitoring of outcomes for children, adults and families lacks cohesion. It is limited by the lack of reach data available to the centre from the local authority in respect of aspects such as smoking cessation rates. Staff keep a close check on children who are causing concern and, if necessary, seek and act upon specialist advice. This is contributing to improved outcomes for them. The needs of adult users are not checked systematically but when a need is identified the centre works quickly to address it. Support for adult users is often tailored to their individual needs. For example, new mothers who may be experiencing difficulties with breastfeeding or weaning are helped by the centre staff. Support is provided in the home if this is felt to be appropriate.

Sessions run by the centre are purposeful and engage children and adults well. The centre's teacher makes a good contribution to the learning, development and enjoyment of children and adults. Activities are well resourced and they support children in active learning. Support from staff helps children and parents and carers to participate confidently in a range of new and varied experiences, such as coffee mornings, fun days and 'Stay and Play'.

Outreach work is satisfactory and the centre's family support worker links with health visitors to complete some visits in response to referrals or specific requests. Staff provide an appropriate range of services and activities for those who attend the centre. Participation rates are steady and for some activities, such as 'Infant

Massage' and 'Bumps and Babes', they have increased. Health-related services such as the child developmental checks and the weaning programme are valued and well attended. The limited access to health professionals and local authority data restricts the centre's ability to know and work towards meeting the needs of all potential users in the reach area, especially those who are hard to reach.

Care and guidance is good for families in times of crisis. The centre ensures that support is well matched to families' specific needs and is sustained for as long as it is required. Childcare is of good quality. The centre ensures that childminders have regular opportunities to attend training held at the centre. This helps to improve the quality of childminding available in the area. Parents and carers spoken to during the inspection were especially positive about the care and support they receive from centre staff and the counselling service, financial advice and budgeting. They consider that staff listen to them and make them feel valued. The centre is aware that it has not firmly established links with some hard to reach users in the wider community to ensure that it is engaging with all families who are made vulnerable by their circumstances.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	3
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	3
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?

3

The governing body and the recently re-established advisory board oversee the centre's work satisfactorily. They are developing their roles but responsibilities are not yet sufficiently defined to enable them to hold the centre to account. Nevertheless, good relationships ensure that the day to day management of the centre is good. Teamwork between centre staff is a strength and there is a shared commitment to the improvement of the centre's services. Ambitious targets and high expectations help senior leaders drive improvement effectively. Key partners are engaged with the centre, although it is acknowledged by leaders and governors that there are insufficient links at a strategic level, particularly over the sharing of data and other information.

The centre's procedures for monitoring provision are satisfactory and it uses information to guide improvement planning. Self evaluation is mainly accurate but a little modest at times. The improvement plan identifies six broad aims but lacks sufficient detail in areas such as assessment. Resources are deployed appropriately to achieve satisfactory value for money.

The centre takes note of users' views and ideas as it works to adapt its provision to reflect their needs. The centre's promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. All users are welcomed and treated fairly and those who attend the centre report high levels of satisfaction for the sessions they attend. Support for children and adults with disabilities is sensitive and well managed. However, because of the limited information about the community served by the centre it is difficult for staff to evaluate how effectively it reflects and meets the needs of the community.

Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory and understood by all. Child protection training is up-to-date and the systems to ensure all staff are suitable to work with children are carried out appropriately. Health and safety issues are checked well with sound attention being paid to identifying the potential risks of activities and how these can be minimised.

Partnership working is of variable quality. Strong links exist with the nursery, infant and junior schools with whom the centre shares its site and also with the nearby privately-run pre-school. Counselling services work closely with centre and the staff respond quickly to referrals from doctors and other health and social care professionals. Signposting to key partners such as Jobcentre Plus and the health professionals, such as the midwifery service, is weak because there are limited links with them. Working practices with the local and health authority are not close enough to ensure the centre has enough information to deliver services that fully reflect the needs of the reach area.

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	3
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	3
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	3
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	3
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	3
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	3
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider	3

community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	
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Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

Rubery Nursery School, Colmers Farm Infant School and Colmers Farm Junior School all share the same site. They were all inspected between February 2008 and July 2009 but none within the last twelve months.

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 Rubery Nursery and Children's Centre on 10–11 May 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you for making us feel welcome and helping us to find out about your children's centre. We appreciated the time you took to talk to us during sessions such as 'Bumps and Babes' and 'CV Writing'. You gave us lots of helpful information and we are pleased to hear that you value and enjoy the centre activities and services. You told us how the centre has helped you in a number of ways. You also told us that you and your children enjoy learning and you play with them more often.

Many of you told us that you value the advice and support you receive from centre staff and that they help you to build friendships with other parents by attending centre activities such as coffee mornings and the 'Family Fun Days'. The centre helps you to keep your children healthy, and a number of you told us how much you have enjoyed cooking at the centre and tasting different foods. You told us that you and your children feel safe at the centre. We judge that safeguarding and safety at the centre are satisfactory. The centre works well with other services to help families experiencing particularly difficult times.

Children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Staff at the centre and those who visit to provide particular sessions work well together. This supports children's development and helps adults to gain confidence and learn new skills. The care, guidance and support you receive from the centre are good. Some of you spoke to us about the specific help you had received to access services linked to health and those providing support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Your views and ideas are valued and used to

guide the work of the centre. We know that some of you enjoy taking part in the decision making and governance of the centre, but that there have been some changes recently. We have asked the governing body and the advisory board to develop their roles and responsibilities so that they can hold the centre to account more effectively for the services it provides.

The centre works effectively with a number of partners such as social care and counselling services but there are not enough links with some health professionals, such as midwifery services, and employment agencies like Jobcentre Plus. We have asked the centre to create stronger partnerships with these groups.

The centre staff work hard and are committed to giving you the best they can provide. However, they do not have enough information to provide the services that are right for your community. So we have asked them to obtain more data from the local authority and forge closer links with health professionals to make sure that the centre has sufficient information to help it tailor its services to meet your needs and those of the wider community, especially those who are hard to reach.

It was a pleasure to meet you and your children and we thank all of you who found the time to talk to us. We wish you and your families all the best for the future.

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