

Inspection report for Rye Children's Centre

Local authority	East Sussex
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Reporting inspector	Jo Caswell HMI

Area Coordinators	Fay Mitchell Jo Goldfinch
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Rye Community Primary School (135299) Rye College (138624)
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Pugwash Nursery (EY417008)

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.

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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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre management team, the local authority, the headteacher of the linked primary school, health professionals, and representatives from the local advisory group, front-line staff, parents and partner agencies. They observed the centre's work, visited outreach services and the linked nursery, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Rye Children's Centre is one of four centres in the Rother area of East Sussex. It is a phase two centre which was designated in January 2008. The centre serves the historic town of Rye and a large number of rural villages, where transport links are limited. The centre is located on the same site as Rye Community Primary School, Rye College and the leisure centre. It is open from Monday to Friday, with some services operating on a Saturday, throughout the year. The centre offers a range of services which meet the core purpose of children's centres, including advice on training and employment, early years provision, child and family health services, and outreach services in local venues. Full day care is provided on site by Pugwash Nursery, which is registered to provide care for children under five years and was inspected separately by Ofsted in 2011.

The centre serves an area which is mixed in terms of deprivation. A significant proportion of families live in communities categorised as being in the top 30% deprived areas. Homes consist of social housing, rented accommodation and privately owned properties. Employment in the town is predominately seasonal due to the tourist attractions of Rye. Currently, 31% of children registered with the centre live in workless households and 17% of families claim out-of-work benefits.

The vast majority of families in the reach area are of White British heritage. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels that are slightly below those

expected for their age. At the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2012, 66% of children achieved at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The centre works in partnership with a number of agencies and governance arrangements are provided by the local authority. Two advisory groups oversee the work of the centres within the Rother locality.

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 families

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Rye Children’s Centre is a vibrant and welcoming centre which utilises its location adjacent to a primary school and college to place itself at the heart of its community. Since opening, the centre has seen a consistent upward trend in reach and registration data from all known vulnerable groups. This is particularly evident for families from minority ethnic groups where reach has increased by 70% since last year. Further increases have been seen in the reach to fathers, lone parents and the numbers of disabled children accessing services.

The care, guidance and support given to all families are outstanding. Staff utilise every opportunity to identify each family’s individual need and support them in receiving help and advice, particularly at times of crisis. Safeguarding arrangements, strategies to keep children and vulnerable families safe, and partnership working are also outstanding. Staff work intrinsically well with partner agencies to deliver a holistic range of services which have a significantly positive impact on outcomes for children. Key partners from health and children’s services described the partnership arrangements with the centre to inspectors as ‘invaluable’ and ‘brilliant’. Links with Rye Community Primary School are also excellent. There is a shared commitment and vision between the headteacher and centre staff to consistently work effectively together to support local families. As a result, children are well prepared for school and have positive attitudes towards learning.

There has been a constant improvement in children’s achievements by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage from their initial starting points. Concerted action is

taken by all staff and partner agencies, including Pugwash Nursery, to promote high quality early years provision. As a result, children make outstanding progress in their learning. An extensive range of strategies are in place to address the different learning needs of boys, particularly in supporting language and literacy development, and staff monitor this closely to ensure all children continue to achieve. At 66%, the proportion of children achieving at least 78+ scale points by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is above the local and national average.

Provision to support the personal development of parents is good. Staff clearly understand the complex issues facing the local community and work tirelessly to reach families known to be hard to engage. Restrictions with transport within the area are correctly identified and strategies are in place to help families overcome these, such as the use of a taxi bursary and use of the 'Fun Van'. Staff have worked sensitively with families to encourage them to develop their confidence and build their self-esteem, and good support is given to help parents enhance their personal development. As a result, the number of parents engaged in courses and workshops within the centre is improving. This is having a positive impact on improving the economic stability of families, particularly for lone parents. In the last year, 40% of lone parents registered with the centre accessed training. However, progression to develop the personal development programme further into more formal training is still at an early stage.

Governance arrangements are outstanding. The centre is managed by a team of highly competent leaders and the local authority plays a fundamental part in driving the centre's continual improvement. Rigorous monitoring and scrupulous analysis of data provide incisive information regarding the centre's performance. This has confirmed that services are being delivered in the areas where families are most in need. In a recent 'Snap Shot Survey', 66% of families using the centre were from targeted groups, and of these, 78% were from the 30% disadvantaged areas. This demonstrates the centre knows its reach area well and its assessment of need is robust and accurate. Procedures for evaluating the centre's performance are detailed and informative. However, systems for tracking the long-term impact of the centre's services are not yet fully embedded. Centre leaders and the local authority regularly review provision and set ambitious targets to drive the centre forward. Clear improvements have been seen in most areas and any shortfalls in provision are quickly identified and addressed through comprehensive monitoring. Therefore, the centre demonstrates good capacity to improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Refine the procedures for evaluating the centre's work to clearly evidence the impact of services on outcomes for all target groups over a longer-term period.
- Review the learning and development programme for adults to enable a greater number of parents to progress further into training and future employment opportunities.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Outcomes for families are good and improving. Parents feel very safe at the centre and form strong, trusting relationships with the staff. Many parents commended the centre and its staff to inspectors. One parent summarised the view of many by stating, 'The centre is amazing. You don't realise how much they can do to help you.' Parenting programmes are used well to equip parents with the knowledge and skills they need to ensure their children are kept safe within the home. For example, during safety events, parents receive expert advice from the emergency services and agencies such as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. As a result, the numbers of children having accidents and requiring hospital treatment are reducing. Excellent partnerships with other agencies ensure children on child protection plans, children in need and looked after children receive exceptional support, and stringent tracking procedures are in place to monitor children's welfare. Common Assessment Framework processes are well embedded and centre staff are fully involved in multi-agency working.

