

Inspection report for Royston Meadstead Children's Centre

Local authority	Barnsley
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	URN: 106606 Royston Meadstead Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	URN: EY331215 Royston Meadstead Children's Centre

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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with parents, centre staff and representatives from professional partnerships, the advisory board, the board of governors and the local authority. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Royston Meadstead Children's Centre was designated in March 2006 and is a phase one centre located within the St Helen's, Royston and Monk Bretton Wellbeing Locality Area. It is situated in a purpose built building attached to Royston Meadstead Primary School on a housing estate in Royston. Royston is a suburban village four miles north-east of Barnsley town centre. The centre also provides some services from other community venues in the area. For example, the local leisure centre is used to deliver a swimming group, the health centre for a baby clinic and the lifelong learning centre for adult learning courses.

Currently, 704 children below the age of five years of age are living in the centre reach area. Approximately 59% live in one of the top 30% most deprived areas in the country and 41% live in one of the 30% to 70% most deprived areas in the country. The area is a mix of private and social housing. Approximately 35% of children aged up to five years are living in poverty. There are a high number of reported domestic violence incidents in the area. The most recent available data show that approximately 25% of children are living in households dependent on workless benefits. Unemployment figures in the area currently stand at 5.2%.

The vast majority of families are of White British heritage with approximately 4% from minority ethnic groups mainly from Eastern European communities. For some of these families, English is an additional language. Some children's levels of skill on entry to Early Years provision are below that expected for their age.

The centre is governed by Royston Meadstead Primary School board of governors on behalf of the local authority and has an advisory board made up of representatives from the local community, parents and partner professionals. The centre has also recently established a parent forum. The headteacher of Royston Meadstead Primary School line manages the centre manager.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

Royston Meadstead Children's Centre is a satisfactory centre overall with some good features. The centre's safeguarding policies and procedures are robust and embedded among staff and effectively promote the safety and welfare of children and adults. This is further enhanced by the good information sharing and referral processes between partners and the centre, ensuring the right support is provided swiftly to families with circumstances that make them most vulnerable.

Despite staff remaining motivated and committed to their roles, on-going instabilities in the leadership and governance of the centre have had a negative impact on the performance of the children's centre. However, the recently appointed centre leader has swiftly identified the centre's areas for development and with the support of the team has begun to address these with vigour. Through their concerted effort over the last nine months they have successfully improved the engagement of families in the centre services and activities to 42%. In addition, the majority of the families the centre has engaged with are those with circumstances that make them most vulnerable.

Processes for monitoring and demonstrating the impact the services and activities are having on the outcomes for families are in the early stages and beginning to provide the centre with evidence. In addition, there are no processes in place to ensure the centre is provided with information regarding the progress families are making when accessing external services. The governors and local authority hold the centre to account and appropriate support and line management is provided to the centre leader. However, not enough parents are positively contributing to the governance of the centre through representation on the parents' forum, advisory board and board of governors.

Good partnerships with parents, the centre and other agencies ensure very effective communications and families have access to a range of jointly delivered services. Families using the centre receive good tailored support and guidance, particularly in times of crisis, from caring, approachable and dedicated staff, and their outcomes are improving as a result. Children and adults are making satisfactory progress from their often low starting points. They enjoy the activities provided and participation rates are overall sound. The centre adequately promotes equality and diversity and the inclusion of children and families. As a result the centre is meeting the needs of and improving the outcomes for a satisfactory range of children and families from the reach area. Plans for the future are appropriately targeted and the centre has a satisfactory capacity to continue to improve the engagement and outcomes for more families, based on what it has accomplished so far.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Engage more families in centre services and activities and improve processes for demonstrating the impact these services are having on their outcomes.
- Improve parent representation on the parents' forum, advisory board and board of governors to ensure more parents are positively contributing to the decision-making and governance of the centre.
- The local authority should secure the provision of robust evidence that demonstrate the progress families make when accessing external services to improve the economic and social well-being.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Users state they feel safe at the centre and their children are safeguarded. Staff work well with other partners to support those children subject to a child protection plan, those involved with the Common Assessment Framework processes, and looked after children. There is evidence to demonstrate improved outcomes for these children. Some parents are learning how to ensure the safety of their families in and around the home and improve their parenting skills through the centre services and activities. A high number of incidents of domestic violence are reported and the centre supports these families appropriately where possible.

Health outcomes for families are adequate overall. The proportion of mothers breastfeeding their babies at six-to-eight weeks is 28%, well below the national average of 47%. In addition, too many mothers are still smoking at delivery. However, the centre and health partners are actively addressing both these issues with a range of strategies and the centre is beginning to see signs of improvement. Current data shows that the number of children in the reach area in Reception Year at school who are obese is in line with the national average of 9.4%. Parents using the centre services show, through their discussions in groups, a good understanding of a healthy lifestyle and a good number of them access the parent and child swimming, music and movement and walk and talk sessions.

Despite the concerted effort of centre staff and partners to promote children's learning and development and school readiness, the gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest has widened on the previous year but is in line with the national average at 30.6%. Most recent data shows that 59% of children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve a good level of development overall. The centre has recently introduced family learning journals to better demonstrate the impact their services and activities are having on all children's progress. Parents are actively contributing to these records and beginning to recognise their child's achievements and what they enjoy doing. This is helping them to support their child's learning and development at home and improving their parenting skills. As some parents stated: 'I now recognise the importance of spending quality time with my children.' and 'I've learnt to put boundaries in place, stick to them and be firm but fair.' Effective transition arrangements are in place between the centre, local schools, early years provision and parents to ensure the continuity of children's care and learning.

