

Inspection report for The Rainbow Children's Centre

Local authority	Bradford
Inspection number	362544
Inspection dates	20–21 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Liz Godman

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Mrs Anna Curini
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school	N/A
Linked early years and childcare,	Keighley Community Nursery

The inspection of this Sure Start Children's Centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

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 one additional inspector and one early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, members of staff and partner professionals from other agencies. Discussions were held with steering group members, parents, carers and representatives from the local authority. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documentation.

Information about the centre

Rainbow Children's Centre opened as a children's centre on 29 June 2005. Its origins were in a Sure Start Local Programme and it subsequently separated from a neighbouring children's centre in April 2009. The newly appointed children's centre manager took up her post at the start of September 2010 and so at the time of the inspection had been in post for a few weeks. The centre provides the full core offer including childcare and early learning, family support, health services and childminder network support. Keighley Community Nursery shares the site with the children's centre and provides up to 50 places for children from birth to five years. It was last inspected in March 2010. This report can be viewed at www.ofsted.gov.uk. Most children enter early education with knowledge and skills that are below expectations for their age.

Governance is provided by the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council, in conjunction with a steering group. This group includes representatives from partner agencies and parents.

The centre serves a community which experiences high levels of social and economic disadvantage, where there is also a high level of movement into and away from the area. Levels of unemployment are high, as is the number of families in receipt of benefits and many of the existing jobs are low paid. Most families live on the Braithwaite estate on the edge of Keighley, where housing is mostly social or privately rented. The centre also provides for families from outlying rural and village settings. The majority of families are White British. A growing number of families

from minority ethnic groups, particularly of Pakistani heritage, have also relocated into the area.

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

Rainbow Children’s Centre provides good quality services for young children and their families. The centre is well led and managed, not least due to the exceptionally strong strategic direction and outstanding governance provided by the local authority. As a result, the centre is an integral part of the authority’s provision for children in the early years and their families in the Keighley area. Thorough monitoring, good use of excellent data and good analysis ensure a shared understanding amongst staff and partners of the centre’s strengths and areas for development. Consequently, services are well integrated and outcomes are improving. The centre promotes equality and celebrates diversity well. It is welcoming to families from a wide range of backgrounds and has increased the involvement of minority groups during the last year. All these features give the centre good capacity for further improvement. However, the timing of the centre’s planning processes means that, at the present time, priorities specific to the centre’s future development are not recorded in a clear and ambitious plan, shared with partners.

The centre is having a positive effect on children’s and adults’ health. In general, children’s physical activity is less developed than other aspects of a healthy lifestyle, due in part to limited space and provision for outdoor play, and in part to missed opportunities to use the expertise of the staff. Preparations are ongoing for midwives to be based in the centre. Both the centre and the midwifery service are committed to this as they see the benefits for parents-to-be and their children. There have, though, been delays in implementation and so the potential benefits for parents and children are not yet being realised. Partnerships with a number of other of agencies are very strong and this makes a good contribution to adults’ and children’s well-being and development.

The centre gives high priority to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Staff

are trained to recognise the signs of abuse and information is shared well across agencies, particularly social care. This ensures children and adults are safeguarded and there is a clear understanding about the thresholds for referrals to different agencies, which ensures families receive the right level of support for their needs. Users say that the centre is a very safe place and also that good support from the centre has enabled them to keep their children safe at home. Many appreciate being able to use safety equipment, including the stair gates and fireguards provided by the centre.

Adults and children using the centre show high levels of enjoyment and there is good take up of opportunities to learn, play and have fun together. Adults and children have a strong voice in expressing their views on the centre's activities and services. For children this is evident in their enjoyment and engagement. Parents and carers are represented well through the parents' forum and the steering group. They feel that their ideas and contributions make a difference to the centre. Children are well prepared for school by attendance at the centre. The local primary school reports that children who have been involved with the centre have stronger social and personal skills than those who have not.

Adult users enjoy the social opportunities provided by courses, including jewellery making and beauty tasters, and say these have built their confidence. However, opportunities for progression to an accredited course or to a more advanced level are limited and so users recognise that they are not always sufficiently challenged in developing their skills for the future or for employment.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Build on partnerships to further promote children's health and physical development.
- Extend adult users' personal development and skills by providing greater challenge and building upon their current achievements.
- Use the extensive information and data from evaluation to develop a rigorous, systematic and prioritised plan for the centre's future development.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Families show an improved understanding of dental care, healthy eating and food hygiene. A new programme Mend 2-4, has engaged interest and has recruited well. This is provided by health services to promote healthy approaches to food and to tackle obesity. The programme also promotes physical activity. A growing number of new mothers have initiated breastfeeding although the proportion of those sustaining this still remains low. Despite the efforts of the centre, some adult users who have tried to give up smoking, have not succeeded and so smoking cessation rates are low.

