

Inspection report for St Paul's Church of England Infant School and Sure Start Children's Centre

Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	384110
Inspection dates	22–23 February 2012
Reporting inspector	Joanne Caswell HMI

Headteacher	Sue Brown
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	St Paul's Church of England Infant School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Tongham Day Care Limited (EY345109)

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.

An inspection of the registered early years and 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.

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, health professionals, representatives from the governing board, front-line staff, parents and carers and partner agencies.

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

Information about the centre

St Paul's Church of England Infant School and Sure Start Children's Centre is located in Tongham, near Farnham, Surrey. The school is one of ten schools which are part of the West Surrey Foundation. The aims of the foundation include providing educational excellence for both children and adults and support for local families. The centre provides a range of extended services for children aged from two to 11 years, 48 weeks of the year. This includes day-care provision, a breakfast club, after-school club and holiday provision, which are registered with Ofsted. The centre provides the full core offer of services with many activities and groups operating in venues within the local area. The headteacher oversees the management of the centre, supported by a children's centre coordinator. The school's governing body provides governance arrangements on behalf of the local authority.

The centre is a phase two centre which was designated in April 2007. It is one of five children's centres in the borough of Guildford, close to the Hampshire border. The centre serves the areas of Tongham, Ash South, Sands, Seale, Runfold, Normandy, Puttenham, Shackleford, Wyke, Worplesdon and Wood Street. These are rural areas and include one of the 30% most deprived communities. There is a mixture of

privately-owned homes, local authority-owned and rented accommodation within the community, with a high proportion of social housing. In some areas, child poverty scores are higher than others and there are pockets of significant deprivation. The numbers of children living in workless households is often higher than the national average in some parts of the community. There are several Gypsy, Roma and Traveller sites located within the centre's reach area.

Children's levels of skills and understanding on entry to early years foundation stage provision are generally in line with those expected for their age. The majority of families living in the area are of White British heritage.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

St Paul's Children's Centre is becoming well established within the local community. Families using the services feel very well supported and this is leading to improvements in outcomes. One parent summarised the view of many parents by stating, 'The centre is somewhere I can come for anything.' Another parent stated, 'The centre has been part of my journey as being a mum.' Assessment measures are effective and this ensures families benefit from integrated services. This is particularly evident for children identified as being at risk. Most agencies work together well to continually assess the individual needs of each family. However, links with health partners at strategic level are not yet in place. Referral procedures between agencies are effective. The outreach team responds promptly when concerns are raised. As a result, families experiencing difficulties and crisis are supported very well.

Leadership arrangements within the centre are good. The headteacher and children's centre coordinator work together well and share the same passion and dedication towards supporting local families. However, the procedures for monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of the centre are not fully embedded. This is as a result of the current procedures for data analysis. The local authority and governing body do not sufficiently scrutinise available data to closely monitor target setting and

strategic planning. Priorities and key objectives are set, but not effectively monitored. The governing body supports the work of the centre but is not yet sufficiently challenging the headteacher or holding the centre to account to aid improvement. This means the rate of increase in registration of new families is slow. Current registration rate is almost 60% of the reach area.

Evaluation procedures are in place and are generally effective, although procedures for monitoring the long-term impact of the centre's services are still at an early stage. The headteacher clearly understands the strengths of provision and areas for development. She is particularly reflective and demonstrates a clear vision and strong commitment towards leading the centre and driving its improvement. However, the lack of sufficient data made available, particularly health information, inhibits the rate in which the headteacher is able to set ambitious targets and steer the centre forward. As a result, attendance figures have only continued to rise steadily. The limited challenge and direction provided by the local authority and governing body mean the centre demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve.

