

# Inspection report for Valley Children's Centre

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Local authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	407036
Inspection dates	21 - 22 November 2012
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Centre leader	David Saunders
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school, if applicable	Broom Valley Community School 106835
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Valley Children's Centre EY364483

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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 Section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

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

The inspectors held meetings with staff and senior managers from the centre, including the headteacher and a deputy headteacher from Broom Valley Community School. Inspectors also met with parents and representatives from Rotherham local authority, members of the advisory board and a number of partners including those from health, social care and education services. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Valley Children's Centre is a phase two children's centre, designated in 2008 and provides the full core purpose of services. It is situated on the site of Broom Valley Community School. The report of this inspection is available on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). To help form stronger partnerships between services the Local Authority re-organised the children's centre reach areas in April 2011 into 'learning communities' based around the local secondary school and their feeder primary schools. The main areas now covered by the centre are Boston Castle and Sitwell and some smaller areas within Brinsworth, Catcliffe, Valley and Rotherham East. Staffing levels were increased at the centre in January 2012, to meet the greater needs of families in the new reach area.

The headteacher of Broom Valley Community School is also the head of centre. One of the school's deputy headteachers has delegated responsibilities which include the day-to-day leadership and management of the centre. Governance of the centre is provided by the

school governing body on behalf of Rotherham local authority, in conjunction with an advisory board. Advisory board members include the headteacher and deputy headteacher of the school, members of the school's governing body, delivery partners and partners from other schools in the reach area, parents and community representatives.

The centre provides a range of services including health services, social care, family play sessions, parenting programmes, adult education and outreach support. The centre also provides childcare provision on site.

The majority of families are from minority ethnic groups. The largest groups of minority ethnic families are of Asian heritage with increasing numbers of Eastern European families. There are 1183 children under the age of five years in the reach area. Of these 19% are living in households dependent on workless benefits and 45% live in an area within the 30% most deprived in the country. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities are below those expected for their age on entry to early years provision.

## 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**

<b>2</b>
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### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

<b>2</b>
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## Main findings

Valley Children's Centre is a good children's centre. Good leadership and management of the centre ensure a good quality provision is provided. As a result, outcomes for children and families are mostly good. The effective partnership between the children's centre, the childcare provision and Broom Valley Community School ensures seamless services support the needs of children and families.

The centre makes effective use of its equality action plan to bring about improvements. As a result, inclusion, narrowing of the achievement gap for children and meeting the needs of the target groups, including disabled children are good. The leadership team is dedicated to improving the quality of provision to provide the community with high quality services which have a clear focus on those in most need of intervention and support.

Provision is good overall due to careful evaluation and planning of good quality services on site and at outreach venues. As a result, engagement across all target groups is on the

increase. The centre has been particularly successful in engaging families in the new reach area of Canklow, who previously have not engaged with centre services.

Safeguarding arrangements are good. Effective multi-agency work and skilled family support workers, ensure that those families most in need of support are targeted well and this has a positive impact on their lives.

Data clearly show that the improvement in raising children's achievement from their very low starting points is good. Well-planned activities and sessions, effective assessment of children's starting points and strong transition arrangements have a positive impact on raising children's attainment. Some adults have successfully obtained accredited qualifications and engage in training and adult learning activities. However, the centre recognises that it does not yet provide a wide enough range of strategies to engage more workless families in adult training and learning opportunities, to improve their economic stability and independence. The centre and its health partners encourage families to adopt healthy lifestyles, which has a positive impact on their improving health and well-being. However, the percentage of children being breastfed at six to eight weeks at 23% remains well below the national average.

The capacity for sustained improvement is good due to the centre's impact on improving outcomes and the good quality of provision which has increased engagement with target groups, and effective leadership and management.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve the economic stability and independence of workless families by developing strategies to improve employability skills through increased participation in adult education and training opportunities.
- Improve health outcomes for children by increasing the percentage of mothers who sustain breastfeeding at six to eight weeks.

