

Inspection report for Rossington Children's Centre

Local authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	365719
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Reporting inspector	Sue Pepper HMI

Centre governance	Action for Children
Centre leader	Catherine Duckenfield
Date of previous inspection	Not inspected previously
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Linked school if applicable	
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Bright Sparks Day Nursery EY331865

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 of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with centre staff and senior managers, the advisory board, health professionals, local community partners, user groups and parents and carers. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Rossington Children's Centre operates from a purpose built site which was previously a family centre. The centre evolved from a local Sure Start programme. It was designated a Phase 1 centre in 2005. It provides the full core offer of services and a range of supporting services, including health, family support and some adult training courses. Parents and carers are signposted to a range of specialist services.

Population in this former mining area is mostly of White British heritage but a small number represent a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The area served by the centre is socially mixed. New Rossington which is more densely populated is socially and economically disadvantaged with 44% of families being ranked to live in the 20% most deprived areas of the country and a further 22% ranked to live in the 10% most deprived wards. In contrast, Old Rossington is more affluent. Relevant data indicates approximately 65% of adults are employed but unemployment is rising. Over half of the families are on low incomes with 53% dependent on workless benefits. A high proportion of adults have few or no qualifications.

A high proportion of children in the reach area enter school with skills below those expected for their age. Early Years Foundation Stage is delivered through various groups. The centre has an affiliation agreement with an on-site day care provider, Bright Sparks Day Nursery, which provides full day care and education for up to 41 children under five years of age of which no more than nine may be under two years

of age. The nursery is privately managed and is subject to separate Early Years inspection arrangements. The inspection report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

The centre is one of seven children's centres in the local area that Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council has commissioned Action for Children to run on its behalf. It is open from 9am until 5pm, Monday to Thursday, closing on Friday at 4pm, 50 weeks of the year. It is also open Saturday mornings. The centre has an established advisory board which is called the partnership board. It is made up of representatives from the local community, professional agencies and parents and carers. The chair of the board is a parent.

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

This is a good children's centre which promotes positive outcomes for children and families across all five areas. Attention to safeguarding is good. Parents say they feel safe and very welcome at the well-established centre which is centrally located in the community. Users of the centre were unequivocal in their view that the centre workers have built extremely trusting and respectful relationships with them. They said the workers are non-judgemental and can be relied upon to help them.

The centre was regularly referred to as the 'hub' of the community. Parents see it as a place where they can enjoy the company of friends, meet new people and learn new things. Comments expressed by some parents and echoed by others explain why Rossington is held in high regard. 'I lost my confidence, but coming here I now feel more secure' was a typical view expressed. Further comments convey more clearly the impact of the centre, for example, 'thank you for opening my eyes to what I can do.'

Partnership with health colleagues is a strength and attention to being healthy is good. The centre uses innovative ways of testing the impact of the 'seed of thought' they have planted regarding the impact of passive smoking and the importance of healthy eating. Parents receive good quality care, guidance and support. The

counselling service in particular is described as 'brilliant'.

Strategies to assess and effectively meet the needs of children and their families in particularly vulnerable situations are good. Early intervention work has made a big difference to improving some lives. Some parents found it difficult to describe the wealth of assistance they had received but they shared that they had received 'massive support'. The programme of events is cleverly planned to ensure that multiple needs can be met at one single visit. Workers regularly consult with users of the centre so that they can provide bespoke sessions and courses which will further empower parents to meet the needs of their child.

This is an inclusive centre. Attention to equality and evaluation of services is well-embedded and continually developing. The partnership board is well-established, however, members do not fully reflect the community. The centre plans to increase the involvement of more parents to address this issue and strengthen the challenge and support the centre receive on the impact of their effectiveness.

The centre is well attended but not all family members use the wide range of services. 'I want to be a better person, a better dad' was a typical view expressed. Work is ongoing to try to engage fathers more. The centre values their important contribution to child rearing and they recognise that their involvement would be of great benefit. Although they have not been successful in the past in engaging a group specifically for fathers they plan to actively promote this again in the near future.

