

Inspection report for Rushey Green Children's Centre

Local authority	Lewisham
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Linked school if applicable	n/a
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Rushey Green

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre area manager, children's centre childcare and play service manager, the deputy director of children's services for Lewisham, the children's centre manager for the nursery, focus groups of parents and other users of services,

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

Information about the centre

Rushey Green Children's Centre is situated within Rushey Ward, described locally as the 'central corridor' of Lewisham. This ward is one of the 70% most disadvantaged wards and has several pockets of severe disadvantage. The 'central corridor' has the highest crime rate in Lewisham. The majority of residents are white British and black Afro-Caribbean. Minority ethnic groups include those of mixed race, Asian Pakistani, Asian Indian and other Asian, Turkish and Polish. There are a high proportion of families claiming benefits and children who live in workless households. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with attainment below that expected for their age. The onsite nursery provides funded places for vulnerable children from across the area and non-funded places through an application process. It was judged outstanding in all aspects of the five Every Child Matters outcomes at its last early years inspection in 2008. Rushey Green is a phase one children's centre which offers the full core offer of services. Governance is by the local authority through the Children's Centre and Extended Services Advisory Board.

Children's centres in Lewisham have been developed as clusters within four areas with a children's centre area manager for each area. Rushey Green is one of seven children's centres in area 2. This area is in the process of appointing an advisory board which will include parents and members of the local community.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for users and the wider community

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

2

Main findings

Rushey Green Children's Centre and Nursery ensures good outcomes overall for those who use its provision. This is because of the excellent strategic leadership of the local authority which has ensured very effective collaboration and co-operation between all agencies, including the third sector, working with families, especially those who are vulnerable. There is good promotion of equality for all users. For example one parent talked with great enthusiasm about how his three children had learnt to speak English very rapidly at the nursery, 'In only 3 months my youngest son has learnt to make small sentences in English. We only speak Arabic at home.' The good management of the children's centre area manager means that there is a good range of activities across the five wards in area 2 and that Rushey Green signposts effectively, as well as ensuring the needs of the families who attend the nursery are fully met. Outreach workers make every effort to provide services where families can access them best and facilitate home visits where it is difficult for parents and carers to leave their homes. The home visiting pilot project has indicated that this is a very effective way to reach the most vulnerable users. The weekly coffee mornings at Rushey Green ensure that parents have a voice in shaping services offered. However there is no formal mechanism for gathering users' views because the area advisory board is not yet in place. Users feel very safe at the centre. As one parent explained, 'The centre is like a second home to the children.' All users spoken to had very high levels of trust in the provision and the centre staff. There are excellent policies and procedures which ensure all children attending the nursery are safe from harm.

The good provision is underpinned by very strong partnerships that exist between all agencies. For example information is shared by midwives with health visitors and then with outreach workers so that the families with needs are identified as early as possible and an appropriate level of support is given. Parents and carers speak very highly of the collaboration with the Kaleidoscope Centre which makes special provision for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Because of the high level of support from this nearby resource, the Rushey Green nursery is able to be very inclusive. There are excellent outcomes for developing healthy lifestyles

because of the impact of the work of health professionals' pre and post birth, including very successful smoking cessation and dietician programmes combined with the ongoing work of the nursery in promoting healthy food choices and exercise. Due to the excellent quality of advice and guidance given both the nursery and wider children's centre services offer excellent care guidance and support to all users.

The children's centre demonstrates a good capacity to make further improvement. Most of the area 2 team have been appointed in the last 18 months and the impact of their work is just becoming evident. The children's centre area manager co-ordinates the work of the team effectively. However data, recently made available to the centre via a new borough-wide data base, is not yet fully informing the evaluation of the range of activities offered by the centre.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure that when the advisory board for area 2 is in place there is good representation from the Rushey Green community.
- Use the new data base to analyse and evaluate current Rushey Green provision ensuring that what is offered fully meets the needs of users within this community.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

The alignment of health, education and social care services across area 2 has had a huge impact on improving the outcomes for family health and in safeguarding children in Rushey Green. For example there have been notable increases in birth weight and in the number of mother's who breast feed their babies for longer periods. Parents report that attending children's centre services has significantly reduced their stress levels. This is particularly true for parents who cannot afford full time child care and rely on the wide range of 'drop-ins'. They say these offer high quality play opportunities for their children as well as opportunities to meet with other parents and share experiences. All speak very highly of the dietician who gives one-to-one support as well as running courses in healthy eating. Health visitors monitor accident and emergency cases every week thus picking up any recurrent admissions very rapidly and ensuring children are kept as safe as possible.

