

Ryefield Children's Centre

Ryefield Centre, Grammar School Close, Ross-on-Wye, HR9 7QD

Inspection dates	5–6 February 2015
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
		Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Inadequate	4
The quality of practice and services		Inadequate	4
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a centre that is inadequate.

- Leaders do not know how many children and families from the priority groups it has identified live in the area that it serves. As a result they do not know how many children and families from these groups access and use the centre's services on a regular basis.
- Much of the information provided to the centre by the local authority relates to the whole county and not specifically to the area around Ryefield. Leaders are not therefore able to effectively plan and evaluate the impact of services.
- The centre does not effectively check the quality and impact of its services. Very little information has been gathered to evaluate centre-led services or those to which families are signposted.
- The centre lacks information about adult learning services and how many parents improve their skills in English or mathematics when they access them. It has limited information from agencies that support families' economic well-being, such as how many parents move into employment or receive the benefits to which they are entitled.
- Leaders hold an overly optimistic view of the centre's performance. This is because monitoring is poor and plans to improve the centre do not link closely to local needs. Targets are not specific or measurable and do not include clear timelines.
- Families have limited opportunities to contribute to the centre's development. Very few parents take part in the parents' forum.
- The advisory board has not been provided with sufficient information to challenge the centre effectively.
- The local authority has not effectively driven improvements at the centre.
- The monitoring of health and safety, and quality of record keeping, is not sufficiently robust, although the local authority has taken swift action to address this aspect of the centre's work.

This centre has the following strengths:

- Most two-, three- and four-year old children take up their entitlement to free education.
- The centre provides effective support at times of crisis, in particular for families experiencing domestic violence and for children who are identified as being at risk.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Work with the local authority and partner agencies to:
 - collect precise information about the numbers of children and families from priority groups that the centre has identified as most in need of its services and who live in the local area
 - gather reliable information about how many of these children and families use the services of the centre and its partner agencies
 - check precisely on the impact of this work and use the information to accurately monitor, evaluate and improve the effectiveness of the centre's work.
- Ensure that the large majority of children and families identified as being most in need of support access services until their needs are met.
- Improve the centre's promotion of adult education services, the take up by parents and check closely the progress they make from their starting points. Focus improvement work particularly on enhancing parents' skills in English and mathematics and the pathways to accredited learning and paid employment, especially for those on low incomes or who are out of work.
- Improve the economic well-being of families by ensuring that more low income and workless families know about and access the benefits to which they are entitled.
- Ensure that development planning:
 - sets out clear and measurable targets that identify exactly what improvement is required and by when
 - identifies who will assess the progress towards the targets set
 - outlines the cost with regard to time and resources required to sustain rapid improvement.
- Ensure that governance is effective by:
 - ensuring that members of the advisory board have the information and training that they need to challenge leaders about the impact of the centre's work and can hold its performance to full account
 - involving more parents in the parents' forum and the advisory board, so that they can make a greater contribution to shaping future services
- Work with the local authority to strengthen the monitoring of health and safety and ensure that record keeping associated with this important aspect of the centre's work is meticulous.

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 three Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with representatives from the local authority, health partners, adult learning and training services groups, children's centre staff, parents and members of the advisory board.

The inspectors visited a range of activities and sessions held at the centre. Senior centre staff attended all team meetings. A joint observation was undertaken with the centre leader.

The inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the self-evaluation form, service plans, a sample of case files, parents' satisfaction surveys, safeguarding policies and procedures, and a variety of files for the range of activities delivered.

Inspection team

Sheelagh Barnes, Lead Inspector

Additional inspector

Peter Towner

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Lesley Talbot-Strettle

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Full report

Information about the centre

Ryefield Children's Centre is one of ten children's centres in Herefordshire. It was opened in 2008 and operates from part of a large building that was previously a school. The centre serves families in the Ross-on-Wye area. It is governed by an advisory board of key partners and parents. The centre provides childcare and health services, family support and adult learning courses. The centre is managed by the local authority. The centre local services coordinator takes responsibility for the day-to-day management of the centre.

The area served by the centre includes 1,184 children under five years of age, the majority of whom are White British. The largest minority ethnic group is from Eastern Europe. The area is very mixed socially and economically and there are pockets of deprivation. For example, the John Kyrle area of Brampton is among the 25% most deprived in England. Much of the area is rural with limited public transport. There is a relatively high proportion of low-income households, lone parents and children with additional needs or disabilities living in the area. Most children enter early education with skills that are lower than those expected for their age, especially in communication and language development.