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

2
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The centre is clearly focused on raising children's achievement. The good quality play and learning sessions and good onsite childcare provision increase children's enjoyment and achievement. Evidence shows the positive impact on the achievement of children who benefit from the funded places for two-year-olds, particularly in relation to their personal, social and emotional development. Data and feedback from local schools clearly demonstrate that children who attend the centre's childcare provision, enter the Reception Year are well prepared and settle more easily than their peers. The percentage of children gaining at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scales with at least

six points in each of the scales for personal, social and emotional development and communication and language and literacy shows an improving trend from 48% in 2010 to 62.4% in 2012. This represents very good progress overall taking into account children's very low starting points. The achievement gap between the lowest 20% of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest has narrowed from 41.6% in 2010 to 31.7% in 2012.

Families are effectively safeguarded because of the centre's close attention to promoting their well-being and safety. Families whose circumstances make them vulnerable, looked after children and children subject to a child protection plan, receive well-targeted support. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process is used well to support families experiencing a range of difficulties. Families benefit greatly from individual advice and the promotion of safety. As a result, they have a good understanding of how to keep their families safe and there is evidence of a reduction in the escalation of child protection issues.

Health outcomes are at least satisfactory. Most families develop a satisfactory understanding of how to keep healthy because the centre and its health partners provide a range of activities and services, which promote a healthy lifestyle. For example, attendance at clinics and immunisation is on the increase. Although the percentage of children in the Reception Year who are obese has reduced from 12.9% in 2009 to 10.98% in 2011 this remains above the national average. There has been a positive impact on reducing smoking during pregnancy and recent data show that 44% of mothers who previously smoked had stopped by the time they gave birth. Breastfeeding is well promoted in the centre and mothers who choose to breastfeed are effectively supported by breastfeeding peer mentors. However, at 23% children being breastfed at six to eight weeks remains well below the national average of 47.1%.

Users are enabled to make a positive contribution through consultation and their evaluations of activities. They participate in decision-making through their membership on the advisory board. The well-attended 'Stay and Chat' sessions provide a useful forum for parents to air their views and become involved in the direction of the centre. The centre listens to and acts on the views of parents. The centre encourages parents to progress into volunteering at the centre and provides training for them to do so. Some volunteers have progressed to gain qualifications or employment. One parent explained, 'I am taking an NVQ course while I am volunteering here. I have gained the confidence to apply for a job in a secondary school as a one-to-one support worker.' Some adults have benefited from courses to improve skills such as literacy, numeracy and sewing. However, as recognised by the centre, a low percentage of workless families improve their employability skills through participation in adult education and training opportunities.

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>3</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>2</b>
<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.</b>	<b>3</b>

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

<b>2</b>
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The centre is at the heart of the community and together with its partners provides effective assessment and timely well-coordinated support for families with circumstances that make them vulnerable. Parents value the good quality individual support they receive in times of personal crisis. The centre provides parents with valuable information and signposting to relevant agencies for issues, such as domestic violence, sexual health and alcohol and drug misuse. Families also benefit from individual advice on education, housing, tax credits and benefits. Effective signposting to employment services and access to a touch screen kiosk provide information and support on employment opportunities.

The centre's provision is well matched to the needs of its users through a broad range of activities and services that are effectively targeted and adapted according to need. Overall, participation rates across the range of services have increased well over the last year. Effective monitoring enables the centre to analyse the increase in engagement across all target groups and identify areas where further work is required, such as engaging more workless families in courses. . The centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for families through a range of well-planned sessions such as 'Bumps and Babes' and 'Mini Millers'. Joint sessions for parents and children are fun and staff effectively model good parenting skills. The centre promotes community cohesion well and families from a range of cultural backgrounds demonstrate respect for each other. One centre user said, 'I bring my neighbour's children. They came here from Eastern Europe and don't have family in the area to support them, so I help. It was fantastic to be able to bring their daughter with Down's Syndrome here. The centre really helped her development.'

