

Inspection report for Ravenswood Community Children's Centre

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| Local authority | Suffolk |
| Inspection number | 406967 |
| Inspection dates | 20–21 February 2013 |
| Reporting inspector | Mary Dudley |

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| Centre leader | Claire Ball |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |
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| Linked school if applicable | Not applicable |
| Linked early years and childcare, if applicable | Spitfires Nursery EY443815 |

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 the integrated services manager, members of staff and professionals from key partner agencies. Discussions were held with parents and representatives from the local authority. Inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Ravenswood Community Children's Centre is a phase two centre, which was designated in 2007 and began delivering services in December 2009 that meet its core purpose. The centre is located in a community centre and forms part of a wide range of local facilities including a shopping centre, health centre and a modern housing estate to the East of Ipswich. The children's centre opened in its current location in January 2011, prior to which services were delivered in a variety of settings and through outreach work. Childcare is provided on-site by the privately run Spitfires Nursery.

The centre is one of six centres making up the north-east locality; the centre manager is also responsible for the Tree House Children's Centre which is subject to a separate inspection. Although Ravenswood has its own management arrangements most services are delivered through an integrated locality model. The integrated service manager who oversees the work of all six children's centres provided support to this inspection due to the absence of the centre manager.

There are 782 children aged under five years living in the reach area, of which 409 live in the 30% most deprived areas of the country. Of the children living in the area 120 are registered with the centre and a further 331 are registered with other children's centres. The large majority (77%) of families living in the area are of White British heritage, with a small number of families from a range of ethnic minority groups predominantly Asian and Eastern European. There is no data

available about the proportion of children living in workless households, or the number of families receiving workless benefits in the reach area. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities when they enter early years provision are typically below the level expected for their age.

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

4

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

4

Main findings

The effectiveness of Ravenswood Children's Centre in meeting the needs of local families is inadequate. Too few families from the different target groups use the centre and participation rates are low. Despite some families improving their health, safety and general well-being to a satisfactory level, outcomes for families are inadequate overall. Significant weaknesses in leadership, management and governance are holding back the centre's improvement and the value for money provided is inadequate.

Families using the centre, particularly from the most disadvantaged community identify that they are given appropriate support and information especially in times of crisis. A few families benefit from effective family support and outreach work, and those families that use the centre speak positively about it. One mother told us that 'The centre was a lifeline when I started and now it's a place I like to go'. The centre works hard to remove barriers to access for those families with whom it works. A few families benefit from effective family support and outreach work.

Children and families are kept safe through robust safeguarding arrangements, effective use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and Team Around the Child (TAC) procedures and well-targeted integrated support. Close attention is paid to assessing the needs of families who are particularly vulnerable and the recording of the progress they make is good. However, the centre fails to record in any meaningful way the progress that the majority of children and families make who engage with its services. As a result evidence is often anecdotal and insufficient to help shape provision. Managers do not have enough information or detailed knowledge about target groups living in the reach area to be certain it is meeting their needs.

Some families are becoming healthier as a result of the effective partnership work with health services and the targeted support to families identified through the Ante-Natal Healthy Child Collaborative process. These regular meetings of midwives, health visitors and children's centre staff identify mothers experiencing problems during, and in some cases after pregnancy, and provide appropriate packages of support. However, breastfeeding rates are low and obesity levels above average and the centre has no way of knowing precisely what impact its services are having on improving these key aspects. Satisfactory learning and development opportunities underpin children's sound educational achievement. Children who attend activities make steady progress from their starting points in their personal, social and emotional development. However, there is a lack of opportunities for adults to improve their learning or employability skills which restricts their economic well-being.

