

Inspection report for Richard Lee Children's Centre

Local authority	Coventry
Inspection number	365718
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Deborah Udakis HMI

Centre governance	Local authority
Centre leader	Karen Ritchie
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Richard Lee Primary School URN 103693
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Richard Lee Playgroup URN 511510

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.

An inspection of the registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

An inspection of the co-located primary school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior managers, health and education professionals, representatives of the local authority and adult learning services, support and outreach workers, parents and carers.

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

Information about the centre

Richard Lee Children's Centre was designated in March 2008 and serves an area to the south east of Coventry. The children's centre provides the full core offer through a range of integrated services that include health, family support, adult training and early year's advice and guidance. There are 23 children's centres provided by the local authority. The head of centre reports to the local authority and has responsibility for this and another children's centre nearby.

Statistical data for the area indicate that it is ranked within 30% of the most socially and economically disadvantage in the country. The percentage of workless households and those dependent on workless benefits is above average. Children start nursery with skills and knowledge broadly in line with expected levels. The population is predominantly White British with a growing population from minority

ethnic backgrounds including Eastern European and Asian.

Richard Lee Primary School and Richard Lee Playgroup all operate on the same site as the centre. They were inspected at the same time as the children’s centre but have separate reports. Inspection reports can be found on the Ofsted website www.ofsted.gov.uk

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

The children’s centre is effectively meeting the needs of users and there is clear evidence of improving outcomes for users and the wider community. The centre’s leaders, well supported by an effective team, set ambitious targets to improve outcomes for the local community. Leaders target and adapt the provision well to meet local needs. Parents and carers influence the centre’s direction of travel through regular consultations and evaluations but have few opportunities to contribute to the governance of the centre or participate in the decision-making process. The centre’s development plan includes key performance indicators and targeted and specific points for action but does not clearly prioritise these within the document. Nevertheless, targets and priorities are well understood by staff and partner agencies and are regularly reviewed and updated through discussions.

Significant changes six months ago resulted in the appointment of a new centre leader and leadership team. They have quickly settled and continue to inspire trust and encourage and promote high quality services. The centre management team is strong with a commitment to further improve services to meet the needs of the community. The existing strong infrastructure provides a platform to drive forward development and ensure that good capacity for improvement is sustained.

Evaluations and the collation of data provide valuable evidence in respect of user satisfaction rates. Data collation is systematic and is being further developed. The current local authority’s analysis of data is generally a strong aspect and provides evidence to support improved outcomes for children and their families but does not always provide clear indicators of success of the centre’s performance.

The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community is outstanding. This is supported by the vast amount of written evaluations and comments from parents and carers about the positive impact the work of staff is having on their lives. The high quality support for families has not been affected by the transitional changes which have occurred as a result of reorganisation.

Keeping children and users safe is a priority for staff and safeguarding procedures are robust. The centre intervenes swiftly in response to the needs of children and their families and is quick to recognise mental and emotional health issues and take appropriate steps to safeguard children.

The centre promotes equality and diversity through resources and staffing to reflect different faiths, cultures and backgrounds. Parents and carers from minority ethnic backgrounds attend the centre, confidently access services and participate in offering feedback through evaluations. Centre data shows that a number of lone parents, families living with a disability, fathers and immigrant families are accessing services. However, the centre is less successful in engaging with teenage parents.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the extent to which users contribute to decision making and governance of the centre.
- Improve the effectiveness in reaching out to engage with members of the community who are not accessing services, including teenage parents, in order to identify and meet their needs.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Effective and proactive multi-agency partnerships and a willingness to innovate all add up to significant improvements in the health outcomes for children and their families. An increased take-up of breastfeeding and immunisation has resulted from targeted support from health agencies. The centre works closely with partner agencies, including health visitors, speech and language therapists and the Wildlife Trust, to promote healthy lifestyles. This also includes the use of the outdoor environment to promote positive physical and emotional health.

Parents and carers who expressed a view have unanimously agreed that the centre is a safe and secure place where they and their children feel safe and welcomed. Safeguarding arrangements at the centre are thorough and are well-established. The use of the Common Assessment Framework and Team Around the Child processes are firmly embedded throughout the centre and its partner agencies. The effective use of these assessment processes and the sensitive arrangements that are in place to support information sharing between agencies ensures that appropriate early

intervention strategies are identified and implemented. Case studies show that children on child protection plans and their families receive high quality support and monitoring from staff and, as a result, most children are successfully removed from child protection plans.

