

Inspection report for Rusholme Children's Centre

Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	382216
Inspection dates	25-26 May
Reporting inspector	Joanne Smith HMI

Centre governance	Local authority
Centre leader	Jeff Burns
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	500169 Rusholme Children's Centre Daycare 500094 Hanifah Pre-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.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with head of centre, members of the senior leadership team, local authority senior officers, parents and carers, volunteers and representatives from a number of partner agencies.

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

Information about the centre

Rusholme Children's Centre operates from one building and was designated in 2004. It is a phase one children's centre situated on one of the main routes into Manchester city centre. The local authority is the lead agency and is responsible for performance monitoring and service delivery at the centre. The head of centre coordinates the services offered at the centre, including those offered by statutory and voluntary partners and commissioned services. These include health clinics, childcare, parent and child groups and adult learning opportunities. The head of centre also manages another children's centre. At the time of the inspection, the head of centre had been responsible for Rusholme Children's Centre for two weeks.

The centre serves an area that is in one of the top 30% areas of deprivation in the country. The majority of the local population is White British. Within the remaining minority ethnic population there is a range of heritages represented including Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean, Black African and Chinese. A number of British and international students who attend universities in the reach area also live locally.

The majority of the housing stock is rental property. Children in the reach area enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities that are lower than those typically found nationally. Unemployment in the area is high and many children under five live in households dependent on workless benefits.

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

Rusholme Children's Centre supports the families that use it adequately. Outcomes for users who are known to the centre are positive and in most areas are good. Adults are developing a good understanding of how to promote healthy eating for their children. They are supported well to learn about reducing risks in their homes. Children who use the two day care settings at the centre progress well in their learning and development. They are happy and confident and well prepared for life in full time education. Adults enjoy the learning experiences offered to them by the centre and some, although it is not clear how many, have progressed into employment or volunteering.

A major gap in the centre's systems is the effective evaluation of services and the impact they are having on family life in the short and long term. Parents and carers are encouraged to share their thoughts about the centre and its services. It is not clear however, how this information is used to shape service delivery at the centre. A small number are members of the centre's shared advisory board.

Staff in the centre are welcoming and they, along with their partners, are committed to improving outcomes for families in the reach area. Systems to safeguard and promote the welfare and safety of children are strong. Families who access the centre have their needs assessed well and services are tailored to their need. There is not enough clear assessment and evaluation of the reach area to say categorically that local need is met, although anecdotal evidence suggests this to be the case. Alongside the good provision for children's learning and development in the centre and in the wider private and voluntary Early Years Foundation Stage providers, adult

learning is well provided for.

The community served by the centre is a rich ethnic and cultural mix. This is reflected in the centre's strong focus on providing English for speakers of other languages classes and providing a Welcome Group to ease new arrivals to the community into life in a new area or, for a significant number, a new country. Families of children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by services offered at the centre, helping them to feel more comfortable to access wider services.

The centre is described by parents and partners as a hub of information. The outreach worker post is key in this. This post has been vacant for over a month and the processes to fill the gap left are not secure or embedded, reducing the centre's ability to fulfil its role. There is a good range of information displayed around the centre promoting services and raising health awareness issues. Much of this is written in English, making it inaccessible to some centre users.

The centre has recently been through a period of significant change with some key members of the staff team leaving the service and a new manager taking up his post two weeks prior to the inspection. This is the result of significant rationalisation in the local authority. Although a handover programme was put in place, this was not as effective as it needed to be to help the new manager have a clear overview of the characteristics of the reach area and the rationale behind the services offered by the centre. As a result of the changes, much of the information needed for the inspection was difficult to locate.

Clear staff supervision systems are in place and management structures are well understood, despite the changes. Systems for monitoring the centre's work are in place and as a process they are adequate. However, the quality of monitoring of the centre's work is poor, resulting in a lack of challenge in the targets set for the centre. A substantial consequence of this is that the centre delivers to local authority or district priorities with little or no knowledge of whether these are the key priorities for their reach area. In addition, the centre is unsure of where the most vulnerable groups are or whether they are the families using or registered with the centre. The quality of evaluation in the centre is weak. This has been recognised at a more senior level. However, action to rectify this has not been swift enough to help the centre to review its impact properly and confidently target services where they are most needed. Consequently, the centre's capacity to improve is currently satisfactory.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - information held about the reach area and what is known about registrations and attendance patterns is used effectively to target users and service priorities
 - self-evaluation provides an accurate basis for leaders to develop an
 - effective development plan that accurately reflects the identified needs of the centre's reach and details the actions required at an operational level
 - robust systems are developed to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of service provision and the impact of outcomes on users
 - sharp, measureable and challenging targets to speed improvement and focus on services where they are most needed are in place
 - the local authority speeds up the process of decision making to close the gaps left by the rationalisation exercise and ensure consistent messages are received by all parties.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

For families who use the centre, their understanding of keeping healthy is developing well and obesity levels for children in the Reception Year in the area are below local authority levels. Parents who attend the Health and Nutrition in the Really Young (HENRY) courses are a targeted group. As a group they report improved understanding of nutrition. Parents' awareness of cultural choices relating to how food is cooked and ideas such as having a 'chubby' baby are worked through. This helps parents and carers to understand that eating habits established in the early years continue to have an impact on health in later life. Take up of breastfeeding is high in comparison to local authority figures and the rate of teenage pregnancy is low. This has partly been attributed to the cultural make up of the area.

