

# Ravensdale with Forest Town Children's Centre

Sanders Avenue, Ravensdale, Mansfield, NG18 2DN

**Inspection dates** 7–8 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
Access to services by young children and families		Good	2
The quality of practice and services		Good	2
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This is a good centre.

- The relationship between the children's centre service provider, Nottinghamshire Children and Families Partnership, and the local authority is clear, well understood and managed effectively. The relationship delivers a robust process for checking how well the centre is doing in meeting the targets it has for improving the life chances of families living in the area it serves.
- Since the children's centre was last inspected significant progress has been made in how information is collected and used to make sure services and activities are highly relevant to the needs of families living in the area. The centre now has sharp targets which are well designed to tackle issues faced by local families.
- Action to make sure that all families, including expectant parents, have information about the centre through strengthened partnership working has significantly increased the number of families registered with, and using the children's centre in the months leading up to this inspection.
- Families receive effective early help, guidance and support, helping them to make good progress in their lives. Services and activities are good quality, well placed and delivered by highly skilled and knowledgeable centre staff and partner agencies.
- A good variety of starting points are available for adults to begin entry into learning and development because the centre has good partnerships with adult learning providers. Some adults take up opportunities to progress into further learning and volunteering.

### It is not outstanding because:

- The centre's methods for tracking the progress of adults and children are not well established. As a result the centre has not embedded a pathway to vocational learning for adults and is not able to fully measure its impact on how well children progress or how well the centre narrows the achievement gap, especially for children in the Ravensdale area.
- There is no clear policy in place to support how the growing population of families who speak English as an additional language are supported to access services and activities.

**Information about this inspection**

The inspection of this children’s centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty’s Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre coordinator, staff, and representatives of partners, the local authority, parents and Nottinghamshire Children and Families Partnership.

The inspectors visited Ravensdale Children’s Centre, Forest Town Children’s Centre and Forest Town library.

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

**Inspection team**

Joanne Smith Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Peter Towner

Additional inspector

Patricia Hornsby

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Ravensdale with Forest Town Children's Centre (Part Ravensdale, part Eakring & Forest Town wards) is a phase one centre in the Ravensdale area of Mansfield, and was formed by the merger of two centres. Ravensdale centre is located on the site of a leisure centre, on a housing estate close to the centre of Mansfield. Forest Town site is linked to a library in a residential area. Ravensdale ward consists of three areas that fall within 10% of the most deprived in England. Forest Town ward consists of three areas which fall within 20% of the most deprived.

Services for children and families in Ravensdale and Forest Town are delivered at the two children's centre buildings and Forest Town library. Ravensdale and Forest Town have the highest number of workless households in Nottinghamshire and there are around 380 children across the area living in workless households. Most families live in social housing. There is also a high incidence of domestic violence. Almost all of the population is White British with very small percentages of families of Bangladeshi and Eastern European heritage. Most children in the area enter early years provision with skills below those typical for their age.

Since 1 June 2013 Ravensdale and Forest Town Children's Centre (Part Ravensdale, part Eakring & Forest Town wards) has been managed by the Nottingham Children and Families Partnership (NCFP). Day-to-day management of the centre is carried out by a centre coordinator who is supported by a district manager. There has been significant change in the centre staff team since the inspection in June 2013 and in January 2014 a new district manager and a temporary centre coordinator from NCFP started working with the centre.

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

- Build upon the quality and monitoring arrangements to:
  - expand on the tracking of adult learners to provide a pathway to work related qualifications
  - embed tracking of children's progress to demonstrate the centre's impact on their school readiness and narrowing of the achievement gap, especially for children in the Ravensdale area.
- Implement a more formal strategy to support the growing population of families who speak English as an additional language to access the centre and use its services.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

**Good**

- Most families with children aged under five years, and those expecting children, are known to the centre. There has been concerted effort by leaders and staff to find out about families' needs and provide relevant services. As a result, the large majority of families whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are making good use of the centre's services and activities on a regular basis.
- Excellent attention is given to working with a wide range of partners, including the local agency for supporting homeless families. Weekly meetings, with this and a range of other partners, to review new families to the agency mean that swift assessment is made of families' needs and they receive timely support at a time when they are at their most vulnerable.
- Careful thought is given to how and where the centre delivers activities. Information about young parents was analysed and showed that their support group was not being delivered where it was most needed and attendance was poor. The meeting place for the group was changed and the number of young parents using the group increased.
- Parents are well informed about their child's entitlement to a funded nursery education place. The early years focus group is a solution focused team of practitioners who have a good understanding about the barriers to engaging two-year-olds. They have identified a range of strategies to improve participation. This includes identifying gaps in services, working closely with the health visitors and using data effectively to uncover gaps in the services. As a result, most three- and four-year-old children and the majority of eligible two-year-old children attend good quality early years settings.
- Families who are suffering from domestic abuse are a high priority for the centre. Excellent joined up working with other agencies locally and through district representation at the multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) hosted by the police means that families are given timely support according to their needs. The positive work done with adults is reinforced through work with children who can attend 'Hands are not for hurting' to learn about positive relationships.
- Although relatively small there is a growing eastern European community in the area which, with partners, the centre is monitoring closely. At present the centre does not have a clear or formal strategy to support families who speak English as an additional language to access and take advantage of the children's centre and its services. Nevertheless the number of families from minority ethnic groups attending the centre is increasing well.

