

# Inspection report for Chase Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Hampshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	383407
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 January 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Graham Lee

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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Bordon Infant School Bordon Junior School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Not Applicable

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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**Report published:** February 2012



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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.

Inspections of the co-located infant and junior schools were carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The reports of these inspections are available on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre leader, other key staff, a representative of the local authority, members of the partnership board and a number of parents. They also met with the Mayor of Bordon, two local headteachers and key partners from health, Jobcentre Plus and the army welfare service.

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

## Information about the centre

Chase Children's Centre is a phase two centre which was designated to provide a graduated range of services in 2008. Originally it opened as an early years centre in 1989. It is located in purpose-built accommodation and shares a campus with Bordon Infant and Bordon Junior schools. Although it has a community room situated within the infant school, it operates independently. It has accommodation in its Norwegian Log Cabin and the community room. The facilities also include a recently created sensory garden. The centre is managed directly by the local authority through a partnership board.

Two of the four wards served by the centre are within the 30% most deprived in the country. The other two wards also contain pockets of deprivation. Many of the children aged under five in the reach area are from the families of army personnel connected with Bordon Camp, a large military garrison. As this is a training facility, the population is transient with a number of families moving into the area for short periods of time. Most families are of White British origin, although there are increasing numbers of families of Eastern European heritage. A significant number of

children, under five, live in workless households and in families in receipt of benefits. Children’s skills and abilities on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are often below those typically found in children of that age.

## 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**

**1**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**1**

## Main findings

Chase Children’s Centre provides outstandingly well for families within its reach area. It is at the heart of the community and is highly respected by all. Working with key partners, it provides a very effective range of high-quality services which meet the needs of families in the reach area. In recent years the centre has considerably extended its influence and is now engaging with the vast majority of families with children under five, including those in target groups facing particularly challenging circumstances. As a result, its impact on improving outcomes for children and families is profound. As one parent commented, ‘We love it here. Chase really is a life saver. The one thing I can depend on if things aren’t going well.’ This was typical of the views expressed by many.

A key feature in the centre’s success is high-quality leadership, supported by a knowledgeable and dedicated staff team. Together, they have high aspirations for families in the community and this has led to notable improvements in provision and outcomes. Self-evaluation is rigorous and grounded in a range of evidence and leads to the setting of ambitious targets for improvement. Data are being used with increasing effect to show the extent of the centre’s reach, although it is not yet sophisticated enough to be able to fully demonstrate the impact of its work across all outcome areas. All staff share in the centre’s pursuit of excellence. Consequently, morale is high and the centre is demonstrating outstanding capacity to sustain its improvement.

The success of the centre’s partnerships with local schools and other statutory and private partners enables them to provide a range of integrated services which have a very positive impact on the lives of families in the community. The centre plays an important role in developing and enhancing these partnerships. Of particular importance is the close relationship with the army welfare services which gives the

centre access to young families within the garrison who often experience isolation and related issues.

The centre is a warm and welcoming place and provides outstanding care, guidance and support to families, who are extremely well protected. Parents, without exception, say how approachable they find staff and how they have confidence in confiding in them. One remarked, 'The staff are so helpful and it makes you realise that everyone has the same problems.' As a result, once they are engaged with the centre, parents tend to come back again and again. Consequently, outcomes for children and their families are improving rapidly. There is demonstrable evidence of the centre's impact on improving health outcomes in the area. Although the centre and its partners offer very good support for new mothers, however, its impact on helping them to sustain breastfeeding after six to eight weeks is currently more limited.

## **What does the centre need to do to improve further?**

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Work with the local authority to develop the use of data to demonstrate the impact of the centre's work across all outcome areas.
- Work with key partners to increase the proportion of mothers sustaining breastfeeding after six to eight weeks.

