

South Ruislip Children's Centre

Queens Walk, South Ruislip, Hillingdon, HA4 0LR

Inspection dates	30 April–2 May 2014
Previous inspection dates	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Access to services by young children and families		Requires improvement	3
The quality of practice and services		Requires improvement	3
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a centre that requires improvement.

- The centre is welcoming and parents value the activities such as the crèche facilities and high-quality equipment in the playroom and toy library.
- Over the last year, since the centre has been fully staffed, there has been a sharp increase in the number of families using centre services, particularly those most in need of support, providing a good foundation for further improvement.
- The centre has a positive impact on the achievement of children and their families because it targets its work towards those who are experiencing difficulty in their lives.
- The emphasis placed on developing children's language and communication skills and support for children identified with autism have a good impact on their development and readiness for school.
- Staff with management responsibility have developed good practice in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the centre's work in preparation for further developments.

It is not good because:

- The local authority has not ensured that the centre has the information it requires from strategic partners for staff to have an in-depth awareness of the needs of those families living in the local area whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable.
- The centre does not yet work with most families in its area.
- There are not enough programmes on offer for parents to improve their parenting skills.
- Too few parents in workless households engage in training and development activities to improve their chances of future employment.
- There are not enough opportunities for parents to contribute to centre development and parents do not have representation on the advisory board.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- The local authority should ensure that there are effective protocols in place for sharing data between partners, including with social care, health and police services, and schools so that centre staff have a stronger knowledge of the locality on which to plan services.
- Increase access and participation in the centre:
 - for all groups of parents, including those within target groups, so that the large majority regularly use the services
 - by providing more opportunities for parents to attend programmes to improve their parenting skills
 - by ensuring that adults in workless households have opportunities to participate in further training to improve their chances of future employment.
- Strengthen the role that parents play in decision making and the governance of the centre, and ensure that they have representation on the advisory board.

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 two additional inspectors

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre manager, centre staff and representatives of the local authority including a member of the advisory board; parents and users of the centre; and representatives of the organisations who work in partnership with the centre.

The inspectors visited activities taking place in the centre and outdoor play area.

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

Inspection team

Helen Hutchings, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Ann Janssen

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

South Ruislip Children's Centre is a phase three stand-alone centre serving an area with a population of approximately 2,400 children from birth to five-years-old. Following local authority restructuring, the centre began working with three other centres in the autumn of 2013. An increasing number of activities are planned across these centres to avoid duplication of services. The centre is managed by the local authority, supported by a locality advisory board. The centre manager has oversight of four other centres managed by the local authority.

The centre was designated in April 2010 and ran activities from a number of venues until it opened formally in purpose-built accommodation in June 2011. It shares a building with the South Ruislip Early Years Centre (EY430585) which provides day care and is subject to a separate Ofsted inspection. The report is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk. The centre provides universal drop-in groups for parents and children, family support services and learning courses, and manages health appointments for midwives and health visitors working within the centre.

The centre serves an area in which the number of children living in workless households or dependent on benefits is below levels seen nationally. The large majority of families live in owner-occupied homes. The large majority of families are from White British backgrounds. The centre's key target groups are: young parents and Royal Air Force families at Northolt. The vast majority of children in the area attend early years provision in Nursery classes in school from the age of three. Overall, their skills and knowledge are at the level expected for their age.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- The extended period of local authority restructuring has led to delays in appointing staff, which has had an impact on the centre's capacity to establish itself within the community. However, over the last year, the centre has made rapid progress in increasing its contact with families in the area. As a result, most families are now registered and the majority of those in the area's target groups engage in at least one activity.
- Most recently, the centre has been developing its links with Royal Air Force services to complement the support for families living on the Northolt base. Only a few activities have taken place, but arrangements are in place for staff to work at the base as part of the centre's outreach provision.
- Midwives and health visitors working within the centre have supported centre staff in identifying parents and children in need of additional help and in promoting the centre's services.
- Good partnership arrangements with a local mother and baby unit ensure that young parents are given the help they need to develop their early parenting skills. The centre is a hub for teenage and young parents across the locality. Most young mothers and many fathers attend sessions regularly. In response to an identified need, the centre has set up a budgeting course and has negotiated with health practitioners to provide additional sexual health advice.
- The centre runs parenting programmes for families where children have been identified with autism, and makes links with other centres for parents experiencing significant difficulties in their parenting skills. 'Come and Play' sessions and one-off events such as first aid demonstrations give parents opportunities to share experiences, but there are few universal services for a wider range of parents to develop their parenting.
- The centre recognises that its work to support parents into employment requires further development. There are few opportunities for parents to develop their confidence and employment prospects, for example through volunteering. Staff have been trained on giving basic employability.
- Parents make good use of the toy library, appreciating the high-quality resources and advice on how to extend children's learning through play.