The leaders are well supported by the dedicated centre workers. They have developed strong links with many partners and agencies. They use all available information extremely well to analyse the impact of their work. They are learning innovative ways to collate and refine their data collection using new electronic systems which has led to some good results. Users can access information provided by Jobcentre Plus and they are signposted to adult training courses. However, data to demonstrate the impact of this work and users' progression towards employment is limited. The manager knows how important it is to have reliable information to target and measure the full impact of their work. This pro-activity demonstrates good capacity to improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve information sharing with Jobcentre Plus and adult training courses to demonstrate the long-term impact of their work with service users.
- Ensure users from across the community are represented on the advisory board.
- Increase the involvement of fathers who are not accessing the centres activities.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

All outcomes are good and some are improving strongly. Through a multi-agency approach they provide a wide range of integrated services. The strong partnership work based on thorough analysis of the needs of users is central to the centre's success.

Children are well protected by a 'team around the child' approach to the Common Assessment Framework. There is good evidence of improved outcomes for children on child protection plans. Early intervention of family support workers prevents the escalation of concerns by helping parents to cope with family pressures, thus reducing risks to children. The family support service provides a counselling service to assist good mental health and well-being. Parents described the counsellor as 'brilliant' and a 'breath of fresh air.'

Parents and children are benefiting greatly from the services provided and developing a good awareness of the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle. Some health outcomes are variable, such as the uptake of breastfeeding which is low. However, some mothers have learnt that not only does breast milk reduce the risks of obesity but it also boosts baby's immune system and promotes bonding. The centre is optimistic that peer support will help further increase breastfeeding.

The baby café acts as a place where problems can be identified early by health colleagues and mothers have ready access to health advice and support across a range of developmental issues. Parents are given sound advice on portion size and suitable diets for infants. 'I enjoyed cooking in the cosy kitchen where I could see my kids playing and I learnt how to cook healthy meals' was a typical comment from a parent. Shocking visual images such as decaying teeth remind parents of the harmful effect too much sugar can have on children's teeth. Parents are supported to understand the sugar and fat content of foods through real life props or displays, which enlighten them on the contents of every day drinks and foods.

Baby massage enhances relationships and reduces colic and sleep disturbance in some babies. Those who have benefitted from this service said, 'touch relaxation really works.' Centre staff work alongside health colleagues weighing babies to enable health colleagues to have more time to discuss any issues. Smoking cessation has helped some users to stop or make positive changes, for example, 'I no longer smoke in the house.' These services have resulted in more confident parents who have more contented babies who have had fewer health issues.

Users of the centre develop a good understanding of how to keep their children safe through specific sessions and regular liaison with the local community police. They said, 'it's a useful opportunity to share tips and get good advice.' Role play props, such as the road crossing equipment is used to effectively encourage young children to learn how to keep safe on the roads. Home safety schemes enable parents to risk assess their own homes and equipment is provided, if required, to help minimise

risks to children in their homes.

Positive parenting courses help parents learn new ways to manage their children's behaviour. 'I am now a completely different person; I have routines and boundaries for my children' were all typical remarks. Baby signing prevents young children being frustrated and promotes good communication skills. Parents' described this session as simply being 'time for us.' The centre recognises the need for a dads' group so that the promotion of effective parental skills and enjoyment of children is not just confined to mothers, but they have yet to establish a group.

Children under five years of age take advantage of the planned drop-in sessions where staff are supportive and offer guidance and advice when needed. Evaluations report that children not only develop their confidence but they learn to share and enjoy a wide range of activities. Parents who have completed learning stories enhance their understanding of the value of early learning through play.

Partnerships have been improved with schools. On entry, children are mostly below national averages especially in their communication, language and literacy development and personal, social and emotional development. Concerted efforts on these areas of development are clearly showing some signs of improvements.

Users of the centre have access to a good range of opportunities to take up training. Parents stated, 'There's lots of unemployment, I have contact here with 'dad' and I am looking at access to training to hopefully get back to work'.

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 recently been greatly improved and enhanced due to the centre manager securing grants for its further development. Plans are firmly in place to

develop a sensory room. The new conservatory room increases capacity for joint working and enhances the quality of the environment. It overlooks the extremely welcoming outdoor area. Attractive displays are informative and celebrate achievements.