Children behave well and safely around the centre. Good modelling by staff is improving parents' and carers' skills in managing behaviour and in keeping children safe. Strong relationships between the centre, a nearby family centre and other agencies are improving the safety of families and children who are vulnerable, including those who have a child protection plan or those who are looked after. The centre's active initiation of Common Assessment Framework processes, engages other agencies well to safeguard children and meet needs. However, National Health Service data indicate a high percentage of emergency admissions to hospital for the centre's reach area. For about a third of these the reason is given as 'other'. The centre is aware of this and is exploring the data further to identify how it might make a difference to children's safety.

Parents' improving confidence and the guidance they receive are increasing their skills in helping their children at home, although, on occasions, parents and carers are not fully engaged with their children during centre activities. There is steady improvement in the Early Years Foundation Stage profile scores of children who have used the centre, including among the lowest 20% of achievers. Within this though, children's communication, language and literacy skills are proving hard to shift, particularly for boys. There is some improvement through work in partnership between speech and language therapists and the centre.

An increasing number of families use the services provided by the centre and users report its benefits for themselves and their children. Adults and children attending the centre work harmoniously together. Users say that the centre helps them to feel less isolated and to engage with a variety of services and to make new relationships. A typical view is, 'The centre is my lifeline.' Users say that their confidence and self-esteem have improved since attending the centre. Users from all backgrounds appreciate the opportunities to meet new people, to challenge assumptions and to try out new activities.

The crèche provided by the children's centre is enabling parents to attend courses and to develop their skills. Some, such as 'home maintenance' and 'managing your money', are aiding economic stability, whilst others such as the accredited information and communication technology (ICT) courses are building skills which users are keen to apply in their current jobs. The centre has regular visits from an adviser from Jobcentre Plus, but users are not always prompt in taking up this help.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
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	2
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 centre has good systems for reviewing and responding to users' needs. Health visitors play a key role in letting families know about the centre. All activities are evaluated and adjusted according to feedback. Users say that, 'If we ask for something it usually happens.' Extensive data also ensures the centre has a good understanding of local needs. This knowledge ensures a good balance between activities with wide appeal and those for families in greater need. For example, speech and language therapists identify children from a few months of age who may have communication difficulties. They make persistent home visits and attend the centre's drop-in sessions to ensure no-one is missed. Parents from minority ethnic groups are increasingly becoming involved with the centre and appreciate being able to speak with members of staff in Punjabi.

The centre is promoting learning for all its users well. Parents receive good help and advice on child development and on preparing their children for nursery or school. Good, varied activities support learning and stimulate interest and enjoyment. Particularly popular are creative activities, including music on the 'Rainbow train' and arts and craft activities during 'Let's play'. During these activities staff provide very effective role models for parents and carers. Effective assessments of adults' learning results in activities matched to needs. This includes the provision of extended activities in ICT sessions, such as use of spreadsheets, while others cover simple word processing. Similarly, English language support is available where needed on introductory childcare courses.

The centre is very sensitive to the different needs of its users. Support for lone parents is very good and the centre provides valuable social opportunities for parents and children. The centre also recognises the needs of mothers in balancing childcare, working night shifts and extending skills by attending centre courses. A very warm and welcoming atmosphere ensures a good ethnic mix in many sessions and also enables men to feel comfortable about coming to a session predominantly attended by women. Childminders make good use of the centre and their effective network enables them and the children they care for to access the centre's good facilities and enjoyable activities.

