

Inspection report for Rye Oak Primary School and Children's Centre

Local authority	Southwark
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Rye Oak Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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.

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

The inspectors held meetings with senior managers from the centre, frontline staff, parents, staff from partner organisations, members of the advisory board and a representative of the local authority linked to the centre.

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

Information about the centre

This is a phase one centre designated in 2006 and co-located with a primary school in south east London. The centre is at the Southern edge of Peckham, bordering on Nunhead. It houses the primary school's Early Years Foundation Stage unit, providing places for 125 children aged three to five years old. Children in the centre's reach area demonstrate skills, knowledge and abilities below those expected for their age on entry to early years provision.

The centre is managed by the school's governing body on behalf of the local authority. The centre manager is responsible for the day-to-day organisation of activities and services and leads the strategic direction of the work of the centre. He is line managed by the headteacher of the co-located primary school. The school's governing body has delegated responsibility to a children's centre committee to oversee and monitor the work of the centre. The centre's advisory board has representatives from the governing body, parents' forum, commissioned services and local private, voluntary and independent settings.

Rye Oak's reach encompasses some of the most deprived areas in the country. There are 10 Lower Layer Super Output areas (LSOAs), of which 60% are in the bottom 30% most deprived nationally. There are approximately 1,480 children under five years old living within the centre's reach area – an increase of 19% over the previous four years.

The centre's reach area is rich in diversity, both culturally and linguistically. For example, 26% of children speak a language other than English as their first language. Over two thirds of families are of minority ethnic heritage. About one third of children and adults who use the centre come from homes that are dependent on benefits and where no one is in work. The centre provides full core purpose 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

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

The centre makes a good contribution to improving outcomes for families. It is a highly welcoming place which is considered by families as an integral part of the community and seen as a safe haven. The centre is inclusive and a large majority of families accessing services are among the groups and individuals in most need of intervention and support. A key strength of the centre is the family support work, which is helping those who are experiencing difficulties in their lives to make significant improvements. Parents develop a secure understanding of how to keep their children safe and protect them from harmful situations, such as accidents in the home. Parents were overwhelmingly keen to share how the centre has helped them to make changes in their lives. For example, one parent said, 'If I compare myself to where I was a year ago to where I am now, the two places are poles apart.'

Children's safety and well-being are enhanced because staff are vigilant and have a secure understanding of safeguarding. They act promptly in order to provide families and children with the correct support or refer them on for specialist services such as child protection.

Children and families using the centre, including those from target groups, treat each other with respect and value opportunities to celebrate different festivals and events, such as Eid and Black History Month. The parents' forum is very proactive and a strong feature of the centre's work. For example, the 'Little People's World' group organises regular trips and activities attended by many families. Parents confidently told inspectors that they feel able to share their views with staff and provide

suggestions to improve the quality of services delivered.

Staff and key partners are enthusiastic and passionate about their work with families. This is because the centre's leaders demonstrate a clear vision and inspire continued improvement. They have a secure understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for improvement, such as increasing the number of fathers accessing services, particularly health, and reducing further the above average obesity levels in young children starting school. As a result, the centre's capacity to improve further is good.

The centre uses available data provided by the local authority and their own analysis well to identify need, plan and review services. As a result, the centre is reaching a large majority of target groups, including teenage parents and families living in workless households. Leaders are focused on promoting high-quality services and undertake a range of monitoring activities. Self-evaluation is accurate and supported by evidence of impact on outcomes and leads to areas for development. However, the centre is not currently evaluating the longer-term impact of its work by tracking the achievement of children when they move on to the next stage in their education.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve health outcomes by:
 - reducing further the levels of obesity in young children starting school
 - increasing the volume and depth of engagement of families, especially fathers, in health-related programmes and activities.
- Measure the longer-term impact of the centre's work by:
 - developing an effective system to track the achievement of children when they move on to the next stage in their education.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Health outcomes are improving as the majority of families in the reach area are accessing the many services provided. The promotion of emotional well-being is an important aspect of the centre's work. Obesity rates in the reach are higher than average and the centre is beginning to tackle this effectively through the promotion of healthy eating and physical activity in sessions. Although participation from all targeted groups has risen, there are comparatively fewer fathers engaged in health-related programmes and activities. Good work with health partners has resulted in a rising trend in children's rates of immunisation in the reach area. Mothers are actively encouraged to breastfeed their babies. Recent data show that around 80% of babies aged six to eight weeks are partially or totally breastfed, which is above the national average.

