

Inspection report Rowanfield Children's Centre

Local authority	Gloucestershire County Council
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Linked school if applicable	Rowanfield Infants School URN 115592
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Rowanfield URN EY337035

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.

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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 registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

An inspection of the co-located/partner 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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior managers, health and education professionals, representatives of the local authority and adult learning services, support and outreach workers, parents and carers. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Rowanfield Children's Centre forms part of the Hester's Way and Rowanfield Children's Centre Cluster and is one of two clusters in Cheltenham. It is a phase one centre and was designated in April 2006. The centre provides the full core offer through a range of integrated services that include health, family support, adult training and childcare provision. The head of centre reports to the board of governors and the local authority, which are responsible for the governance of the centre. A 48-place day-care nursery is located within the centre for children aged three–five years. This facility was not part of this inspection.

Statistical data for the area indicate that it is ranked within 30% of the most socially and economically disadvantaged in the country. The percentage of workless households and those dependent on benefits is above average. Children start

early years provision with skills and knowledge that are below the expected levels. The population is predominantly White British with a growing population from minority ethnic backgrounds, predominantly from Eastern Europe.

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

Rowanfield is a good children’s centre. It has made good progress in the short time between October 2010, when the current senior management team was formed, and the present day. However, there has not been enough time to see the full impact of all the hard work that has been undertaken. The good progress that has been made to date has been brought about by the dedication of a consistent team of skilled senior managers and staff under the strong leadership of the centre manager. They are totally committed to further improve services in order to meet the needs of the community. They have high standards and share the clear vision that ‘Together we will make a difference.’ The governors have played an increasingly active role in this work. The centre has benefitted greatly from the services of a data consultant and a business manager. However, the management team recognise that the collection and analysis of data is not happening fast enough to help set challenging and specific targets, which can then be measured and reviewed in order to accelerate improvements in outcomes further.

Users appreciate the excellent relationships and the high quality care, guidance and support within the centre. The inclusion of all children and their families is at the heart of the centre’s vision and its work. The high level of safeguarding ensures that parents and carers and their children feel safe at the centre and are confident to share concerns with staff. The centre is highly regarded by parents and carers, who comment positively about the quality of its work. They say that staff are approachable, helpful, give confidence and raise self-esteem. One parent, reflecting the views of many said, ‘The centre has not only made a difference to me, it has made a difference to my child, my family and my whole life.’ Consultation with users about the quality of provision on a day to day basis is good and they are represented on the centre’s advisory board. However, the centre has identified that they do not

yet extend enough opportunities for parents and carers to make a formal contribution to the decisions that influence the work of the centre.

Outcomes for children and their families are good. Children's levels of communication and language skills have improved consistently over the past four years because children benefit from the services of the centre's speech and language therapist and projects such as 'Every Child a Talker.' These, added to important work done in the 'Pilot Twos', a project which provides targeted intervention for children with specific risk factors, and the outstanding nursery provision, have significantly raised the levels of skills, knowledge and understanding for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Adult learners benefit from a high level of encouragement and commitment from well-qualified staff. The staff successfully encourage even the most reluctant of learners to raise their aspirations and have the confidence to progress from one qualification to the next and go on to higher education and improved job prospects.

The centre promotes a high level of purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users. Staff have high expectations, they celebrate achievements and instil confidence where students once doubted their ability and their worth. The highly effective partnerships which exist within the cluster, and between the two clusters in the area, have increased the range and quality of services that are on offer. The centre provides excellent value for money as costs are shared and duplication of work is largely eliminated. All of these developments, together with the centre's effective procedures for self-evaluation, demonstrate that the capacity for future improvement is good.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the collection and analysis of data to ensure that targets set are ambitious, specific and measurable and use these to evaluate the centre's effectiveness and further accelerate improvements in outcomes.
- Develop the systems already in place to enable more parents and carers to contribute formally to making strategic decisions about the direction and work of the centre.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Although some of its work is relatively new and so has not had time to show its full impact, there is clear evidence that outcomes for users are good. The centre is successful in helping children and their parents and carers to build good personal relationships and raise their confidence and self-esteem. Good attention is given to the promotion of emotional and mental health, in addition to physical well-being, for children and for adults, including the promotion of breastfeeding and helping users to