## **How good are outcomes for families?**

<b>1</b>
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Parents and their children feel safe and secure when attending the centre. Some are apprehensive when first making contact, but quickly become confident in the friendly and welcoming atmosphere. For many parents the sense of isolation is quickly reduced and new friendships are forged. The stimulating environment and sensitive support from staff and partners, through the 'Play and Learn' sessions, for example, enable them to develop their parenting skills and to provide more stimulating activities for their children at home. As one parent commented, 'It helps you to pick up tips to enable you to be the best parent you can be.'

As a result of the stimulating environment provided, children really enjoy their visits to the centre. They quickly learn to socialise, develop their speaking and listening skills and become inquisitive about the world around them. Hence they make rapid progress, often from low starting points, and are very well prepared for the transition to school as a result. Throughout the area the progress of children's learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage is improving. Although it remains below the national average, gaps for the lowest achieving children are narrowing.

Some parents have low levels of literacy and numeracy and many make considerable improvements in these basic skills through their attendance at English and mathematics courses run in conjunction with a local college. There are a number of examples of parents accessing training and work as a result of their contacts with the

centre. This has been enhanced recently by the re-location of the Jobcentre Plus adviser within the centre itself, which has made this service far more accessible. Nevertheless, the impact of the centre's work in this aspect is restricted by the relative lack of opportunities in the area and the large number of short-stay army families who are not seeking employment. Families using the centre are prominently represented on the partnership board and involved in the governance of the centre. They also help to shape services through the parents' forum and their regular feedback and evaluations.

The large majority of families in the reach area are engaging with appropriate health services and the take-up rates of integrated services are high, particularly among target groups, such as single and lone parents. As a result, there are many examples of families improving the physical and emotional health of their families. The role of the family support workers, in particular, plays an important role in helping to improve outcomes for families experiencing crisis or upheaval. As a result, there are good examples of looked after children and those on child protection plans and subject to Common Assessment Framework procedures making good gains in their stability and well-being. Children using the centre have a good awareness of their own safety and that of others. Adults, including those that are potentially vulnerable, feel exceptionally safe at the centre and develop an excellent understanding of how to ensure the safety of their families.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for families*

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>

**How good is the provision?**

**1**

The quality and range of services offered by the centre are outstanding and fully meet the needs of families within the area, including those in the most vulnerable groups. A detailed understanding of the local community, together with excellent partnerships, ensures highly-focused assessment of needs and services that are adjusted accordingly. This is supplemented by highly-focused outreach work,

provided by the family support workers, which provides timely intervention for many families needing support or intervention. Moreover, the 'Freedom Programme' provides sensitive and empowering support for women who may have been subject to domestic violence and abuse.

The centre is extremely well resourced to promote individualised learning through, for example, the 'Families Learning Together' and 'Play and Learn Language Group'. This impacts significantly on children's learning and development and parents' confidence in supporting their children's learning. There are many opportunities for parents to develop the health and emotional well-being of their children from birth to school. The extremely popular 'Baby Days' postnatal support group, for example, gives parents the opportunities to meet with others with new babies and to talk to the health visitors. Activities such as the speech and language therapy drop-in sessions enable parents to discuss any concerns that they may have. This excellent level of support for families was confirmed by one parent who commented, 'There is no need for any young mum to be at home feeling isolated with their little one.' As a result, outcomes for children are outstanding and achievements of adults and children are celebrated regularly.

The centre also uses its satellite provision very well to make further inroads into the community. For example, 'Martinique Monkeys' is a group for families with pre-school children, run in conjunction with the army garrison, which is providing invaluable support for families and helping to break down barriers between local residents and army families. There are also groups at the community centre and the leisure centre used for parent and child swimming sessions. These have been extended as a result of demand from parents, indicating how they are empowered to shape services. Fathers are also prominently involved in the centre through the 'Saturday Dad's Club' and by involvement with the partnership board. During the inspection, serving soldiers were engaging with a variety of activities that were taking place.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

**How effective are the leadership and management?**

**1**

Arrangements for the governance and accountability of the centre are extremely clear and well established. As a result, key partners are well aware of the aims of the centre and take a very active role in promoting high-quality integrated provision based on a good understanding of the needs of the local community. Within the

centre all staff are valued and play a key role in reviewing its work and setting priorities for improvement. Effective arrangements for their professional supervision support outstanding performance. The partnership board, widely representative of key partners and users, has a very good understanding of its strategic role and is very ambitious for the continued development of the centre's work.