### The quality of practice and services

**Good**

- The centre promotes and celebrates the work of volunteers very well. What adults do after they have finished adult learning courses is tracked and followed-up after three months. A positive partnership with the local college and the county adult education services is improving the range of services on offer. However, tracking and partnerships are not being used well enough to help to devise a clear pathway for adults to see how they can progress through education to employment.
- Activities and groups for children and parents are good quality, well planned and resourced, and have a clear focus. Recent changes to the environment in both centre buildings and the way activities are delivered to be both practical and informative for parents is much appreciated by those who attend. Language development is a recurring theme in activities to support children to become ready for school. The 'Tuneful Tots' session, for example, is skilfully delivered to a wide age range of children who enthusiastically join in action songs and respond to prompts and routines used in the sessions.
- Structured and nationally recognised parenting courses are offered to families at different venues

across the district. Parents are supported well to attend these. Parents who have attended courses develop a better understanding of their children, the benefits of play and early learning and experience very positive changes in their relationships with their children and in their family life.

- The centre is very effective in providing services to promote the health and wellbeing of children and their parents. It has strong links with a range of other agencies, such as a counselling service and where appropriate refers parents to these services promptly and effectively. The centre provides excellent support for mothers to encourage breastfeeding and help them with related problems.
- Parents are developing a much better understanding of how to keep their children safe and healthy. Most children receive their initial vaccinations and information provided to the centre shows that families are eating more fruit and vegetables. The number of children who are obese is well below that seen nationally.
- Overall children in the area make good progress and the number of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is slightly above the national average. Children living in the Ravensdale area, however, do not do as well as their peers in the Forest Town area and the centre's tracking of children is not yet established enough to assess whether the children who do better have accessed more of the centre's services than the others.

#### **The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management**

**Good**

- Following the previous inspection prompt and pertinent action was taken by the local authority and Nottinghamshire Children and Families Partnership (NCFP) to produce a highly relevant and detailed action plan. With support the manager started to take the centre forward. However, good and well-intentioned plans were not effectively fulfilled with the result that progress was slow. Effective monitoring identified this and following the placement of a temporary manager the centre is moving forward rapidly and with renewed clarity.
- Governance and management arrangements are secure and clear. The local authority has robust performance monitoring arrangements in place to set sharp and measurable targets and check the centre's progress against these, with a strong focus on data evidence. Managers at a district level are committed to monthly meetings between the local authority and NCFP, which are used well to help to prioritise the centre's work.
- Staff, partners and the local advisory group have an excellent understanding of the centre's purpose, their role and the centre's priorities. This has produced a team determined to provide services and activities that meet local families' needs even more closely. Families using the centre have noticed positive changes, are well informed about the centre's priorities and appreciate the opportunities they have to make comments and receive feedback about the centre.
- Staff are experienced and well qualified. They benefit from regular one to one meetings with their managers, which follow a standard agenda so that they can prepare and both parties know and understand the expectations of the other. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults whose circumstances may make them vulnerable is integral to these meetings as is the welfare of staff who are working with difficult cases. There is a thorough and relevant staff training plan that links staff development closely to the centre's main priorities.
- Excellent communication and partnership working with both statutory and non-statutory partners provides families with children who are subject to a child protection plan, children in need, looked after children and those being supported through the early help assessment forum with joined up support. Families are helped to make positive and life changing decisions and progress, such as help

to successfully adopt a child or attendance at a parenting course to improve relationships within the home.

- Resources are managed very well. Staff skills are used to good effect in group sessions and one to one situations so that families get the most out of them. The centre buildings are busy and well used by partners and external providers, such as a counselling service, as well as centre staff. The environment in both buildings is used to maximise learning opportunities with eye-catching, informative and easy to understand displays.

**What inspection judgements mean**

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Practice consistently reflects the highest aspirations for children and their families and, as a result, inequalities are reducing rapidly and gaps are closing.
Grade 2	Good	Practice enables most children and their families to access good quality services that improve children's wellbeing and achieve the stated outcomes for families.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	Performance is not as good as it might reasonably be expected to be in one or more key areas.
Grade 4	Inadequate	The needs of children and families in its area are not being met and/or the leaders and managers are not providing sufficient challenge to bring about improvement to the quality of services.

**Children's centre**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	22469
<b>Local authority</b>	Nottinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	442805
<b>Managed by</b>	Nottinghamshire Children and Families Partnership on behalf of the local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	1367
<b>Centre leader</b>	Amanda Jobling
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	11 June 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01623 486982
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