

Ryton Brook Children's Centre

Anston Brook Primary School, Ryton Brook, North Anston, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S25 4DN

Inspection dates	24–25 June 2014
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
		Not previously inspected	
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. It is not good because:

- Cuts in staffing following a Rotherham-wide review by the local authority mean that the centre's resources are stretched. As a result, leaders cannot increase the engagement of families from target groups in the most disadvantaged area of the reach as quickly as they would wish.
- The centre only engages a majority of families from target groups in centre services and activities, rather than a large majority.
- There is very little tracking of the progress made by children and adults who participate regularly in centre activities. Consequently it is, therefore, more difficult for leaders to provide evidence of impact in some areas of the centre's work.
- The advisory board does not offer enough challenge to the leadership about the performance of the centre and the impact of the services it provides.
- Too many parents are unaware of the advisory board and its role in helping to secure the success of the centre.

This centre has the following strengths:

- The head of centre has instilled ambition and organisation and has prioritised correctly the areas for development. She makes sure that diminishing resources are all aimed at improving the life chances of those most in need in the locality.
- Partnership work is well established. The lead teacher provides good-quality support to local early years settings; centre staff are held in consistently high regard by other agencies.
- Health outcomes are improving. This is particularly so for rates of sustained breastfeeding, reduced obesity for children in Reception Year in local schools and reduced smoking by mothers at delivery.
- Greatly restricted family support and outreach work still provide strong support for individual families who often regard the centre as a last chance in helping to resolve their problems.
- Leaders, governance and managers work well together and have improved the quality of practice and services along with the centre's overall effectiveness over the past 18 months.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Improve access to services by continuing to work towards engaging at least the large majority of families from target groups within the most disadvantaged area in the reach.
- Improve further the impact of practice and services by developing systems to record and check the progress of children who regularly enjoy centre activities, and adults who attend courses or training.
- Improve further the impact of leadership, governance and management by:
 - ensuring the local authority provides sufficient resources to help centre staff to engage more quickly with a greater proportion of families in most need of support
 - increasing the level of challenge offered by the advisory board to the centre's leadership
 - extending parents' knowledge about the advisory board and its work.

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 head of centre, an officer from the local authority, centre staff, parents, members of the advisory board, volunteers, and representatives from professional partnerships including health, early years and education. One activity was observed jointly with the lead teacher.

The inspectors only visited services delivered at the centre due to the timetable and to reduced staffing.

They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation such as the centre's evaluation of its success, its development plans and information related to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Jane Hughes, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Joan Cawdron

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Ryton Brook is a stand-alone centre, designated in 2009. It is based within Anston Brook Primary School, which led and governed the centre until May 2012. Since then, leadership and governance have been shared with Dinnington Children's Centre. The advisory board has amalgamated with Dinnington. The head of centre took up post in May 2012. She is the headteacher of Dinnington Community Primary School and also head of Dinnington Children's Centre. The on-site primary school is inspected separately; its inspection report can be found on the Ofsted website at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

The centre runs a range of integrated services both at the centre and through outreach. These include, for example, stay and play, baby group, baby massage, breastfeeding support, and family learning. The centre targets children from workless households, lone parents and fathers from target groups. There is also a high focus on maternal mental health. Since January 2012, the centre has been staffed by one outreach worker and one family support worker for the equivalent of one day each week per worker. The centre is to close on 31 March 2015.

There are 420 children under five years within the reach. Of these, a very large majority are registered with the centre and 65 currently live within the 30% most disadvantaged area. Of households in the reach, 18% are workless. Almost all families are of White British heritage. Most children enter early years provision with skills typical for their age.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Not enough families from target groups, including those expecting children, engage regularly in centre activities. This is in spite of the proportion having risen sharply from a minority to a majority in the last 18 months.
- There is good take-up of funded early education places by two-, three- and four-year-old children. This is helping to increase the proportion of children who reach a good level of development by the end of Reception Year in the locality. Data held by the centre show that children in this age group are, therefore, well prepared for school.
- Health professionals register families as a matter of course during pre- and post-birth visits to homes. This is helping the centre to continue to increase overall registration rates, including for expectant parents. Currently, 91% of families from target groups such as those who are workless, lone parents and fathers, are registered with the centre.
- In the past, leaders did not prioritise appropriately the needs of different families in the reach and so families and children from target groups were more likely to slip through the net. However, targeted work aimed at families living in the most disadvantaged areas of the reach is now the primary focus for centre staff.
- Families are carefully signposted by staff to the increasing numbers of good and outstanding private providers of early education within the reach. As a result, children generally get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- There are few records of how well children and adults do when they participate in activities, courses or training. Consequently, it is not possible for leaders to show the impact of all aspects of the centre's work and the value it adds to local lives.
- The exception to this is where staff collate information on how well children go on to do in school when they have attended the children's centre. Of the children who accessed services at Ryton