The advisory board met for the first time last year and is struggling to attract appropriate professionals and parental representation. A few parents are involved in helping to shape services by contributing ideas about the activities they engage with, but none are involved in the development of the centre or its governance. Self-evaluation is poor. It does not accurately identify weaknesses and is not supported by evidence of impact. Priorities are agreed but the data available are not detailed enough to measure the progress made towards meeting targets over time. These weaknesses clearly identify the centre's inadequate capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Strengthen leadership, management and governance by:
 - establishing robust self-evaluation processes
 - working with the local authority and partners to establish more effective ways of gathering information and data, specific to the centre's reach area, to inform target setting and analysis
 - ensuring the advisory board is up to full strength and provides appropriate challenge when holding the centre to account for its work
 - involving more parents in both governance and the centre's decision-making process.
- Engage with families in the wider community not currently accessing services to ensure participation levels across all target groups increase significantly.
- Establish a system to measure the impact of the centre's services on improving key performance indicators such as breastfeeding and obesity and to track the progress made by families accessing services.
- Develop provision to enhance families' economic well-being by:
 - increasing the opportunities for volunteers to be involved in the work of the centre
 - improving the uptake of adult learning opportunities which enhance their employability.

How good are outcomes for families?

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Outcomes for children and families are inadequate overall because the centre does not do enough to support parents to improve their skills, economic stability and independence. A few parents have been signposted to the Family Inclusion Service for information on benefits, housing and debt counselling which has resulted in a handful of families improving their financial health. The centre signposts parents to training opportunities but does not follow this up to confirm achievements and successes, so outcomes are unknown. There are currently no volunteers at the centre.

There is no parents' forum through which the views of parents can be passed on and no parental representation on the advisory board. Currently parents have only occasional input into decision-making or governance of the centre, such as halting the planned closure of the 'Stay and Play' session and expressing ideas for the content of some activities. This means that they are unable to contribute to, or influence, the development of the centre's provision and services in any significant way.

Health outcomes are satisfactory overall. Partnerships with health professionals ensure parents are provided with information and support in relation to health and well-being so that they make satisfactory progress in developing healthy lifestyles. Pregnant mothers and their families needing additional support are identified through the Ante-Natal Healthy Child Collaborative process. As a result parents benefit from additional support prior to giving birth which makes the pregnancy less stressful. Data shows that the percentage of mothers that are breastfeeding at six to eight weeks in Ipswich East has fallen to 39.2% and the levels of obesity amongst children in Ipswich are above the national and County average. The centre fails to target these groups effectively because available data are inadequate and its evaluation of past provision is insufficient.

Families feel safe in the centre, a typical comment from a parent was, 'I am able to relax in the centre because I feel my child is safe.' In addition some parents learn how to play safely with their children at home supported by effective outreach work. A large majority of parents attending parenting classes are building confidence in their parenting skills. The TAC and CAF processes used by the centre and its partners ensure families receive timely help which keeps them safe. Case files show significant improvement in the well-being of families supported through this process. The well-established multi-agency partnerships also ensure positive impact on the welfare of children subject to child protection plans.

Children and adults, who attend activities at the centre such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Shake Rattle and Roll' play, learn and have fun together. Children that attend sessions make satisfactory progress, however this progress is recorded only in a general way. Children in the reach area are achieving above the Suffolk average in their developmental levels and the gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest has fallen by almost 15% in two years to 18.5%. This is below both the National

average and the Suffolk average of 29.7%. Due to a lack of data it is currently not possible to accurately identify the centre's direct contribution to the improving trend.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

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| 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 | 3 |
| The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development | 3 |
| 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 | 4 |
| 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 | 4 |

How good is the provision?

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The quality of provision overall is satisfactory although the lack of detailed data about families living in the reach area is a weakness which means the centre is not assessing the needs of families precisely enough and therefore does not match its services to local needs. For example, there is no information about the number of families receiving benefits. Additionally, breastfeeding rates are only available for Ipswich East. The uptake of services by target groups is beginning to be monitored but findings are not yet being used to inform service developments. At 15% the number of families in regular contact with the centre is very low, although the majority of children under five years of age living in the area are registered with other children's centres within the locality. The centre does not contact non-users to see whether provision should change to meet their needs.

Sessions are generally appropriately planned, purposeful and enjoyed by users. Parents use the ideas gained from the sessions to extend their children's learning at home. One said, 'I do much more with my children now, we are much more active.' Staff work hard in activities to ensure everyone is included and that activities are stimulating and promote purposeful learning. Sessions are regularly evaluated, although the information is not always used to adapt future activities.