The baby clinic provides a 'one-stop shop' for families offering periodic weaning advice and the opportunity to take up immunisation and smoking cessation sessions. The antenatal and midwife drop-in sessions run the breast feeding café, which promotes the benefits of breastfeeding to mothers and mothers-to-be. A speech and language therapist is now assigned to the centre. This service makes attending crucial speech development much easier for parents and as a consequence children's attendance has improved.

Assessment of the needs of all those who use the centre is very robust due to the high levels of knowledge, expertise and the effective sharing of information with most partners. Adult learners' needs are carefully considered to ensure they are signposted to the most appropriate sessions or courses for them. 'I question everything I do, they are very good at praising which makes a real difference to me' was a typical comment from a parent. The planned drop-in sessions for childminders, foster carers, young parents and family groups successfully bring wider members of the community together. The centre has recently introduced the use of texts which is proving to be a popular way of communicating. This promotes community cohesion and provides opportunities to share experiences. Parents and carers know they can turn to the centre and that they will be helped with childcare, mental health issues and any practical problems, such as, debt management. Parents commented that the centre helps promote an 'I can' attitude.

The Movers and Shakers group is a stimulating and enjoyable group which fosters physical activity and development of communication and personal and social development through songs and nursery rhymes. The Ready Steady play group aids children's transition from pre-school to nursery school.

The centre also runs an after-school club for children from five to 11 years of age. Children enjoy meeting new friends and develop their decision making skills. They engage in purposeful learning activities and have the opportunity to explore issues, for example, anti-bullying. Family events have proved to be a huge success encouraging families to enjoy traditional games and art and crafts.

Although the centre does not have a specific service for children with special educational needs, they consult with appropriate services to provide any specialist equipment and support any individual child may need. The centre manager's current work with 'Aiming High', which is part of the children's disability team, puts the centre in a strong position to further enhance provision. For instance, the new Sparkles group is specifically for siblings of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities .

Some families are more difficult to engage and the centre has recently employed a

parental engagement worker to further promote outreach and their engagement. The centre has facilities to translate leaflets and letters into individual home languages as required.

Joint home visits are conducted with new families or those targeted in the most deprived areas to ensure families whose circumstance may make them vulnerable are well informed about the support available. Several parents described the intervention provided as having a 'major impact on my life'.

Access to childcare vouchers enables many parents to place their child, free of charge, in a setting of their choice whilst they access courses; some of which are accredited. Jobcentre Plus routinely sends job vacancies to the centre and parents also use the internet for searching jobs. Nord Anglia has an appointment service running at the centre to support those who have been unemployed for a long time. The Workers Education Association provides adult education and they support the achievements of new skills which enhance opportunities for employment. A few parents have trained to become volunteers and some have had work placements at the centre which have enhanced skills ready for them to be able to join the workforce. The quality of courses offered to which adults are signposted is monitored and the centre is aware of any issues that may arise. Participation and retention rates are precisely tracked but long-term outcomes which evidence routes enabling parents to work towards further training or gain employment are limited to anecdotal or local knowledge.

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

Despite great changes to workers at the centre, universal and core services remain unaffected and new services are continually developing to meet the needs of the community. This is because the leaders and workers have good knowledge of the reach area. The current job-sharing role of the centre manager and senior project worker effectively blends their different skills and expertise extremely well. The centre leader's expertise and knowledge of social work underpins effective safeguarding decisions and ensures good protocols are in place for referrals. Her determination and drive to find out relevant statistical information on all deprivation

levels ensures the centre is kept well informed. They know where they can most likely make a difference and improve outcomes. The acting manager has complementary organisational and creative skills, which underpin the centre's ambitious plans to continuously improve provision.

Recent involvement of the centre working with the Reparation Scheme gives young people who live in the community an opportunity to achieve something positive, such as helping to develop the outdoor grounds.

The leaders and partnership board recognise their strengths and where they can make further developments. The local authority and management are aware of where there are gaps in the data. They have a clear vision of the direction in which they are going and where they can further strengthen their impact. Many of the services are new so it is too early at this stage to evaluate the impact of them. Leaders are well supported at a strategic level and by an enthusiastic team who have clear roles and responsibilities and a good attitude towards continuous improvement.

