

# Inspection report for Rotherham Central Children's Centre

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Local authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	383714
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Centre leader	Mrs Helen Simpson
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Ferham Junior and Infant School URN 106839
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	The Ferham Centre EY407034

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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.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the centre management team, centre staff, representatives of the local authority, members of the advisory board, users of the centre and partner agencies. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Rotherham Central Children's Centre developed from a Sure Start local programme and was designated as a phase one children's centre in 2005. The centre is located alongside Ferham Primary School in The Ferham Centre near to Rotherham town centre. There is an outreach base within Thornhill Young People's Centre. The children's centre provides the full core offer and is managed on behalf of the local authority by the governing body of Ferham Primary School. Support to the governing body is provided by the advisory board. The on-site day care provides childcare and education within the Early Years Foundation Stage for children from two to five years. This provision is inspected separately and inspection reports can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The centre serves families living in the top 30% most deprived areas in the country. Almost all the area is within the top five per cent most deprived areas in the country. The majority of the families in the area are of Asian origin. There has been an increase of Eastern European communities moving into the area. Families face issues of cultural and language barriers, high levels of unemployment, low income and poor health. The number of families claiming benefits is above the Rotherham average. Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills that are below age-expected levels.

## 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 families**

**2**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**2**

## Main findings

The overall effectiveness of the children's centre is good. The centre sees itself as being at the heart of the community, offering information and support to those most in need. Cultural and language barriers have been broken down due to the determination and commitment of staff who treat all users with respect and encourage them to air their views. As a result, more men are becoming involved in their children's learning and women feel less isolated. All the parents and carers spoken with and the centre's own evaluations demonstrate how effective the centre is in improving lives of families in the area. As one worker stated, 'we give the parents the seed then the parents grow it'.

The centre successfully engages with the majority of its families, particularly the groups in most need of help. For example, the number of migrant families benefitting from services that remain in contact with the centre continues to increase. Due to the high mobility levels of families within the community the centre has a constant challenge to keep abreast of their individual needs. However, the passion and drive shown by staff is having a positive outcome as families gain in confidence and learn to trust them.

A specific strength of the centre is that it recognises the importance of involving users in decision making and adapting services to meet their specific needs. Views are sought through a variety of means. These include surveys, evaluations, one-to-one meetings and comment boxes. As a result users play a very significant role in developing services. There is a core group of users who have improved their family well-being through courses and volunteering. However, the centre does not yet build sufficiently well on these achievements so as to enable more users to gain formal qualifications.

The links with the health service have strengthened as a system has been introduced to keep the centre informed of any new births. As a result, contact can be made with the family within weeks and needs assessed. Policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting equality and diversity are good. The Family Information Kiosk within the

reception area at the centre is well used, providing useful information for families. Jobcentre Plus can no longer provide a worker within the centre but a comprehensive file of information and the latest jobs are clearly displayed in the reception area. A report is compiled by Jobcentre Plus on a frequent basis and disseminated to the centre.

The capacity for sustained improvement is good. Priorities reflect the diverse community and tracking systems are thorough, and effectively identify any shortfall towards the targets.

## **What does the centre need to do to improve further?**

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve outcomes for families in the reach area by:
  - increasing the number of users accessing further education in order to improve their life chances through employment.

## **How good are outcomes for families?**

<b>2</b>
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A good range of health-related services are delivered from the centre and these reflect the diverse community. The promotion of Health Week gave parents, carers and children the opportunity to take part in fun activities such as, food tasting, making smoothies and testing their knowledge on 'hidden sugar' in food. Families learnt what foods are healthy and were enthused to try the different fruits at home. The importance of breastfeeding is a message the centre has worked hard to promote. Breastfeeding peer support is in place and there has been a steady rise in the number of mothers successfully sustaining breastfeeding. The Re-shape weight management programme was a great success with 95% of women losing weight and learning new ideas to take back to their families. Another success story has been the number of families signing up to 'smoke free homes'. This number continues to rise.