Emergency hospital admissions of children in the reach area have come down significantly as a result of the centre's strong promotion of safety at home. As one parent remarked after attending the 'Saving a Baby's Life' first aid training, 'The

workshop is an eye opener; I am aware of the importance of not taking anything for granted'. There are striking examples of families facing challenging circumstances showing improvements in their parenting skills. As a result, there is evidence of improved outcomes for children subject to protection plans and those subject to the Common Assessment Framework. Disabled children and those with special educational needs are supported well and receive specialist support, for example the educational psychologist and through speech and language therapy.

Parents and their children really enjoy the opportunities to interact with others, through the highly popular stay and play sessions, for example. This is enabling children to become more independent in developing social skills and in becoming inquisitive learners. The impact of the centre's work is evident in rising attainment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, with over 70% of children achieving 78 points or more in the reach area. This is good achievement in relation to children's starting points. However, at present the centre has no means to follow up the longer-term achievements of children when they move on to school. Popular courses such as Community Volunteering and Family Maths are clearly enjoyed by adults and many achieve well in these, including increasing numbers gaining accreditation.

The centre works effectively to help develop adults' skills and especially their self-confidence and personal development. Consequently, over a third is engaged in increasing their skills through, for example, English language or parenting classes. For example, the very well attended 'Life and Work' programme equips parents with the key skills they need to go on to further education or employment. Many examples were provided to show where adults have gained employment or their circumstances have been changed beyond recognition due to their contact with the centre.

Parents are well represented on the advisory board; their contribution influences decision-making and is highly valued by the centre. The well-established parents' forum has wide representation and is a strong voice in shaping service delivery. Additionally, families from all target groups feel they have a voice in relation to what services are on offer through regular evaluations and feedback to the centre.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	3
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 children and parents, including those from target groups, 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 parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2

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	2
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How good is the provision?

2

Centre staff know the families in the area very well and, with partners, skilfully identify the ones whose circumstances make them more vulnerable and in the greatest need of support. Staff skilfully build trusting relationships with families. Parents greatly appreciate the good care, guidance and support they receive from highly sensitive staff. As a result, they feel very well supported in times of crisis. One parent told inspectors, 'We were depressed and lacking in confidence; the centre gave us words of encouragement and the skills to believe in ourselves.'

The centre makes the most of its partnerships with health services to provide support for young families to become confident parents. As a result, 80% of young parents are engaging in services at the centre.

The centre uses the data profile supplied by the local authority along with extensive knowledge of the local area to identify the needs of the community and plan services. It provides a good range of services that meet the needs of the large majority of children and families, including those from target groups, such as children living in workless households and families from minority ethnic groups. There are a good range of weekly activity sessions, which are well attended, for example child minder group sessions important for networking and information sharing. The centre recognises that deepening the engagement of fathers is a key area to develop further.

The range of activities clearly enables parents to develop social skills and increases their confidence in parenting skills. Information about housing, benefits and training is tailor-made for individual families by the centre staff. There is evidence of improved economic stability for some families. Good guidance and support have resulted in four parents being accredited for community volunteering and applying their skills in work placements.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Governance and accountability arrangements are clear and understood and links between strategic planning and service provision are effective. Good partnerships with other services and key partners, for example early intervention, health trusts and providers of adult learning, are firmly established, ensuring services are integrated and making a difference for families.