Parenting courses are highly beneficial to those who access them. The positive impact on family life and parent and child emotional well-being is still felt many months after the end of the course. Families who are using the Common Assessment Framework are well supported by the centre's approach to joint working. The Early Intervention Team is instrumental in moving families down the continuum of need, therefore, reducing the need for professional intervention in their lives. Parents and carers feel safe in the centre and security is good, reducing the risk to adults and children. There is a positive atmosphere and this is reflected in the good behaviour and respect for others that is evident around the centre. However, there is too little evidence that adults are well prepared to make appropriate choices and decisions and their level of involvement in decision making at the centre is unclear.

Parents and carers who use the centre build up good levels of confidence. Those

who access the Pre-School Special Needs group move onto using other universal groups with their children. This is also the case for families who attend the Welcome Group. These families are often new to the country and the group is very supportive in helping them to find out about the area and the centre, beginning to reduce the isolation felt by some of them. The Welcome Group is run by volunteers from the centre's successful volunteer programme. A small number of volunteers have moved into employment. This, coupled with the support to access in work benefits and workless benefits is increasingly improving the financial stability of the families who access the centre.

Learning is given a high priority at the centre and it is clear that children make good progress while they are there. Transition into school for these children is well managed; it is particularly sensitively handled for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This helps them to settle well into school life. Children who do not access any pre-school provision are sensitively supported with entry to school through a 'summer school'. Local schools report that this improves the settling in process for children who accessed the opportunity. There is less secure information to support adults' successes in learning. However, those who access English for speakers of other languages classes demonstrate their good progress moving onto level 1 qualifications or passing the citizenship examination.

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	3
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?

3

Learning and development are at the core of much of the centre's work. There is a strong focus on providing English classes for speakers of other languages. These are popular and well thought through, providing learners with practical skills, such as telephoning school to report a child's absence or explaining symptoms of illness to a doctor, at the early sessions. Good opportunities to act as a volunteer are available to centre users. This programme is very successful in developing volunteers, some are now trained to deliver basic Red Cross first-aid and some of those who speak

English as an additional language are trained as interpreters.

The centre has the large majority of families with children aged under five registered. However, a much smaller proportion actually access the centre and it is not clearly known by the centre if these are the families most in need of support. When families do use the centre and its services, their needs are assessed well and packages of support are tailored to their needs. This is supported by an effective referral and allocation system that is managed by the Early Intervention Team. Assessment of local community need is not conducted as effectively. Activities to reach out to the community, such as Family Fun Days, are successful in making contact but analysis of the information gathered is narrow. Consequently, it is not clear whether the range of services is as well matched to local need as it could be. Services are wide ranging and are matched to district and local authority priorities.

Health services delivered at the centre are well used with the centre described as 'a huge focal point for women's social contact and peer support'. The centre has numerous, informative displays some of which are sensitively positioned. Much of the displayed material is written in English, meaning that it is not easily accessible to everyone, especially those who are not yet confident enough to ask for help.

The Early Intervention Team and Home-Start volunteers are effective in working with families in the reach area when they have sought support. A useful Talk Time session run by the Early Intervention Team at the centre is well used by some to gain practical advice or support. At times of crisis, families seek support from the centre, for example to access emergency financial support. Some of the outreach work is limited, due to the vacant post at the centre. Volunteers are undertaking areas of the work linked to this post, but some tasks, such as those working with the Early Intervention Team, have been adversely affected. This situation is creating a sense of uncertainty in some who describe the situation as 'feeling like everything is in freefall'.

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

Systems to ensure that adults working in the centre are suitable to do so are robust

and secure. All staff and volunteers are subject to a Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) check. There is a clear record of these, including the triennial renewal date, which is used well to track and review CRB disclosures. Partner agencies cooperate very well with the centre in ensuring all adults are suitable by providing confirmatory letters that their staff have been subject to a CRB check. Additionally some partners provide staff CRB disclosure numbers as extra security to the system. There is a comprehensive file of accessible information, such as contact telephone numbers and procedures to follow, for example, if there is an allegation against a member of staff. Staff, volunteers and partner agency workers have a good understanding of the expectations of them and are clear about reporting procedures should they have concerns. Volunteers and partners can confidently state the reporting procedures should they have concerns about either a child's welfare or an adult's conduct.

The centre's commitment to promoting equality of access to those that use it is clear. The families of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported to attend the centre through a specialist group. Services, such as psychologist support, are effective in helping those with mental or emotional health needs to access services. Displays in the centre are representative of the community. However, the range of written material in languages other than English is limited. The centre has information about the reach area and the whereabouts of the families whose circumstances may make them hard to reach. However, it does not use the information well enough to be certain it is reaching them.