Governance and accountability arrangements are clear. The majority of staff are generic workers who undertake both group work and family support work, which promotes good value for money. Professional supervision is well-established. Recommended good safeguarding practice is adopted across all areas of work. A Single Central Record is in place, which underpins effective recruitment procedures and relevant training is up to date. The newly developed electronic systems promotes robust recording of information and they monitor the regularity and uptake of services to establish cost effectiveness.

The make up of the partnership board involves a range of partners, including a local councillor who support and challenge the centre extremely effectively. Although, they acknowledge membership is currently all female and does not reflect the ethnic minorities in the area. The independent chair is an enthusiastic parent who represents the locality well.

Consultation systems are embedded and the views of users of the centre are regularly sought. A variety of methods are used to seek users' views, such as discussions with parents at drop-in sessions, questionnaires, the communication board and comments box and books. Responses to ideas parents have made have been swift which shows a willingness to take into account users' views. Basic evaluation sheets which request users' views using facial expressions enable the majority, including children, to express their levels of satisfaction. Nevertheless, the manager is keen to re-start a parent's forum to provide further opportunities for parents to share their ideas and views.

The centre routinely evaluates the services it provides for children and families and reflects on the suitability of services on offer. The level of user satisfaction is high. Effective quality assurance systems are in place. The centre promotes equality and diversity well by tackling any discrimination. Parents and children are actively

involved in staff selection and recruitment which has proved valuable.

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	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	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

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Rossington Children's Centre on the 1 and 2 February 2011 and we judged the centre as good.

The centre is well-established in the community and it has formed good links with other partners, particularly health professionals. It provides a safe place where families can be sure to receive a warm welcome and good quality care, guidance and support. Those of you we spoke with told us you appreciated the, 'I can' attitude which is promoted. Safety schemes help you to get practical support, such as safety equipment which helps reduce accidents in your homes.

Some of you told us, 'I would be lost without this place'. You expressed high levels of satisfaction with the centre and your regular attendance shows how much you value the good quality provision and resources.

The health visitors, midwives, nurses and family support workers combine their professional experience, knowledge and resources very well to meet your individual needs. They work closely together to assess any difficult situations effectively. They know what support they, or others, can provide for you in times of crisis and have built non-threatening and trusting relationships with many families. They successfully promote healthy lifestyles and are determined to provide the best support they can for you. Some of you told us, 'the centre has had a major impact on your life'. We know many of you have enjoyed the benefits of the baby clinic when you can also attend other useful services at the same time. Those who have joined the baby massage groups were upbeat about the benefits of using massage to improve relationships with your baby. Some even reported improvement with baby's colic problems or sleep patterns.

The centre works in close partnership with local schools to aid your child's transition onto their next stage of learning. You said the Ready Steady play group helped prepare your child for school and increased your understanding of the importance of play and how young children learn and develop. The Movers and Shakers group encourages you to be more active and has helped develop your understanding of how sharing books and singing rhymes can support your child to develop better speech and listening skills.

The positive parenting courses has helped develop your confidence and self-esteem and taught you better ways of managing your children's behaviour. It was a pleasure to see and hear how well some of you are now able to confidently manage your children's challenges in more positive ways. Some of you have completed learning stories with your children which really show the steps in learning. We have asked the centre to continue to identify and encourage even more dads to access the centre's activities so that they can also benefit from the good quality services on offer.

Family events and the after-school club are popular and further develop a good community spirit. The newly formed Sparkles group, which is especially for children who have a brother or sister who has a special educational need and/or disability, recognises the importance of valuing all family members.

A few of you have trained to be volunteers and have been successful in completing courses which have led to employment. We have asked the local authority and Action for Children to ask Jobcentre Plus and other adult training courses to provide the centre with information on the impact of their work with you. This will help the centre to identify how much they are helping some of you to participate in further education and training which can lead to paid work.

The centre is hoping you will want to join the parent forum and partnership board to help ensure the centre's plans are constantly meeting your families' needs. We hope that you will be interested in doing this so that even more of you can become involved in decision-making and the centre's success.

We would like to thank everyone who was willing to speak with us. We are very grateful for your help and wish you every success in the future.

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