The centre's extremely strong commitment to promoting equality and diversity and ensuring that discrimination is tackled is enshrined in centre policies and procedures and is evident in its everyday life. It is very successful in removing any barriers to access and, as a result, engages with high proportions of families from its target groups, including those from a range of ethnic heritages and those associated with the armed forces, young and lone parents. As a result, the centre provides significantly improved opportunities for families from a wide variety of backgrounds. The very effective collaborative arrangements for identifying children and adults with disabilities and special educational needs enable information to be shared and appropriate intervention to be put in place, for example through speech and language therapy.

There is a comprehensive awareness of issues related to the safeguarding of children in the centre and all staff receive regular training in child protection. Arrangements for risk assessments and quality assurance are thorough and all encompassing. All adults working or volunteering in the centre undergo full checks on their suitability to work with children prior to being appointed. Protocols and procedures for making referrals and for the sharing of information between key agencies are well established and work very effectively. As a result, the centre and its partners are able to act swiftly when intervention is required, for example in relation to issues of the safety of children and domestic violence.

The highly effective range of partnerships considerably enhances the provision of high-quality integrated services within the reach area. It also ensures that the centre is building the capacity to respond to the needs of the community much more effectively than was previously the case. The centre also makes very good use of its excellent resources and those within the wider community to meet the needs of families. As a result, outcomes and provision are outstanding and the centre provides excellent value for money.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>1</b>



<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>1</b>

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

Inspectors considered the judgments of the inspection of Bordon Infant School when making its judgement. In particular, this inspection found that children's skills and understanding are below average on entry but that gaps are closing by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. There was also evidence of a very strong partnership between the school and the centre.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Chase Children's Centre on 25 and 26 January 2012. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

All of those of you we spoke to told how much you enjoy your contact with the centre and how warm and welcoming you find it to be. You told us that all the staff are very approachable. We agree that everybody at the centre cares about you and looks after you very well. They make sure that you and your children are safe and secure and well protected.

We found that the staff at the centre know the community very well and because of that they are able to offer a wide range of services that really meet your needs very effectively. The centre has very good resources to help your children learn and develop. A number of you told us how these had given you lots of ideas about how to help your children at home. We found that children are now much readier to start school because of the support you have been given at the centre.

We also found that there are a lot of activities to help with the health and well-being of your families. The excellent partnerships with the health services mean that there are always experts on hand to give you support and advice. Activities like the 'Parent and Baby Swimming' help your families to be fit and healthy and the 'Make, Take and Bake' sessions, for example, give you many ideas about healthy menus. Most of you are now involved with the health services and this is helping to improve healthy outcomes in Bordon. We have asked the centre to work even more closely with the health visitors to help more of you to keep up with breastfeeding after six to eight weeks.

The family support workers play an important role in helping those of you facing challenging circumstances to get back on your feet again. Some of you told us how much of a lifeline this has been. The centre makes sure that everybody in the community is working together to help you and your families. The close partnership with Bordon Garrison, for example, makes sure that those of you at the camp for relatively short periods of time get the help you need and are able to meet others from the local community. You also told us that having Jobcentre Plus located at the centre is much better and that this has led you to join in some of the other services offered by the centre.

The centre is extremely well led by the leader and all the staff. They are keen to make things even better for you. Some of you are members of the partnership board and contribute directly to the governance of the centre. You also have opportunities to give your views through the parents' forum and through your evaluations of the services offered. The centre uses data well to show how it is helping more and more families in the community. We have asked them to work with the local authority to make this even more useful in showing the excellent work it does.

Once again, thank you very much for your contribution to the inspection. You are right to be proud of Chase Children's Centre because it is at the heart of the community and provides extremely well for you. I hope that you continue to enjoy its services to the full.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).