- The majority of two-year-olds eligible for free early education have not taken up their entitlement.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The centre provides an increasing range of universal and targeted activities. Until recently, a minority of families in most need of support used its services, restricting the centre's impact on reducing inequalities and improving life chances.
- Universal sessions, such as 'Come and Play', 'Baby Massage' and 'Toddlerific' are popular. Parents told inspectors that they trust staff and that they are always ready to give sensitive advice and support. They particularly value staff help to seek out further support when this is not available within the centre.
- Centre staff constantly emphasise the importance of developing children's communication skills and effectively model strategies which help parents to extend children's speech. Staff are vigilant in identifying where children have delay in their speech development, and strong links with speech and language specialist services mean that families have the support they need at an early stage.
- The crèche facilities which are run during adult learning sessions, such as English language, are highly valued by parents. They comment on how this helps their children to become more confident with adults and other children. Parents particularly value the respite crèches for those experiencing difficulties from time to time.
- Health outcomes, such as breastfeeding rates, are strong and obesity levels are showing a small decline over time as a result of the centre's work.
- Postnatal depression is an identified area of need in the area and staff have been trained to identify and support mothers. However, there is no formal sharing of this information by health professionals, which reduces the centre's ability to provide well-timed, additional support.
- The centre agrees action plans with those families requiring additional support based on thorough assessments of their needs. Centre files show that families make good progress in their well-being and learning about how to keep their children safe.
- Staff have a thorough knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage and use this to make good provision for children attending centre activities. This is contributing effectively to closing the achievement gap for different groups of children. The centre prioritises supporting boys' readiness for school because of an identified historical gap across the area between the achievement of boys and girls at the end of Reception Year. An effective transition programme piloted last year is being extended to ensure that parents are aware of the expectations of children's skills, such as toilet training, when they join a Nursery class.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The centre leader and staff have an ambitious vision for how the centre will improve its provision to ensure the success of all families in the area. Staff are enthusiastic and energetic, and work together as a cohesive and effective team.
- Staff use the information that is available to them to evaluate activities and the range of services, and they are fully involved in development planning. However, planning is not always based on accurate data about the needs in the area as effective protocols on sharing strategic information have not been agreed between the local authority and its key partners.
- Staff work closely with health and other professionals at a personal level to share information that is used well to identify and support those families identified as in need of additional help.
- Surveys are used for parents to evaluate the outcomes of various centre activities, and show high levels of satisfaction. Managers are increasingly observing sessions as the basis for quality improvement.
- Recently, the centre encouraged more parents to join the parent forum but this is not yet well established. There is no parental representation on the locality advisory board. Consequently, there are not enough opportunities for parents to influence the work of the centre and to inform local strategic decision making.
- The local authority has adequate procedures in place to support the centre in identifying its priorities

and targets, but frequent changes in personnel have led to discontinuity in monitoring its effectiveness and helping the centre to assess the impact of its own work.

- Line management and supervision arrangements are robust and are effective in identifying individual and centre training needs. Staff are well qualified for their roles.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements to protect children and families using the centre's services. Policies and procedures are firmly in place to reduce the risk of harm to families, and staff work diligently to meet the needs of families, including those subject to child protection plans, looked after children and children in need. Staff use agreed tools, including the Common Assessment Framework, to identify and provide early help.
- The lead taken by centres across the locality for different aspects of provision helps to ensure that resources are used effectively, and the centre has access to additional local authority support when needed, for example for outreach work.

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.

Centre details

Unique reference number	22776
Local authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	442764
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	2,400
Centre leader	Lorraine Penson
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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