Improvements in assessments in the Early Years Foundation Stage show that children are making good progress and with the centre’s input there is evidence that the gap between the lowest and higher attaining children is narrowing. Access to good quality adult learning and activities are improving parenting skills and life chances. One parent said, ‘I am now employed full-time again and if it was not for the centre I would not have had the confidence...to apply for work again’. Learning facilitators are knowledgeable with a good awareness of learners’ starting points and they organise learning objectives with these in mind. Parents commented on the thoughtfulness of staff and the wide range of ways they are able to participate in the life of the children’s centre.

Regular community consultation events involving parents and carers and partners are used to inform local need and service provision. A large majority of residents say that people from different communities get on well together and indicate that the community is stable and welcoming. Parents and carers are instrumental in making valuable choices and decisions, and have opportunities to express their views. They make valuable contributions to the work of the centre through their involvement in evaluations and consultations.

The economic well-being of many families, and in particular those who are made vulnerable by their circumstances and those who experienced isolation, is greatly improved because of their engagement with the centre services. However, economic outcomes for most families are satisfactory overall. The centre offers families activities to develop the use of English to improve users’ social and economic potential. Uptake of the ‘Parents Guide to Money’ workshops has been good and has helped some users to maximise income and make the most of available finances. A new partnership agreement is in place with Jobcentre Plus although it is too early to assess its effectiveness. The recent allocation of a link person is a welcomed opportunity for the centre to work in partnership to further develop opportunities for individuals seeking or working towards employment. A few parents and carers have engaged positively in the well-established volunteer programme. Volunteers are well supported and most have achieved a nationally accredited award in voluntary work delivered by centre staff. Several volunteers have gone on to secure paid employment as a result of the high quality experiences and qualifications gained while working at the centre.

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These are the grades for the outcomes for users

<p>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</p>	<p>2</p>
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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	3

How good is the provision?

2

The centre makes good use of assessments such as those carried out under the Common Assessment Framework which are consistently clear and effective. Parent and carer feedback is used to assess the quality of provision and whether services are meeting their needs. The leaders and staff eagerly listen to the views of parents and carers and use their feedback to flexibly adapt services and make positive changes in provision. For instance, the 'Family Fun Days' and 'Dad's Group' are arranged taking into account users views. In addition, the hugely successful provision of summer play activities was developed by the extended schools service in partnership with parents and carers, the local school, sports and leisure services, and the centre. Good use is made of available data to ensure services continue to meet the needs of children and their families. The local authority is developing its data collation and analysis by improving the availability of information relating specifically to the centre.

The outreach workers have developed close partnerships with health and social care colleagues to secure the cooperation and engagement with parents and carers. They are experienced at breaking down barriers and working collaboratively to target users and secure their trust and involvement in the centre. Targeted support for hard to engage families is reaping dividends with successful engagement with expectant mothers, mental health survivors, survivors of domestic abuse, and children with special education needs and/or disabilities. In this way the centre is able to work inclusively with families in the community with rare exceptions.

The access to good quality, varied and accredited learning opportunities is having a constructive effect on the life chances of children with some positive outcomes for parents and carers seeking employment. Parents have benefitted a great deal from attending training courses. One parent spoke excitedly of the support she is receiving from centre staff as she embarked on a positive career change and is working towards a nationally recognised qualification in childcare and education.

Information for users is of high quality. The local authority's 'Annual conversation' specifically focuses on the effectiveness of the centre in engaging with users and ensuring services are matched to needs. This has resulted in the provision of flexible

services including English as a Second Language (ESOL) courses to meet the changing needs of the community. Users commented that the centre provides a range of opportunities for them to comment on the range of services provided. They reported that they are valued and listened to and the centre is a safe place where they can develop their skills.

The care, guidance and support provided to parents and carers are outstanding. The centre team know and understand their community extremely well and this informs high-quality provision. The centre works collaboratively with families and other professionals to improve the life chances and personal development of children. The staff secure the support, trust and commitment of parents to set goals for themselves and to make important changes to improve outcomes for them and their children. Users from different age groups and backgrounds express high satisfaction with the way the centre and partners engage with them. A strong commitment to inclusion and safeguarding is at the core of the entire work of the centre.