Children make good progress during their time in the nursery which has contributed to an increase in the numbers of children attaining 78 points overall and 6+ in PSE and CLL by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is evidenced through the detailed pupil development files with clear evaluation against the Early Years Foundation Stage outcomes. The Every Child a Talker project has been particularly successful in improving children's communication skills with very effective support from speech therapists especially for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Parents are highly complimentary of the level of care their children receive, 'Everyone is so friendly and helpful at Rushey Green.' They say they have difficulty getting their children to come home at the end of the day! Children behave well in the nursery and parents have much appreciated the input at coffee mornings on behaviour management as well as the parenting courses offered across area 2.

A number of initiatives support the good development of users' economic stability and independence. For example the Job Club and benefits advice held at the centre and in other venues across area 2 is well used by Rushey Green families. A very successful volunteer programme has enabled parents to develop confidence to engage in formal training, for example NVQ2 in childcare. Some users have returned to work following their volunteering experience. Parents say the Time Bank is a very useful resource because you can give your time in exchange for someone else's time. For example one Asian parent was able to 'buddy' new arrivals and support them with settling in to a new country as well as introducing them to children's centre services. There are limited opportunities for users to contribute to decision making and governance of the centre as there is currently no advisory board.

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare	1

concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	3
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	2

How good is the provision?

2

The good partnership working across all agencies ensures that there is good assessment of the needs of all users. This ensures that the most vulnerable families are well supported and receive carefully targeted services. The common assessment framework is used exceptionally well for children at risk because of the highly effective support for the family from the 'team around the child'. The new Early Intervention Locality Panel provides a multi-agency response to families with multiple needs and brings a holistic approach to supporting the most vulnerable families.

The nursery makes good provision to ensure children learn and develop well. The Trinity Tots drop in provides good quality toys and how to play successfully with children is carefully modelled by the outreach team. Parents also value the activity cards they can take home to remind them how to replicate the play activities at home. The 'Get Crafty' sessions are much enjoyed by parents and children. One parent was most amused by her three year olds bright blue hands during a painting session! The Toy Library next door to the children's centre is a popular and very well used resource. It is managed by a charitable trust but is supported by outreach workers. Childminders find this extremely helpful as they are able to change the range of good toys regularly. There is excellent provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities for example through the Bagbooks resource designed specifically for children on the autistic spectrum. Informal discussion with users has led to a fathers club being established at one of the area 2 centres. A number of Rushey Green users access this provision.

The quality of care, guidance and support users receive is outstanding. For example the home visiting project enabled outreach workers to go to the neediest areas and support families in their homes. Once contact is made with a vulnerable parent, outreach workers discuss their specific needs with great sensitivity and often accompany them to children's centre activities or to appointments with key support agencies. This builds their confidence so that they are able to access services on their own. For example one user who attended a summer holiday club was introduced to the Jobs Club and to the dietician. As a result of this she has worked on her CV and is actively seeking work with support from outreach workers.

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	2
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Lewisham local authority has an effective structure for ensuring the accountability and professional supervision of all staff working in Rushey Green. There are good management structures in place within the children's centre except for the current lack of an advisory board. The local authority has an outstanding vision and ambition for their children's centres and the organisation into areas with a manager for each area has been instrumental in encouraging other agencies to organise in area teams to match the children's centre areas. The good outcomes for users of the Rushey Green centre, is an example of the effectiveness of multi-agency working and of the good use of resources to support vulnerable families. The centre gives good value for money.