The centre has identified the following priority groups: families with young children living in the Brampton and Lea areas of Ross-on-Wye, workless and other low-income families, parents with low levels of educational attainment, children with assessments under the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), children subject to a child protection plan, families who have experienced domestic violence and families living in rural isolation.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Inadequate

- Despite the high level of registrations, access to services by young children and families is inadequate because leaders do not know how many families from priority groups are using the centre regularly.
- A minority of lone parents access the centre, and a few families where adults have limited academic qualifications also are in contact. The centre leaders do not have precise figures about how many families living in Brampton or Lea use services because this information is not readily available. Similarly, there is only limited information held about the take up of services by workless and low income families and those experiencing rural isolation.
- A significant proportion of information, gathered by the local authority and from partner agencies and provided to the centre, is at whole county level and not specifically about the area the Ryefield serves. This impedes the ability of leaders to accurately assess local needs, pinpoint those who most need support and check who is using centre services.
- Leaders are not able to clearly show the effectiveness of strategies to encourage families who may be less likely to have regular contact with the centre. Although one group session has been set up on another site in the community for a few families who would otherwise not travel to the centre, the provision of outreach services to groups is limited.
- Through its work with health and social care partners the centre receives information about those who most need support. Those families who do receive one-to-one support are well supported to make improvements and changes to their personal circumstances.
- The centre provides the venue for ante-natal and health visitor services. Parents believe this to be a

positive service as they are familiar with the environment and say it is less clinical than a doctor's surgery. A high proportion of families with new babies are registered with the centre.

- A high proportion of eligible two-, three- and four year-old children take up their entitlement to free early education. They attend settings which are at least of good quality.

The quality of practice and services

Inadequate

- The centre is unable to fully assess local needs in order to plan appropriate services and does not track and effectively monitor the quality of the services it delivers or signposts families to.
- The impact of services on improving the lives of children and families from priority groups is not fully known because of the poor sharing of information between partners and lack of systematic tracking of the progress that children and families make. These inadequacies mean that centre cannot be certain that it is meeting the needs of the most vulnerable children and families.
- The centre is only able to identify a minority of the children and families in the priority groups it has identified as being most in need of support. For example, it has no baseline information about families living in rural isolation and therefore cannot make accurate assessments about the impact of its services on improving their lives.
- Information has not been effectively used by centre leaders to engage families, especially those with few qualifications, on low incomes or out of work, in appropriate services that will improve their mathematics and English skills and build confidence towards improved economic well-being.
- There are good opportunities for volunteers to extend their skills, but these parents are not from priority groups in the main.
- Breastfeeding peer support volunteers are improving the numbers of mothers sustaining feeding at six-to-eight weeks and beyond.
- Well targeted interventions take place to support and protect children identified as being most vulnerable through effective use of the Common Assessment Framework procedures. Case files are maintained to a good standard. Effective support is given to families facing major challenges in their lives and the centre provides a safe and secure haven. For example, through its good partnership with Women's Aid those experiencing domestic abuse are empowered to take more control of their lives.
- The gap in achievement between disadvantaged children and their peers at the end of Reception is reducing over time.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Inadequate

- The rigour with which leaders and managers monitor health and safety is not sufficient. Records have not been kept meticulously. However, during the inspection the local authority acknowledged that this aspect of the centre's work was weak and put in place a process, overseen by a senior officer, to drive rapid improvement.
- Leaders do not effectively monitor the quality of services and the impact they have on improving the outcomes for priority groups. They cannot therefore demonstrate that resources are used effectively to narrow inequalities. A new electronic data management system has been put in place to help capture reliable information about children and families accessing services, but staff have not yet been trained in using it.

- Some targets set for the centre by the local authority, and agreed at the annual conversation meeting, are not relevant or linked closely to its most pressing priorities. For example, it is difficult to see how, in the short to medium term, the centre would contribute to, or measure its progress towards, raising the proportion of school leavers who attain five A* to C grades at GCSE.
- The advisory board is not provided with sufficient information to assess the quality of provision or to challenge the centre about its performance. Although there is a chair of the advisory board, the centre leader has led meetings on occasion and this compromises the board's ability to challenge effectively.
- Self-evaluation processes are weak and not rigorously linked to the impact of centre services or actions being taken to make improvement. As a result, outcomes for the priority groups identified by the centre are not improving quickly enough.
- Development planning is not linked tightly enough to a thorough analysis of local needs. Plans do not clearly identify what the success criteria are, how progress will be measured, what the timelines are or who is held responsible. As a result, it is difficult for the centre to allocate available resources efficiently.
- Although there is a parent's forum, it is only attended by a small number of parents. Not all parents know that the forum exists and so cannot contribute to the life of the centre or the development of future services. Parental representation on the advisory board is low.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures, including staff vetting, meet current requirements. There is good management of oversight of the support provided for families with children assessed under the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), those subject to child protection plans and those assessed as children in need. As a result of the positive impact of the centre's work with its partners, the number of children at risk of harm is falling.

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 details

Unique reference number	22595
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	453954
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,184
Centre leader	Zoe Woods
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01432 260700
Email address	zwoods@herefordshire.gov.uk

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