Some families are improving their economic stability and independence and developing their knowledge and skills through accessing external services that centre staff sign post them to. For example, support for those looking for employment, volunteering or training opportunities, adult learning and debt and benefits advice. However, the centre is not routinely provided with evidence to show how these services are improving the outcomes for the families in the reach area who are accessing them.

The centre places great importance on seeking the views of users and the wider community and uses these to ensure services are what families in the reach area need and want. However, not enough parents are contributing to the decision-making and governance of the centre through the parents' forum, advisory and board of governors.

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	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	3
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?

3

The centre provides a safe, warm and welcoming environment. The family outreach workers are tenacious in encouraging the engagement of children and families whose circumstances make them most vulnerable, such as those living in the most deprived areas and those in most need of intervention and support. This has resulted in a fair proportion of families accessing services.

Families receive effective, tailored support to improve their outcomes, including during times of crisis, and receive good care and a wide range of advice and guidance. Parents are developing their confidence and self-esteem and forming friendships as a result. As some parents stated: 'I don't know what I would have done without the centre.', 'The centre has helped me overcome isolation as I was new to the area. I've made more friends.' and 'The centre has increased my confidence as a parent and as a person.'

Strong partnership working and good use of assessment ensures the centre has a secure understanding of families in the reach area and services meet the needs of those using them. As a result a satisfactory range of families are satisfied with, and participating in, the range of services and activities provided and their outcomes are improving as a result.

Children make at least satisfactory progress, are engaged in their play and learning and behave well. The centre has evidence to demonstrate it has helped to raise the aspirations for some families and enabled them to improve their educational and personal development. Achievements are meaningfully celebrated resulting in raising the self-esteem and confidence of some of their users.

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	3
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.	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Good safeguarding arrangements are in place. The centre adopts safer recruitment practices to ensure that all those who may have unsupervised access to children are safe and suitable. Procedures for making referrals, sharing information between the relevant agencies, and providing appropriate interventions and support for vulnerable families are

very effective. Staff receive regular, good-quality training and development opportunities, ensuring that they are confident and capable to carry out their duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and their families. Risks are thoroughly assessed and minimised to promote the safety of users and staff.

All those involved in the leadership and governance of the centre, partners and staff are passionate about the centre's work and morale is high. Staff value the much needed strong leadership and direction that is now being provided by the new centre leader and state they are well supported. The centre leader has a thorough understanding of the centre's performance and what it needs to do to improve. Self-evaluation correctly identifies strengths and areas for development, and sets priorities that link back to strategic planning. However, at times, the centre lacks evidence of the impact all the services and activities are having on the outcomes for all families.

The centre works very well with key partners to ensure information is shared and provision and services are responsive to the needs of children and families. The centre has developed a range of creative consultation exercises to encourage parents to contribute their views, with varied success. It meaningfully uses the views of parents and the wider community to make decisions that affect local families and shape services. However, currently there is only one parent on the parent forum and this same parent attends the advisory board meetings. No parents currently attend the board of governors meetings.

Overall an adequate range of families are engaged in services and activities and are well supported by staff. The space and staff are utilised well and the centre is rightly focussed on providing more services out in the wider community to enable more families to engage in the centre and services. As a result the centre provides satisfactory value for money.

The centre promotes the inclusion of all children and their families. Disabled children and those with special educational needs access the centre services and receive appropriate support. In addition, the centre ensures effective communication systems with families accessing services for whom English is an additional language.

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 effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	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 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.	3

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

The findings from the most recent inspections of the centres linked early years provision and local primary schools were used to inform the judgements made during the inspection.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Royston Meadstead Children's Centre on 7–8 March 2013. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall with some good features.

Thank you to those of you who contributed to the inspection. Like you, we found the centre to be welcoming and friendly. Leaders, staff and partners make sure you and your children are safe when using the centre. They thoroughly assess and minimise risks, attend a range of training and share important information to ensure your safety and welfare is fully promoted.

The centre works well with families and a range of professionals in your community to ensure they understand what activities and services you need and want most to improve your lives. As a result a sound number of families are accessing centre services and activities and their outcomes are improving as a result. The centre now needs to enable more families to access centre services and activities and improve the outcomes for even more families. Staff are beginning to address this by looking at providing more groups from community venues across the area.

Your views are important to the centre team and they use a range of creative ways to consult with your families to help them make important decisions. However, not enough of you are members on the parents' forum, advisory board and board of governors to ensure

your views are fully represented at all levels. We have therefore asked the centre to improve this.

Families receive effective support, particularly during times of crisis, and receive good care and a wide range of advice and guidance. You are developing your confidence and self-esteem and forming friendships as a result. As some of you told us: 'I don't know what I would have done without the centre.', 'The centre has helped me overcome isolation as I was new to the area. I've made more friends.' and 'The centre has increased my confidence as a parent and as a person.'

Children are making progress in their learning and development, are well behaved and prepared for school. Your centre has helped you to improve your parenting skills. As some of you told us: 'I now recognise the importance of spending quality time with my children.' and 'I've learnt to put boundaries in place, stick to them and be firm but fair.' The centre is also helping you to understand how to support your child's learning and development through play at home. Some of you particularly value your family learning journals and eagerly contribute to these to show the fun you and your children are having together and the progress you are making.

Despite staff remaining motivated and committed to their roles, on-going instabilities in the leadership and governance of the centre have had a negative impact on the performance of the children's centre. However, the recently appointed centre leader has swiftly identified the centre's areas for development and with the support of the team has begun to address these with vigour. The centre has a good understanding of what it does well and what it needs to do to be even better. There are clear goals in place to help them improve. However, they do not have sufficient evidence to show how all their services and activities are improving outcomes for families. The local authority has been asked to help the centre to develop their processes accordingly. The centre has the ability to improve the engagement and outcomes for more families based on what it has accomplished so far. We wish you all the very best for the future.

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