give up smoking. Data shows that breastfeeding has risen by 12% in the last year as a direct consequence of the midwifery project. This has moved Rowanfield from the bottom seven % of local catchment areas to the top 60%. The smoking cessation group not only benefits the health of parents and carers and their children, but has also raised their awareness in relation to economic well-being, as they realise what improvements they can now afford with the proceeds of their savings. Early intervention and referral from pregnancy through to the 'Pilot Twos' play a key part in the centre's focus on the reduction of mental health problems. Mothers speak highly of the benefits gained from 'Mellow Babies', which is closely linked to the work of the infant mental health (Secure Start) professionals who support the development of bonding and trusting relationships between parents and their children. Levels of disclosure about incidents of domestic violence have risen with increased communication skills gained through projects such as 'Every Child a Talker.'

Parents and carers benefit from a good range of courses provided to help them to acquire skills for the future and prepare for their return to the world of work. The approach often begins with 'fun' activities that capture interest and lead on to courses that bring formal qualifications. The 'Look Good Feel Good' course is a prime illustration of this, as it is both appealing and beneficial. For example, participants not only learn how to make their own low-cost body scrubs with porridge and petroleum jelly, but they learn that porridge can also be a healthy addition to the family diet. However, few parents and carers know about the parents' forum or where the suggestion box is sited. This limits the contribution that is made to the strategic management processes that influence the development of the centre.

Safeguarding is paramount and staff are very welcoming and attentive to users' needs. As a result, users and children feel extremely safe and secure in the centre. The centre's focus on the reduction in domestic violence, together with the tremendous support that is provided for families with children on child protection plans and those who are subject to Common Assessment Framework processes, is producing significantly improved outcomes for families. The number of child protection plans and Common Assessment Framework cases has reduced year-on-year in direct relation to the centre's early intervention programme and the staff's improved skills in accurately assessing need.

The outstanding progress found to be made by children in the nursery from very low starting points means that they are much better prepared for their life at school. Photographs posted on the walkway into the centre are a significant signpost to the fact that the centre provides many opportunities for parents and children to have tremendous fun together. The number of adults taking up accredited Level 1 and Level 2 English and mathematics courses has risen from 47 in 2007 to 200 across the cluster. The opportunity to attend at either centre within the cluster gives the students the opportunity to catch up or revisit learning and, as a result, the success rate is high with students going on to further qualifications, higher education and even university.

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	1
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 and employment	2

How good is the provision?

1

The centre provides exceptional levels of care for children, their parents and carers and others that access its services and facilities. The high quality of outreach work provided during home visits is an essential part the work of the centre. Staff are extremely skilled at forming relationships, instilling confidence and matching the right provision to the exact need of the families concerned. They know their families really well and are experts in assessing their needs. Users who have previously lacked any confidence in their own abilities have had their lives completely altered because staff have taken the time and trouble to encourage, coax and support them.

Transition arrangements for adult learners into higher education are individually tailored to ensure successful attendance. Good support, together with high expectations, has enabled adult learners to raise their aspirations, gain qualifications, improve their prospects and change their lives. For example, by attending the 'Dad's Group', one student made the journey through one course after another, to achieving his lifelong ambition to get qualifications and train as a social worker within five years.

The centre's users and their families benefit from resources which are shared within the cluster, making it possible to benefit greatly from the essential services of, for example, a speech therapist who can work with staff, parents and children in the key area of need, and promote the early acquisition of language, to successfully improve outcomes. Individualised learning is promoted exceptionally well. The inspection of the Early Years facility judged its provision to be outstanding.

The centre adapts well to meet the needs of the community. A good example is the group which was set up in response to the needs of a growing Polish community. The community family worker in charge of the 'Social English' group links with the Polish group and encourages families to attend both groups, with a view to moving all families on to an 'English for speakers of other languages' course as and when

they are ready. The centre is able to refer Polish families to a Polish language version of a well-known course on the management of behaviour. Many students from the 'Social English' class have gone on to access accredited courses leading to key qualifications and progress towards further education, training and employment. However, formal assessment through the collection of data is not yet fully refined. This means that the centre does not always have enough precise information and exact comparisons to show exactly how well it is performing, where it excels and where more emphasis is needed.