The centre's effective partnership working means that there is an increasing range of adult learning opportunities to meet the needs of adults. Some adults benefit from courses such as English for speakers of other languages and sewing classes. One parent commented, 'I enjoy the sewing class and it has really helped my self-confidence. I now have a part-time job. I can make clothes for my family which helps us to celebrate our African heritage and helps me save money.'

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?**

<b>2</b>
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The dedicated head of centre leads a professional and experienced team, including the deputy headteacher who provides strong day-to-day leadership and management. Governance and accountability arrangements are clear with a well-established advisory board linking to the governing body of the school. Representation on the advisory board is wide and includes parents and many of the key delivery partners and partners from the local community. They have a strong input into the direction of the centre and its services.

Close monitoring and a clear strategic lead by the local authority is having a positive impact on improving outcomes. Development plans have challenging targets which are well informed by quarterly data provided by the local authority. Effective use of data at all levels results in continually improving provision. Rigorous evaluation and analysis of data is leading to improved outcomes and narrowing the gap, particularly between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the rest. Staff are well supported through robust supervision arrangements and are well equipped and trained for their particular roles.

The effective use of resources has a positive impact on outcomes for families and as a result, the centre provides good value for money. The outreach work and family support are targeted effectively to meet the needs of families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. The centre has effective vetting and recruitment systems. Staff and partners have a clear understanding of policies and procedures to ensure the protection of users. They identify and report concerns promptly and collaborate effectively with other key agencies to reduce the risk of harm to children and support their development needs.

Partnerships with services such as social care, health and education contribute to good outcomes for users overall. Transition arrangements with the host school are excellent and are very well established with other local schools. This supports children's care and education particularly well.

The centre's work in targeting outreach services and their consultation with families and partners is good. Consequently, the centre successfully encourages families into the centre who are reluctant to engage.



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 secures 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 findings from the concurrent inspection of Valley Children's Centre childcare provision and the most recent inspection of Broom Valley Community School have contributed to this report and judgements.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Valley Children's Centre on 21 and 22 November 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you very much for talking to us and welcoming us into your sessions. The information you gave and the stories you shared with us helped us to make our judgements. Some parents told us how the centre has supported them to improve their lives and how much more confidence as parents they now have.

You told us you enjoy the sessions with your children such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Mini Millers' and a good number of families attend these sessions. We found that children and adults benefit from accessing services at the centre and children make good progress from their starting points.

The centre is successful in engaging with families that need most support because it targets its outreach services. The centre works with adult education providers to give families access to courses, which help to improve education, skills and future employment opportunities. However, we found that not many of the workless families participate in these opportunities. We have asked the centre to find ways to increase their participation.

You told us how your involvement with the centre and involvement in parenting courses is improving your ability to keep your children safe. We found that staff have a good understanding of child protection procedures and that they are well trained and promptly report any concerns to relevant agencies. This is having a good impact on helping keep families safe. Children using the centre's services behave well. You learn more about how to stay healthy through advice from staff and health partners and sessions at the centre such as 'Bumps and Babes'. However, the percentage of babies who are breastfed at six-to-eight weeks is still well below the national average. Therefore, we have asked the centre to improve this further.

You reported that you get on well together at the centre and there are good opportunities for you to contribute to the decision making. The centre listens to you and asks you what you think of the services and activities it offers and therefore many more of you are using the centre.

The centre works well with everyone in the community, irrespective of their background or disability and is increasing the participation of those who most need their support. We found that the centre successfully promotes equality and diversity and families treat each other with respect.

The centre sets high expectations and the clear focus on improving the centre is proving effective. The centre has a good grasp on its strengths and has clear plans in place for further improvement. Leaders use data well to measure the impact of its services and to set precise targets.

We thoroughly enjoyed spending time at your centre, meeting you and your children, and 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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).