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13 March 2007

Mrs Judith Shelley
Headteacher
Rawmarsh Children's Centre
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Dear Mrs Shelley

Ofsted survey inspection programme - Evaluation of the impact of children's centres on children and their families 2006/07

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, children, parents and representatives from other groups, during our visit on Thursday, 8 March 2007.

As outlined in the initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of your provision, the visit had a particular focus on the impact of your provision on children and their families.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the centres visited, but individual centres will not be identified in the main text. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements we made included: interviews with the governing body, key centre staff, professionals and providers using the centre, parents, a scrutiny of relevant documentation, and brief observations of sessions within the centre and day nursery.

The overall effectiveness of the provision of an integrated offer of services for children and their parents was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are outstanding.

- Children make excellent progress in the nursery and the several day care sections. Children improve greatly in confidence, social skills and across all areas of learning, including communication and speech and language, often from low starting points.
- Children with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those on the autistic spectrum, make very good progress and are fully integrated into the life of the centre.
- The centre is very successful in reaching out to parents and carers within the community. It meets the wide range of needs within this socially mixed community very well. It is raising the level of parenting skills and knowledge, reducing isolation, helping parents to access benefits, and supporting them to return to work or gain the skills and knowledge to enter the workplace.
- The centre is especially effective in supporting and improving the life chances of vulnerable parents from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. Parents from a wide range of backgrounds readily acknowledge the positive difference the centre has made to their lives, but for the most vulnerable families, its intervention has proved critical in preventing breakdown and in providing them with hope.

Quality of provision

The quality of the provision is outstanding.

- The nursery has a long history of providing very effective education and care for four year-olds. This is being maintained and is now extended to children from birth to five.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good. A high proportion of the staff is highly qualified, including four teachers and many staff with National Vocational Qualifications at Level 3. This level of expertise positively influences the quality of planning and how well play is organised to meet the needs of children, including those with additional learning needs.
- The centre is on the site of the long-established nursery school, albeit much extended and fully refurbished, with high quality resources and bright displays of children's work. However, its very success is highlighting the need to provide additional rooms to accommodate all the activities with children and the community that the centre wishes to develop.
- The centre has excellent relationships with its community and with the range of providers, particularly those working in family support (social care) and in health. The closeness with which front-line professionals work together ensures that vulnerable families and young parents are identified early and relevant support arranged.
- Parents and carers receive a warm welcome. They find the environment provided within the centre and its satellite, Monkwood, to be helpful and supportive. Success and enjoyment in one aspect of child rearing often leads on to an interest in another, and parents and carers embark on a series of courses and training based at the centre that improves their

confidence and parenting skills, enables them to enjoy their children more, and to make friends.

- The centre has well-established outreach provision and strong links with local schools and colleges. It is one of the main providers of training in early years for the local authority.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the centre are outstanding.

- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership of the centre, drawing effectively from over 20 years successful leadership of the nursery school on the site. She is supported very well by her senior team.
- The centre has a very positive and welcoming ethos that makes it an ideal place for parents and carers to access help, support and front-line services.
- The centre has a new and enthusiastic governing body. Governors are fully representative of the community; several came to the nursery as children. They bring a range of valuable skills, knowledge and perspectives to bear on the work of the centre. A high proportion of governors have children or grandchildren who attend the centre.
- A strong strategic commitment to multi-agency working within the community from children's services within the local authority and health trusts underpins the work of the centre and contributes to its very good capacity for further improvement.

Inclusion

Inclusion is outstanding.

- The centre is very successful in providing equality of opportunity for all its community of parents and carers. It is instrumental in providing this for the most socially and economically disadvantaged.
- It makes extremely good provision for children with learning difficulties and disabilities, and is a recognised resource base for children with autism, for whom it provides exceptionally well.

Areas for improvement

There are no significant areas for improvement. However, we discussed encouraging more parents into adult/higher education, evaluating the impact of the work of the centre in greater depth, and investigating ways of creating more accommodation to meet demand. In addition, it may be helpful to extend the good use made of assessments of children's learning in the nursery, how they inform future planning, into the day care settings.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop provision at your centre.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Brian Padgett
HM Inspector of Schools

Cynthia Walker
Childcare Inspector