Arrangements for safeguarding children at the nursery and across the Rushey green provision are outstanding. For example as soon as a family registers at the centre they are given a pack which includes home safety information and some home safety equipment such as plug covers. There is excellent liaison with social care for children who have child protection plans. Foster carers are very impressed with the support they receive and with the good outcomes for children who are looked after. Schools also comment on the improved behaviour of this group of children due to the work of the children's centre.

Equality and diversity are promoted well. There is good support for families arriving from other parts of the world and a good uptake of ESOL courses signposted by the centre. Users are very positive about the inclusiveness of the nursery. For example a child with Downs Syndrome who has made very good progress thanks to the excellent collaboration between the Kaleidoscope Centre and the children's centre. The range of users reflects the local population well and the drop in sessions and coffee mornings actively promote community cohesion through creating opportunities to share ideas and cultural differences in approaches to parenting.

Whilst the centre has a very positive and proactive approach to encouraging the community to engage with services by seeking users views and making changes to services based upon these, there is no formal approach to user involvement through an advisory board. This also has an impact on the effectiveness of the self-evaluation for the Rushey Green centre because currently this reflects an area perspective

rather than a centre specific perspective. This approach has also had an impact on the analysis of data. During the inspection it was discovered that data could be provided that was very centre specific. This had not been requested prior to the inspection because the full capacity of the new database was not known. The data which resulted from inspection trails is very useful to the children's centre and to the local authority who can now request similar data for all their children's centres.

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	3
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	2

Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Rushey Green Children's Centre on 22 and 23 July 2010. We visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's plans and documents and had discussions with some of you and professionals. Following our visit we have judged that the centre provides good, and in some areas outstanding support to you and your families.

One of the things that the centre is doing really well is improving the health of families. Because all the different agencies work so well together your children's health is improving. The number of mums' breastfeeding has increased and, because mums have stopped smoking, the number of low birth weight babies has reduced. The dietician works in the community and many of you talk about how useful this is. She has also worked with the centre and some parents to help improve children's eating habits. However there is more to do to reduce obesity in young children. The excellent partnership with Kaleidoscope ensures ongoing support for families who have children with special educational needs and/or disabilities when they start at Rushey Green.

Those of you who spoke to us said that your children's centre is a warm and welcoming place, and that you would rather wait for a place in the nursery at Rushey Green than go elsewhere. You and your children are safe at the centre due to the excellent risk assessments and robust policies and procedures. You also told us that you feel able to share any concerns with staff. The home safety packs you get when you register provide you with a good start and are supported by parenting sessions to help you understand how to keep your children safe. As a result the number of children's hospital admissions is reducing. This is also supported by the work that health visitors do with the hospital to see if there are any families with young children who may need some extra support. We found that the centre was excellent at helping people at times in their lives when they most need it; action was taken quickly and different people and organisations worked well as a team to support both children and families.

Those of you we spoke to said that your children love going to Rushey Green Children's Centre Nursery and you are very happy with the progress they are making in their learning. Some of you have been involved in voluntary work in area two, where you have also been able to attend training courses. This has led to some of you gaining qualifications, such as childcare qualifications, and improving your work prospects with a few of you also going on to find jobs.

People in charge of running the centre are doing a really good job. The children's centre area manager and the nursery manager have worked hard to make sure that everything the children's centre does for you will make a difference to the area in which you live. They make sure that everyone who works in area two shares this commitment and we read about, and heard from you, of lots of examples where they have made a real difference to your lives. There are a few activities, other than the nursery, that run from the Rushey Green centre but you also told us that you use

some of the services run at other children's centres in the area or in local community buildings. Managers know there is still more to do if they are to fully meet the needs of your community. For example they need to dig a bit deeper into the area two activities, to ensure that they know who is using the activities and the centres in the area so that resources fully meet your needs.

Lewisham Borough Council delivers their children's centre activities on an area basis, with Rushey Green being one of seven centres in area two. As a result they have initially concentrated on getting activities up and running in the area and do not yet have an advisory board in place for area two children's centres. This has meant that parents are not currently able to make a formal contribution to decisions made the centre. The borough has plans in place to develop an advisory board for the area and we have asked them to ensure that when then advisory board for area two is in place there is good representation from the Rushey Green community.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to come and speak to us, we are very grateful and we wish you every success for the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.