Health outcomes for all families are good and improving. Obesity rates in the reach area are reducing and are well below the national average at 8.2%. Parents and children benefit from many cookery courses, active play sessions, sports and physical activities to encourage exercise and healthy lifestyle choices. The weekend 'Kick Start' group is especially popular with fathers and male carers who enjoy spending time with their children and benefiting from physical play. The centre's allotment is regularly used by parents and children to grow fruit and vegetables and cook with home-grown produce. Regular child health clinics supported by the centre ensure parents have easy access to professional advice and any concerns about a child's development are identified and addressed early.

Children and parents enjoy their time at the centre and there is a fun, purposeful atmosphere evident in all activities and in Pugwash Nursery. Children benefit from play experiences of the highest quality and the positive interactions they receive from staff. The 'Fun Van' and Toy Library play a crucial role in reaching some of the most rural areas and highly effectively support pre-school provision in more isolated communities. Targeted strategies to enhance children's language development have been particularly effective and parents are now more readily engaged in reading to children and presenting stories in different formats. Parenting courses and family learning workshops help parents understand how play enhances children's development and supports children's transitions to nursery and school. As a result, parents confirm they now clearly understand how to support children's learning at home.

Good strategies are in place to encourage parents to develop their skills and become more closely involved in the centre. Eight parents recently completed the volunteer course. Parents confirmed how much they enjoyed the course and it equipped them with relevant skills to undertake opportunities within the centre and wider community. Data show that almost 40% of parents using the centre engaged in training or adult learning activities between 2011 and 2012, and of these, 31.5%

were from the most disadvantaged areas. While the numbers engaged in personal development opportunities continue to increase, the number of parents who progress onto more formal training and future employment is lower and the centre recognises this is an area it needs to develop further.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

The extent to which children, including those from target 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	1
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	1
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships, and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future, and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment.	2

How good is the provision?

2

Staff know the needs of the local community extremely well. The family outreach service plays a fundamental part in reaching the most vulnerable families and signposting them to relevant support. One parent told inspectors, 'The staff are so welcoming, you never feel judged.' This has a significantly positive impact on improving outcomes. There are exceptional partnerships in place with an extensive range of commissioned services, voluntary agencies and other early years providers. As a result, services are fully aligned and promote high quality outcomes. Case studies show that outstanding support has been given to families at times of crisis. Parents confirmed to inspectors how much the centre had helped them when they were feeling isolated and vulnerable. One parent expressed this by stating, 'The centre gave me focus in my life when I really needed it.' Many parents confirmed to inspectors that the centre had raised their aspirations for their own future and for that of their children.

Provision within Pugwash Nursery to support children's learning and development is excellent and stringent monitoring of the delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage across all centre activities is highly effective. This ensures any children identified as requiring extra support are monitored closely. Consequently, children's readiness for school is significantly enhanced. Excellent work with speech and language therapists has raised parents' awareness of the importance of engaging

positively with children and promoting language and communication. Family workshops have been well attended and parents are fully involved in the language tracker process to help monitor children’s development and readiness for school. The linked school’s headteacher confirms how effective this work has been in raising children’s achievements and improving their ability to learn.

Opportunities for adult learning are improving and an increasing number of parents are now readily engaged in activities to support their personal development. Commissioned services provide a range of workshops and courses to support parents’ development opportunities. However, provision to extend this further into more formal training and progression to employment is still at an early stage.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Governance and accountability arrangements are excellent. The promotion of family welfare and child safety underpin service provision. Local needs analysis is wholly robust and services are continually delivered to those most in need. The leadership structure is clear and effective with all roles and responsibilities fully understood. Links at the strategic level are excellent and all key partners are totally involved in the stringent review of services and monitoring of service delivery. The advisory group reflects the views of centre users and a number of parents are now taking an active role in the decision-making process within the centre. Senior managers work collaboratively to deliver a comprehensive range of services which meet the needs of local families. Self-evaluation procedures are accurate and the centre knows its strengths and areas for development well. A key priority for the centre now is to track the long-term impact of its services as this is not yet fully implemented.