The centre is a safe place for all who attend. The promotion of Health Safety Week served as a reminder to parents and carers constantly to check the home environment as their children move from one developmental stage to another. Home visits are undertaken to offer safety advice and equipment to help parents and carers understand the importance of safety within the home. Effective support is in place to support families and there are many moving accounts of how the centre has helped families in times of crisis and to bring some stability to their lives. Parents and carers refer to the centre staff as 'my other family' and say that the support given made them feel 'I am somebody'. The centre is fully involved in the Common Assessment Framework and as a result the number of children subject to child protection plans has decreased.

Children are well prepared for school as there is a seamless transition through day care into the Early Years Foundation Stage. Tracking systems reflect that children attending the centre achieve higher at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage than those who have

not attended. Targeted support is in place to promote language development through the Every Child a Talker programme. The introduction of the Imagination Library has been a resounding success with the large majority of children now receiving free books. Bi-lingual support enables the children to express themselves and gain confidence. The centre is acutely aware of the potential isolation for the majority of the families due to language and cultural differences. For this reason, the Living in My Community course provided information on cultures and practices within the United Kingdom. The course was well received with parents and carers gaining a better understanding of issues including health, driving, computers and citizenship. The focus on involving fathers led to the successful Dad's the Way to Do it session, with fathers saying 'you get to bond more with your child'.

Families are very well represented on the advisory board with one parent currently in the position of vice-chair. Opportunities for parental views to be heard and acted upon are excellent. Changes to the timing of activities and re-arrangement of the reception area have been due to parents expressing their views. Children make their views known as they help plan their activities in the holiday club. Their behaviour is exemplary and they are developing extremely positive relationships. Visual resources are available for those who are not able to communicate easily whether this is due to age, learning disability or the ability to read English. A survey carried out by the centre on parental satisfaction showed that the large majority of parents and carers were satisfied with the service. Jumble sales held at the centre have been a very successful way to involve the local community.

There is an emphasis on encouraging a positive learning environment for both parents, carers and children. The Giving Real Opportunities for Women course was very well attended and raised awareness of employment, and entrepreneurial opportunities. The introduction of sewing classes has been an innovative way to improve skills and has proved to be a popular activity. A number of parents and carers have become involved in voluntary work. This includes promoting breastfeeding, running the Bumps to Babies sessions and working alongside the infant feeding coordinator. However, too few users access further education to improve their economic stability and the number of users obtaining employment remains low.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships, and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>1</b>

**The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment.**

**3**

## **How good is the provision?**

**2**

The centre has good procedures to assess the needs of families. This begins with a comprehensive welcome form completed at a face-to-face meeting when the needs of the family and the services the centre is able to offer are discussed. The centre has a good knowledge of the specific needs of its target groups and has successfully increased engagement across these. Bi-lingual workers, specialist health visitors, family support and outreach work all contribute to supporting those families most in need.

The centre prides itself on offering a range of learning events that enable families to gain different experiences of life. Trips to three different seaside resorts during the summer break were a resounding success as it was the first time for some of the families that they had been able to travel much beyond the town. Partners are fully involved delivering health services alongside centre staff. For example, Bumps and Babes, Breast Buddies, Baby Massage and baby clinic are regular sessions to support the health and well-being of families. Physical activities are provided through Start to Play, a soft play activity which originated through links with Rotherham Football Club. Parenting skills are popular choices and parents and carers begin to understand the world from a child's perspective in the Your Child is Amazing course.

The needs of the community are constantly being reviewed, with an emphasis on learning English as a second language and Drop-in and Play sessions specifically for Eastern European families. Parents and carers are delighted that, with their increased language skills, they can now help their children at school and that they have increased confidence to join other classes and outings. For those ready to move on, a fully equipped information and communication technology suite is based within the centre and help is available to complete application forms. One parent, now working as a teaching assistant, said how the centre provided a 'stepping stone' and gave her the opportunity and confidence to go on to further training.