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. The centre's family support workers know families very well, are highly committed to helping them and work effectively as a team. As a result families say they feel well supported at times of crisis. There is also good continuity between the centre's family support workers and the school-based parental involvement workers, easing transition to school. Close

working with the on-site community nursery provides access for families to supported day care where this is needed. Generally there is good access to information, advice and guidance, for example, about tooth care and talking to children about sex. However, information for adults about sexual health, alcohol and drugs, although available, is less evident and so less accessible to those who may need it.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Officers from the local authority ensured that the centre remained effective until the new centre manager took up her post. They continue to provide good support during her induction. High-quality day-to-day management and very clear lines of accountability and supervision ensure that all aspects of the centre's work run smoothly. Parents are very well represented on the steering group and make a good contribution to governance. Senior leaders are committed to driving the centre's improvement and this and very high expectations are shared amongst all staff and partners. This secures cohesive and successful team work. Partnerships with other agencies within the local authority and with health visitors and speech and language therapists are especially strong and effective in supporting families. This partnership work supports the good safeguarding arrangements. All necessary checks such as Criminal Records Bureau and recruitment checks are completed for staff, other agencies and volunteers. Resources, targeted to provide for children and families with the greatest need, have helped to steadily improve outcomes. Staff's knowledge and skills are generally used well. However, occasionally opportunities are missed to use particular expertise, for example, in dance, to promote children's physical development. The centre is well maintained and provides an attractive and safe environment suited to the needs of both adults and children. It provides good value for money.

Different cultures, languages and religions are reflected well in celebrations, displays, toys and resources. Users from minority ethnic groups say they feel welcome and their use of the centre has increased. Women of South Asian heritage are well represented on the staff and on the centre's steering group. White British users comment positively about how much they have learned about different cultures from this. There is good support for those who speak English as an additional language

and the centre is inclusive and accessible for children and adults with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood	1
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	2
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	2
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

The inspection report for Keighley Community Nursery was used to inform judgements made during this inspection. The nursery was inspected in March 2010 and its overall effectiveness was judged as good.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the Rainbow Children's Centre on 20 and 21 September 2010. We judged the centre as good overall.

During our visit, we talked with a number of you and met the professionals who work with the centre. We visited some of the sessions and looked at the centre's documents. You told us how much you enjoy the activities provided by the centre and that staff at the centre are always keen to know what you think of these and what else you would like. You told us that staff are friendly and helpful and we agree with you.

The new centre manager provides good leadership, with particularly good support from the local authority and the steering group. Most of you said that the parents' forum helps you to make a difference to the centre. Because of this the centre is well placed to become even better and to make an even stronger contribution for your children and families in the Keighley area. We found that the centre staff know the area and its families really well and work well as a team. This means they are good at providing the right activities for you and at pointing you in the direction of the right agency to help if they cannot. All these things are coming together well to give your children a better start in life.

You told us, and we agree, that the centre is welcoming to everyone, no matter what their background. You said that everyone gets on well together and how much some of you have learned from mixing with different people and that this is good for your children too. Indeed, the headteacher of the local primary school told us that she finds that the Rainbow Centre children are ready for school and settle quickly because they have been to the centre. Although the centre is meeting your needs well, we have asked the local authority and the manager to put together a written plan to help it become even better. We are sure that they will ask those of you who go to the parents' forum and who are on the steering group, along with the other agencies that work with the centre, to help them with this.

The centre is helping you and your children to lead healthier lifestyles. You said that you enjoy the cookery classes and we noticed how keenly you signed up for Mend 2-4. You told us, and we saw, how the limited outdoor play space at the centre and in the area makes it hard to keep your children physically active. Perhaps you will get a new playground in Braithwaite soon! Also we think that some indoor games and dancing would help with this. We hope that, as planned, the midwives will move into the centre before too long. This will be better for everyone as new mothers will get to know about the centre even sooner. The centre works well with some other agencies. Examples are the health visitors who told many of you about the centre, also the speech and language therapists who are spotting children who may have communication difficulties even though they are only a few months old. We agree with you that the centre is a very safe place. Staff are trained well to help you keep your children safe. You also said that you liked the good support from the centre to

make sure your homes are safe, especially the first-aid training and the loan of equipment like stair gates and fireguards.

We saw your children enjoying themselves in 'Let's Play' and 'Rainbow Train' as well as in the crèche. You said you liked meeting people on courses like jewellery making and beauty tasters, and say these have built your confidence. Those of you on the ICT course are working hard to get the qualification, especially as some of you have other jobs, including night-time work as nurses, and young families to look after. Some others of you though could be challenged a bit more to do courses with qualifications or even more advanced qualifications. This should help you to achieve your ambitions as well as maybe to increase your income.

Thank you very much for your welcome and your openness with us. We really enjoyed meeting you and your children and wish you every success for the future.

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