Day-to-day management ensures that the premises are used effectively. Close work with the co-located primary school enables the centre to use additional resources, for example the sensory room, for the benefit of children with a range of special educational needs. Staff work very well as a team and morale is high. Those in charge, including the local authority, recognise and fully appreciate the commitment from current staff to maintain high-quality services during a time of change. The use of resources, including the current carefully considered deployment of staff and the good outcomes for families, demonstrates the centre is providing good value for money.

There is a range of monitoring and evaluation systems in place, which ensure services are of good quality, improving outcomes for families and helping staff to identify where they need to develop services further. The centre's self-evaluation is accurate and leads to well-considered targets for improvement, such as reducing levels of obesity by the end of the Reception year and deepening the engagement of fathers.

The inclusion of all families, irrespective of their background or needs, is at the heart of the centre's work. This has resulted in significant improvements in the involvement of all families, especially target groups and those families in greatest need. As a result, the centre is narrowing the gap between the most disadvantaged and the rest.

Early intervention strategies and close partnership with welfare, psychological therapy and other key agencies, for example Solace, ensure children are protected effectively against harm. The centre's work is underpinned by robust safeguarding procedures, which are clearly understood by all ensuring the risk of harm to children is reduced. All staff, volunteers and partners are vetted to ensure their suitability for working with children. Staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding and are alert to signs of abuse.

The centre has been very successful in reaching out to most target groups, in particular lone parents, teenage mothers and families from minority ethnic communities. There is also a rising trend in the engagement of families who have children and/or adults with disabilities. Families overwhelmingly express high levels of satisfaction with the centre and its staff. Their views are sought regularly and there are good examples of how this feedback has been used to make changes in activity sessions.

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	2
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
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	2
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	2
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	2

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

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Rye Oak Primary School and Children's Centre on 29–30 January 2013. We judged the centre as good overall.

We really enjoyed our two days at your centre and would like to thank all of you who took the time to speak to us during the inspection.

Your children's centre provides you with an attractive, safe and inclusive environment where you and your children feel safe, valued and respected. You told us how you greatly appreciate all the care, guidance and support you receive and particularly value the individual welcome from staff and how this helps you to feel less isolated. Partnerships with key agencies are strong so they can offer the correct support and guidance.

A key strength of the centre is the family support work, which is helping those of you who are experiencing difficulties in your lives to make significant improvements. You develop a secure understanding of how to keep your families safe and protect them from harmful situations, such as accidents in the home. Some of you were overwhelmingly keen to share how the centre has helped to make changes in your lives. For example, one parent told us how confident and independent she was now compared to 12 months ago.

Children's safety and well-being are enhanced because staff have a secure understanding of safeguarding. There are robust procedures in place, for example, to ensure all adults working in the centre are suitable to do so.

Many of you have a sound understanding about how to lead healthy lives through a focus on healthy eating and taking lots of exercise and because there are good links with people such as health visitors, midwives and the speech and language therapist. Although obesity rates of children by the end of the Reception year have been falling since 2007, they are still above the national average. We have asked the centre to continue the good work it has started to reduce this further, especially by engaging more fathers whose participation in the centre's good range of activities is not as strong as it is for other targeted groups.

Children make good progress in their early learning and adults are also supported well to extend their skills such as their knowledge of English. This has helped many of you to return to work or to improve your circumstances such as by getting better housing or more entitlement to benefits. This support has been life changing for a substantial number of you. However, the centre is not yet following up the longer-term impact of its work by tracking children when they leave the centre and move on to school. We have asked the centre to look at how it can improve this so that it can measure the benefits of the good work it does in the longer term.

Families feel fully involved with the centre and many of you make an important contribution such as by attending advisory board meetings or by playing an active role in the impressive parents' forum. A few of you are accredited volunteers and determined to build further on this experience. You are all very satisfied with the work of the centre, describing it as 'a huge asset to the community'.

There is a very clear understanding of what the centre's strengths and areas for development are and the staff are highly committed to continue to improve outcomes for all families in the community. This means that the centre is well placed to continue to improve.

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