The centre has established strong relationships with its statutory and non-statutory partners. This leads to robust multi-agency working with families who have contact with these services. These partnerships are used well to inform families about the work of the centre. However, the number of users is low in comparison to the number registered and those in the reach area. Voluntary services, such as the Birch Centre and Home-Start, are used effectively to extend the work of the centre. The centre teacher is well used by the local Early Years Foundation Stage providers. Her input has been instrumental in improving inspection outcomes to good for the vast majority of them. The work that the teacher does with local universities and theatres, for example, is a creative use of resources to make progress in narrowing the achievement gap between the lowest performing children and the rest. This is having some effect, albeit slowly. Good use is made of the building to facilitate a number of groups, including a Saturday morning Latvian group. These activities indicate that the centre is providing acceptable value for money.

Governance and accountability arrangements are in place and understood by all. Very recent changes to the management of the centre are not yet established or embedded. However, the local authority has determined a clear direction and has recognised that some aspects of the centre's monitoring systems are in need of improvement. In some respects, however, the local authority has not been swift enough in its decision making, leaving the centre without vital staff such as an outreach worker. In addition, although the local authority has put communication strategies in place these are not always effective. This is illustrated by the different understanding of how the role of outreach worker is going to be filled. The centre

has a shared advisory board in place that has adequate representation from partners and parents. Attendance at this is heavily weighted to the centre management team. Some local key partners have not been included in the advisory board: their omission means that the centre is not accessing key elements of local intelligence to aid their service delivery planning. The local authority has put satisfactory systems in place to hold the centre to account. These however, have not been used effectively as a tool to monitor the centre's performance.

Self-evaluation and the annual conversation documentation are not effective in setting clear priorities or harnessing and using key information. Data that the centre holds about the reach area has not been sufficiently analysed, or if it has the documentation is not accessible to the new manager. The centre development plan contains generic local authority and district priorities for the centre to work towards. It does not have clear, measurable targets to enable the centre to properly evaluate its effectiveness in improving outcomes for children and families in the reach area. Targets that are used link to the local authority and do not challenge the centre to effect change at a rapid enough pace. For example, the target for narrowing the achievement gap between the lowest performing children and the rest is well within the reach of the centre, it being 0.5% higher than the local authority. In addition, the evaluation systems used by the centre to capture users' views are not particularly helpful. They take the form of a satisfaction assessment which does not give the centre specific information on the impact it is having in the short, medium or long term. In addition for those whose ability to read English is limited, the evaluation forms are unclear resulting in answers such as 'yes' to questions that clearly require a qualitative answer.

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	4
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	2
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	4
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been	2

commissioned to provide	
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	3

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

Information from the inspections of Rusholme Children's Centre Daycare and Hanifah Pre-school was used to inform some of the judgements at this inspection.

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 Rusholme Children's Centre on 25-26 May 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you to those of you who came to speak to the inspectors. We also read some of the things you have said when you have been on courses. We found that many of you who use the centre enjoy the courses you attend. The centre places a high priority on helping you and your children to learn new skills and this is helping your children to make good progress and to be prepared for when they start school. We know that those of you who act as volunteers at the centre have learned a great deal and you are happy to share you new skills and knowledge with others. We are pleased that some people who are volunteers find this helps them to gain employment. We found that the centre is a safe place for you and your children. The centre works well with other agencies, such as the health professionals and family support workers to safeguard and protect the welfare of your children.

The centre offers a number of different services which are helpful to families. These include baby clinics, birth registration and English for speakers of other languages classes (ESOL). We also found that there is a lot of helpful information for you to read and take away from the centre. This is mostly written in English. However, we are assured that volunteers who are trained as interpreters and staff help those who need help with getting the information they need. We learned that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their families are welcomed and well supported at the centre at the Pre-School Special Needs Group. We are pleased that they are helped to use other centre services as a result of attending this group.

The centre is good at making sure families who need help or support get the right type of support from the right people. They are not as good at making sure they know what all the families of young children who live in the reach area need. We have asked them to get better at this part of their work. When the centre asks you about a course or a service you have used they are good at finding out if you have enjoyed it. They are not good enough at finding out if it has been helpful to you either straight away or if what you learned is still helping you after a few months. This means they do not know if what they are doing is helping you as much as it could do. We have asked the centre to improve how they review their work so they can see more clearly how they can make the centre and the services it offers even better. The centre has some systems to help them to plan their work. However, these plans do not always state clearly enough what the centre wants to achieve and if there is a clear target it is not challenging enough to speed up improvements. We have asked the centre to make sure it sets challenging and ambitious targets, making sure they are relevant to the area surrounding the centre.

We know that the centre has undergone some big changes recently. This has led to some people feeling unclear about some of the centre's work. We have asked the local authority to make sure everyone understands what is happening and if they are planning to fill vacant posts to do it as quickly as possible. These are the main reasons we have made the centre satisfactory. Thank you once again to those of you who came to speak to us. We wish you well for the future.

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