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	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The governance and accountability arrangements of the centre are clear and effective. The staff have clear lines of accountability and responsibility and the management of the centre is effective at all levels. Professional supervision of staff and regular one-to-one meetings with managers promotes the shared values of staff and their ability to meet organisational expectations. Users play a vital role in the governance of the centre through formal and informal consultations and evaluations. However, they have limited experience of participation in the centre's decision-making process.

The centre's safeguarding arrangements are thorough. Staff receive appropriate and regular training in child protection procedures and they demonstrate a high level of awareness and understanding. In addition, staff regularly update their knowledge and expertise in subjects related to safeguarding such as domestic violence, professional supervision, and the emotional health of children and their families. As a result, they are well placed to provide support to the most vulnerable groups in the community. Protocols and practices for referrals are well known and the safeguarding of children and their families is considered in all aspects of work of the

centre. There is a common purpose among all staff who work at the centre and key partners to improve outcomes for children. The centre ensures the safe recruitment of staff. All staff employed at the children’s centre are subject to an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. The centre also diligently records CRB checks undertaken by partner agencies for staff working at the centre. Effective multi-agency partnership working arrangements securely safeguard children. The highly competent use of assessment processes ensures that children and families receive timely support and advice.

The centre makes a positive contribution to community cohesion with its focus on meeting local needs, empowerment and reducing social isolation. Teamwork among staff is coherent and morale is high. Staff are well qualified and experienced. There are clear policies for promoting equality and diversity, including the promotion of inclusive practice for children with disabilities and families new to the area.

The centre is bright and welcoming and is highly inclusive and fully accessible. Parents and carers spoke with high regard for the work of the centre to meet the needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The ‘Together Like Me’ group was especially singled out for praise by parents and carers of children who have been identified as in need of additional support. One parent expressed her delight at the progress her child has made since attending this group. The attention to providing good value for money includes providing a wide range of high quality relevant services between this and neighbouring children’s centres, thereby reducing any duplication of work and maintaining effective partnerships with agencies.

Data collated by the centre is used to analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of the services provided and to identify any gaps in provision. This helps to shape and improve services and activities when viewed with responses and suggestions from users. Evaluation and analysis of data undertaken by the local authority is evolving to provide evidence of the long-term impact on outcomes for children and their families. This is integral to the centre’s guarantee of providing continued good value for money and informs the delivery plan, the Local Authority’s ‘Annual Conversation’ and commissioning arrangements.

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	2

agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	
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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Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

None

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 Richard Lee Children's Centre on 3–4 March 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you for contributing to the inspection. Your comments prove invaluable to inspectors. Inspectors think that with the centre's encouragement many people now make a positive contribution to the centre services and the life of the community.

Your children's centre is at the heart of the community and is relied upon for the well-being of large numbers of people. The strong leadership and highly successful teamwork means families are provided with a wide range of good services tailored to meet their particular needs.

The centre is making a very positive difference to children's well-being and learning. It makes a significant difference to help children experience a safe start to childhood. Children are having good opportunities to develop their play and learning within the centre and this is helping them to prepare for their next steps into nursery. They make good progress in their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Parents, carers and families, who made their comments known, were unanimous in their praise of the work of the centre and staff. Parents and carers were really keen

to tell the inspectors about how well staff support families, help to raise self-esteem and confidence and encourage them to achieve. The care, guidance and support of families and children are excellent. This is largely as a result of the extremely successful close partnerships that staff forge with parents and carers and the way they engage parents in the work they do with them. The positive work of the staff from across the different agencies ensures that parents and carers access the right services as quickly as possible. Professionals working in multi-agency teams and voluntary organisations have developed strong working partnerships with the children's centre.

A new leadership and management team was established in October 2010. In a relatively short time it has developed a concentrated and valuable understanding of the needs of the families in the local area. The centre has secure systems to make sure that staff are doing a good job. A commendable use of evaluations and consultations ensure that services on offer are making a positive difference to people's lives.

We have asked the centre to make some improvements by improving the extent to which users contribute to decision making and governance of the centre. We have also asked senior leaders to make even stronger efforts to engage with members of the community who are not currently accessing services.

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