Brook Children's Centre, in 2013, the large majority (78%) achieved a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The gap in attainment between the lowest achieving 20% of children and their peers has narrowed over time. They were, therefore, well prepared for school. The influence, knowledge and skills of the lead teacher, together with successful outreach work, are effective in ensuring that parents learn how to support their children's learning through play.

- Within the reach, not enough of the families most in need currently reap the benefits of children's centre services on a regular basis. Even though most are known to centre staff, too few of the families from target groups such as fathers, lone parents and workless families are making the most of the services on offer. This is largely because there are too few staff to be able to spend as much time as is needed in persuading more to become involved regularly.
- Centre staff receive live birth data from health professionals. They are then able to contact new parents promptly and to offer appropriate advice according to their various needs.
- Health outcomes are improving across the reach. Successful promotion of breastfeeding through 'Breast Buddies' has led to rising rates of sustained breastfeeding at six-to-eight weeks. Similarly, there have been successes in reducing the prevalence of obesity in reception-aged children. The proportion of mothers smoking at delivery has also fallen.
- Case files show, without exception, that children and families in most need of help benefit greatly when they access support through centre services. 'I was at rock bottom and I cannot thank the centre staff enough' and 'I don't know what I would do without them' are typical comments of parents when they have accessed these services. There are many examples of outreach and family support workers providing targeted support at times of significant personal crisis. These normally result in positive outcomes for families where inequalities were reduced and life chances enhanced.
- The few children who are disabled or who have special educational needs are well supported so that they can participate in centre services and integrate successfully within the local community and with their peers.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- Staffing cuts brought about through the review of services across the local authority mean that the desired increases in targeted user engagement in centre activities have not taken place at a fast enough rate. Although, of necessity, resources are used to maximise efficiency in order to work towards agreed local priorities and the needs of targeted children and families living in the area, human resources are stretched too thin.
- Even so, and from a virtual standing start, the head of centre has galvanised the development and provision of services to ensure that those most in need are now the key priority for centre staff. The sensible amalgamation of services between the centres at Dinnington and Ryton Brook means that staff work across both centres and can provide 'joined-up support' for families in need. This arrangement is working well.
- The centre is well maintained and security measures are strong. Safeguarding is a key focus for all staff. The vetting of staff is secure and recruitment records are meticulously maintained. Staff make effective use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to document the impact of their work with families who need more personalised support. Children in need and looked after children are carefully supported so that their needs are met well. Child protection training for staff is up to date.
- Staff training is recorded and the arrangements for staff supervision are followed with care. Staff say they feel well supported and that their training needs are identified and addressed through performance management. Their individual targets are reflected in the centre's development action plan. Staff discuss their successes and well-being during these regular sessions.
- Governance by the amalgamated advisory boards is well established. Members have access to centre data to help them understand its improving performance and how well services are reducing local inequalities among families. They are aware of the impact of performance management. However, advisory board members are not asking challenging enough questions of the leadership about the centre's performance. Parents are involved as members of the advisory board but too

many parents still do not understand its role in developing centre services.

- Partnership work is a key strength of the centre and grows in importance as staffing levels continue to reduce. Representatives from health, education, social care, employment and adult learning are all equally appreciative of any opportunities for joint working. They know that staff are always immediately responsive in a crisis and can be trusted to follow through with effective support and solutions to individual problems. Parents back up their positive views.

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

Unique reference number	22596
Local authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	442876
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	420
Centre leader	Vanessa Vaughan
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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