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	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The centre manager's clear vision and passion for improvement is shared by the whole community. Leadership and management are distributed across all levels of the centre. The senior management team consistently communicate high expectations about securing improvement. Everyone is valued and, as a result, there is a high level of commitment and enthusiasm. Leaders have channelled this to good effect, enabling the centre to make good progress.

All partners understand their roles in promoting the centre's integrated provision. Clear lines of accountability are provided by the governors and the local authority, who share high aspirations for the development of the centre. Aspects of their management include regular audits and inspection. The business plan clearly shows that the two centres within the cluster are working together, but retain their own distinct identity. The plan is evolving with the management team's growing understanding of how to gather and use data to ensure that target setting is rigorous and to set measures to evidence improvement and the success of its provision. The advisory board provides an invaluable link across schools and clusters within the area. The pre-planning discussions and post-event analysis ensure consistently good quality provision, with equality.

Value for money is outstanding. Strong and trusting relationships established between children's centres in the area have enabled them to work collaboratively, and to great effect, to reduce any duplication of work, target resources and reduce costs without compromising the high quality of service provision. The sharing of resources as a result of these outstanding partnerships has ensured that the centre can promote a good range of high quality services to match the wants and needs of

the users and have resulted in sustained improvement for both children and adult users.

The 'Social English' course, the provision of a popular behaviour management course in Polish and the centre's commitment to raise achievement for children in the Early Years and adult learners alike clearly illustrate that the promotion of equality and diversity is a significant feature of the centre's work. Whilst the centre is increasingly effective in reaching out to engage members of the community who are not accessing its services, and seeking the views of different groups, the contribution of users in making strategic decisions is not so well developed.

Safeguarding is given the utmost priority. Assessment frameworks and comprehensive multi-agency work are highly effective and ensure targeted support for vulnerable children and their families. Professionals report that the centre's child protection reports are clear and concise and delivered punctually. The single central record is very well maintained. Staff recruitment and induction procedures follow the very best practice and there is a comprehensive awareness of safeguarding issues amongst staff because of the high level of training undertaken.

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	1
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	2

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

The inspectors took account of the inspection findings from the concurrent Section 5 inspection of Rowanfield Junior School, where overall effectiveness was judged to be outstanding, and the Early Years inspection of Rowanfield Nursery, the centre's onsite provision for pre-school Early Years Foundation Stage children, which was also judged to have outstanding overall effectiveness.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Rowanfield centre on 11– 12 May 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank everybody who talked to inspectors or who made a contribution in other ways. You told us how much you value the friendly, welcoming atmosphere of the centre and what a great impact it has had on you and your families. You told us how it has helped raise your self-esteem and confidence and has encouraged you to achieve. You also told us how it has helped many of you to gain qualifications that have improved your prospects and how it has helped your children to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding, so that they can make a good start to their school life. All of this has shown us that the centre is well placed to continue to improve its contribution to the local community.

The care, guidance and support of families and children are excellent. The staff are very friendly and take the trouble to get know you well. They have forged very strong partnerships across different agencies so that they can support you when you need it and in the best way possible. Many of you say that the centre has changed your life and made tremendous improvements for your family. The centre is held in very high regard by all of the professionals working in multi-agency teams and voluntary organisations, who spoke to inspectors. We were impressed with the very high level of safeguarding within the centre and the high emphasis it places on helping you and your children to stay safe.

Inspectors have no doubt, given the drive and commitment of staff, that the good work will continue but we have asked the centre to make some further improvements to the good work that is already done. Firstly, we have asked the centre to find out how well children and users are doing so that they will know what else they need to provide and are able to check whether what they are doing is making a difference. Secondly, we have asked the centre to make sure that it provides enough opportunities for more of you to share your thoughts and contribute towards planning the work of the centre.

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