Safeguarding arrangements are exemplary. Rigorous health and safety procedures ensure the premises are consistently safe and secure. Recruitment procedures are robust and all staff are highly trained with extensive experience. Parents develop an excellent awareness of safety issues and considerable action has recently been taken to enhance parents’ understanding of the importance of how to use the internet and social networking sites safely. Exemplary working with partner agencies promotes the best outcomes for some of the most disadvantaged children. Extensive support and personalised guidance is offered to families experiencing crisis in their lives,

and/or those experiencing domestic abuse. Sensitive support from the centre and close working with relevant partner agencies enable parents to feel empowered to seek help and support. Emotional health issues are quickly identified and supported, making a positive impact on family welfare.

The centre provides good value for money. It successfully engages with the large majority of families in the reach area, a large proportion of whom are from key target groups. Data indicate that children who have been supported by the centre achieve better at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage than those children who were not accessing services. Care is taken to ensure that resources are not duplicated by working in partnership with other agencies and by leaders taking a strategic view of the locality. Staff manage current funding constraints imposed on partner agencies and commissioned services effectively by identifying priority areas and operating alternative services. This ensures families remain engaged with the centre and improvements in outcomes continue. Investment in staff development is key to the centre's effectiveness and all staff are wholly committed and totally dedicated to their role and responsibilities. The range of users accessing services reflects the local community and staff have incisive knowledge in regard to reaching the most vulnerable groups.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The centre is totally committed towards promoting inclusion. Close attention is given towards identifying and addressing the individual needs of all families. The local authority routinely monitors data to ensure all groups are involved in services and no groups are disadvantaged. Contact with disabled children has been particularly successful this year with reach data increasing by almost 100%. Staff work tirelessly to ensure information about the centre and its services is accessible and produced in a range of formats. Links with specialist services ensure the centre makes good provision for minority groups. Early Years Foundation Stage data indicate the gap between the most disadvantaged children and the rest continues to close, and this remains a high priority for all staff.

Parents' views are regularly sought through a range of measures and involvement in the Parents' Forum is increasing. Parents praise the role of the centre in the community and describe it as a 'godsend' and 'a lifeline', clearly acknowledging the positive impact it has on their own welfare and that of their children. Parents feel confident to share their feedback and changes to provision have been made as a result of their views. For example, the centre responded positively to a request for a health-led baby clinic to run alongside a rural toddler group. Children's views are routinely sought and all staff are committed to shaping services in response to user feedback.

These are the grades for leadership and management:

<p>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</p>	<p>1</p>
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The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	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 partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	1
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area 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

Pugwash Nursery was last inspected by Ofsted in April 2011 and judged to be good overall. A copy of this report is available from the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Rye Children's Centre on 24 and 25 September 2012. We judged the centre as good overall with some aspects of outstanding practice. We would like to thank all of you who took the time to talk with us about your experiences and involvement with the centre. It was a pleasure to meet you and your children, and it was very helpful to hear what the centre means to you and the difference it has made to your lives. It is clear to us that you are very happy with the centre's services.

Parents who spoke with inspectors described how safe and secure they feel within the centre because they form such strong, trusting relationships with the staff. As a result, the centre makes an outstanding impact on keeping families safe and safeguarding children. All of the staff work really closely with other agencies to

identify when any children and families may be at risk or vulnerable and take relevant action to protect children. Many parents told us how the family outreach service had helped them when they were experiencing difficult periods in their lives. We noted how good the outreach services are in reaching all areas of the community and that staff provide families with outstanding levels of guidance and support when they need it the most.

We also met with partner agencies, including health managers and the headteacher of Rye Community Primary School. Both agencies confirmed what an important role the centre has in supporting local families and the positive difference it makes in keeping families safe and preparing children for starting school. All agencies work together extremely well to provide services which are useful to you and your families and promote children's development.

We visited some of the centre's services and noted how well activities are delivered. The 'Fun Van' is particularly good at reaching those of you who live in isolated areas where there are few activities for children. We observed how well groups are organised and noted how skilled staff are in arranging activities which support children's learning and development, particularly in language and communication. We visited Pugwash Nursery and observed the high-quality experiences children have and the positive impact this has on helping them enjoy learning.

We could see that a good number of parents have been engaged in activities to support personal development, such as attending workshops and courses, and that a few of you are now involved with the volunteer programme. Those of you we spoke to told us how valuable these experiences have been in raising your own aspirations. We have asked the centre to develop the training opportunities available to you, to enable a greater number of you to progress further in your learning.

It was clear to us how well the centre is run. All staff work together well and have excellent knowledge. The centre is very well organised and the managers have a clear understanding of the local community's needs. They take relevant action to overcome issues which may be difficult for you and consistently look at ways to further improve the service. Partnership arrangements with other services are outstanding and this means you and your families benefit from a wide range of support. The centre managers consistently review the services and make sure they have a positive impact for you and your families. However, they are not yet tracking the improvements you make over a longer period, and we have asked the centre to address this.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to come and speak with us. We are very grateful and wish you and your families every success for the future.

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