Staff build trusting relationships with some families in order to offer appropriate support for those identified as most in need. Family support workers provide emotional support to raise user's self-esteem and confidence and work effectively with partners to support families with complex needs. Outreach work is breaking down barriers to increase engagement of some hard to reach families, including a few workless and lone parents. Parents feel they are given appropriate advice and support in times of crisis. As a result of the care and support they receive, these

parents become better equipped to overcome personal barriers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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| The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups | 4 |
| The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups | 3 |
| The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups | 3 |

How effective are the leadership and management?

4

Governance and accountability arrangements are inadequate. Staff have regular supervision meetings and understand how their work fits into the overall priorities of the centre. However, self-evaluation processes are weak. Progress towards targets is not monitored consistently and there is limited assessment of the impact of the centre's work on outcomes for users. The newly formed advisory board does not provide enough critical challenge to the centre and it does not rigorously assess the impact of the centre's work. Not all partners are represented on the board and there are no parents elected to represent centre users' views. The value for money provided by the centre is inadequate.

The centre is appropriately focused on safeguarding and takes all the necessary steps to keep children safe, including the recruitment of appropriately trained staff to ensure that those at risk of harm receive well-targeted support and guidance. Multi-agency work is effective in ensuring that children receive early and appropriate intervention to keep them safe. Record keeping and monitoring of cases where there are concerns about a child's welfare is good. Systems to record Criminal Record Bureau disclosure checks for staff and safeguarding training are robust. Staff are appropriately trained in a range of safeguarding aspects such as child protection and safeguarding for managers

The centre celebrates diversity and tackles discrimination because of the clear expectations set by leaders and staff. It provides a welcoming and inclusive environment for the small number of local families who attend and ensures that resources are accessible. Staff help users appreciate cultural and physical differences so that adults and children can enjoy activities together. However, managers do not have a sufficiently detailed understanding of the needs of children and their families in the reach area to be certain it effectively promotes the engagement of all target groups.

Partnerships with some agencies, such as health are good and families who are in most need receive support quickly. Other partnerships such as with adult education and skills providers are not yet as strong. There is limited information made available to centre staff by some providers about how well families referred to their services improve their situation.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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| The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood | 4 |
| The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes | 4 |
| The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups | 4 |
| The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties | 4 |
| The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| 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 | 4 |

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

The inspectors took into account the inspection findings for Spitfires NurseryEY443815 which took place in August 2012.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Ravenswood Community Children's Centre on 20 – 21 February 2013. We judged the centre as inadequate overall.

We would like to thank all of you who took the time to talk to us during the inspection. You told us that the centre is a safe place for you and your children and we agree with you. We know that staff take the safety of children and their families seriously, and work with other agencies to make sure that families are kept safe. We also saw and heard evidence that the centre cares for families particularly in times of crisis.

Those of you that use the centre have told us how much you and your children enjoy the activities and some of you have told us that you now know more about being a good parent. We believe that your children are learning and developing through their engagement with activities. We were pleased to hear that the centre encourages you to lead healthy lives and helps you to keep your children healthy. A few of you have improved your financial circumstances thanks to the advice you have received concerning benefit entitlement, however, the centre does not provide enough opportunities for you to participate in further education or training or to become volunteers, so we have asked them to prioritise this.

You told us that staff always provide a warm welcome and go out of their way to make sure you are included in whatever the centre is doing. We think that more families from the community should be using the centre. We have asked managers to ensure that more families, from different backgrounds and circumstances, use the centre. We have also asked that the local authority, other agencies and staff find out more about the community so that they can provide activities that are appropriate for local families and meet assessed needs.

We have asked the manager and local authority to improve the arrangements for overseeing the work of the centre. The new advisory board does not have enough partner organisations represented and there are no parents on the board. It is not asking challenging questions about the centre's work and is not yet doing a good job, so we have asked that it is improved. There is no parent forum or formal opportunity for parents to have a say in how the centre is run so we have asked managers to work with you to set this up. We also found that the centre does not keep information on how well you and your children develop your skills, knowledge, and improve your well-being while at the centre, so we have asked them to pay attention to this too.

Thank you very much for your welcome and willingness to speak to us. We thoroughly enjoyed talking with you and sampling the centre's work. We wish you every success in the future.

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