Childcare is good and has achieved the Quality Kitemark Accreditation. Children from the most disadvantaged areas access childcare and develop skills through good quality resources. Case studies and discussions with parents and carers reflect the good quality care and support given to families. The centre encourages parents, carers and children to have aspirations and celebrates success through praise, stickers and certificates. Childcare Champion was awarded to a father who works tirelessly at the centre as a volunteer and celebrated at an evening event hosted by Rotherham Council.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

**2**

Leadership and management are consistently good at all levels. Meticulous data is generated by the local authority. This provides a sound base to ensure that priorities and targets for the coming year reflect the needs of the community and provide appropriate challenge to the centre. The centre head and centre coordinator provide clear, motivating leadership. Accommodation is used wisely with the sports hall facilities shared between the school and the community. Rooms within the centre are multi-purpose and adapted for a range of activities. Partner agencies and parents are well represented on the advisory board. Meetings are held bi-monthly and targets are monitored, evaluated and reviewed. Key partners recognise the centre is a very useful venue to share good practice and they state that the centre is 'doing a fantastic, committed job'.

Keeping children and families safe is at the forefront of the centre's work and safeguarding procedures are rigorous. Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place and clear notices and information remind parents and carers of their responsibilities. The well-qualified centre staff ensure families receive well-integrated support through signposting to relevant services. Centre staff continually look for ways to improve engagement and they actively promote the centre by walking around the local streets and town centre to meet parents. The large majority of local families are registered with the centre and levels of engagement in the first six months of the current financial year have increased by nearly 50% compared to 2010. Outcomes for children who have attended the centre's provision are growing closer to those achieved nationally by children of a similar age.

Case studies show where the centre has successfully improved outcomes for families including those living in the most vulnerable circumstances. Welcome posters are displayed in a variety of languages and visual images replace text where possible to simplify the important messages to parents. The centre is well designed to allow users full access. The centre provides good value for money with sustainability being at the forefront of all decisions, as shown by the recent re-profiling of children's centre boundaries to fit with Learning Community areas. The childcare provision has also adapted to meet the needs within the community by moving the under twos to a separate site and increasing the number of places available for the older children in order to meet demand.

These are the grades for leadership and management:



<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision.</b>	<b>2</b>

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

The most recent inspection of the Rotherham Central childcare provision was considered during the inspection.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Rotherham Central Children's Centre on 26 October 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank those of you who spoke with us. Your views were very helpful to the inspection. You told us how much the centre means to you and how the staff, 'always have time'. The centre leader and coordinator work well together and they clearly know what they need to do to make the centre even better. The centre is aware that there are times when many of you may feel isolated and lack confidence in how to improve your lives. The

centre understands the needs of your community and can demonstrate its success in including you in its activities and services. Many of you have taken advantage of the parenting courses on offer and have enjoyed the cookery courses and trips. It is important that you continue to achieve and we have asked the centre to increase the number of you that go on to adult training and ultimately increase your opportunities to gain employment.

We were pleased that a number of you have become involved as volunteers in the centre and are confident to become members of the advisory board where you have a strong voice to shape improvements within the centre. It is encouraging that so many of you are making the effort to become involved with the centre. Your centre places a high importance on ensuring you can all express your views. For the centre to continue with its good work it is important that you continue to tell the centre what you need to develop your skills.

You told us that you feel safe at the centre. A high priority is given to safeguarding your children. Through the centre's work, your homes have been made safer and you have gained more understanding of dangers both at home and on the roads. Centre staff are good at assessing your needs and ensuring they provide the support that is right for you as a family. This can be either directly from the centre or through its partner agencies.

Your children in the childcare provision are well looked after. They are progressing well and are well prepared for school. We enjoyed watching the Start to Play session where the children had great fun being able to run off lots of energy in a safe environment with all the soft play equipment. It was wonderful to hear how many of your children have registered on the Imagination Library where they receive free books and take great pleasure in receiving these and sharing them with their parents.

Thank you again for your participation in the inspection. We would like to wish you and your families the very best for the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).