Children achieve well at the centre and are very well prepared for starting school. The linked nursery provides outstanding provision and parents praise the way in which their children develop key skills which help them quickly settle into school. Parents engage positively with the centre's activities as a result of their improved confidence and emotional well-being. Therefore, when children start at school, parents form positive relationships with teachers and this significantly improves children's learning.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Strengthen governance and accountability arrangements to further improve the outcomes for all key targeted groups by:
 - ensuring the local authority improves the quality of the data provided to the centre to enable leaders to set challenging targets which can be robustly monitored and measured
 - helping the governing body clearly understand its role in challenging the centre and holding it to account to drive the centre forward and increase reach data to a greater number of families
 - monitoring and evaluating the centre's work more accurately to measure the long-term impact on children and families.
- Improve partnership arrangements with health services at strategic level to ensure the centre is regularly provided with relevant data in a timely manner to inform service delivery.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

The outcomes for families using the centre are improving. Children develop healthier lifestyles and there is a reduction in childhood obesity levels. This is because parents attend healthy eating courses and develop a clearer understanding of the importance of diet. Staff provide professional advice to aid improvements in family health. For example, parents join slimming clubs and this helps with weight management and the promotion of healthy lifestyles. The 'Bumps to Babes' sessions provide specialist support for parents-to-be and new parents, such as advice with weaning. Breastfeeding rates are still relatively low in comparison with national indicators.

Families feel safe at the centre and recognise it as a place to seek help and professional guidance. Staff provide a very welcoming environment and good attention is given towards ensuring all areas of the premises are safe and secure. Parents develop strong, trusting relationships with staff. This means parents experiencing difficulties and crisis feel supported. One parent expressed the view of many by describing the centre as her, 'lifesaver'.

Good links with the police ensure families feel safe within the community. Regular activities help children understand safety issues and this leads to a decrease in the number of accidents. Children who are subject to a child protection plan are supported well. High quality provision in the linked nursery ensures close assessment and targeted intervention for children identified as being at risk. As a result, children achieve well and are kept safe. The Common Assessment Framework is used highly effectively to tailor support towards individual need and results in good integrated working.

Children enjoy using the centre's services. There is a lively, welcoming atmosphere and all families benefit from quality activities. The centre's day-care provision is outstanding. This means children make excellent progress in their learning from their initial starting points. Parents develop a much clearer understanding of the benefits of play and this enables them to support their children's learning at home. As a result, children settle very quickly into school and continue to make good progress.

Children are happy and develop very positive attitudes towards learning. Parents enjoy activities and benefit from interaction with other adults. This helps to reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation. There are good opportunities for parents and carers to develop their parenting skills. For example, parenting courses help them understand positive approaches towards managing children's behaviour.

Families value the work of the centre and are beginning to engage more closely in contributing towards decision-making. Parents' representation on the governing body is still low. However, families are keen to share their views and are confident the centre responds to their feedback. For example, parents asked for sessions to cover different age groups and the centre responded positively to this. Community relationships are improving and parents confirm they do not feel judged by the centre and always feel welcome. Lone parents are well supported, particularly during school holidays when the centre organises activities to prevent feelings of isolation.

Parents told inspectors how much they enjoy taking part in the courses available to them through the West Surrey Foundation. Targeted support is in place for young parents and lone parents to access accredited training. For example, the centre offers a range of literacy and numeracy courses and funded National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). A small number of parents and carers have completed NVQs in early years, playwork and health services. This raises parents' aspirations and helps improve financial security. Some parents have undertaken volunteering roles and this is successful in building their confidence. For example, one parent is now a school governor. Regular contact with other services ensures parents access information about training, housing issues and employment.

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	3
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 children and parents, including those from target groups, 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 parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	3
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	3

How good is the provision?

2

The centre provides a wide range of services and is making improved links with external agencies to support provision. Partnerships between most agencies are good, although there are no strategic links in place with health services. Families are assessed effectively on an individual basis to support personal need. However, the limited range of available data prevents staff from robustly monitoring the changing needs of the reach area and targeting key areas for improvement. The reach to fathers is lower than other groups. The local authority is not monitoring this sufficiently to shape appropriate services.

Staff use their own local knowledge to understand the different demographics of the reach area and target the communities identified as being most vulnerable. Concerted action is taken to reach the harder to engage families and overcome issues which may prevent families from accessing services. The centre provides its own transport arrangements to enable families in the most rural areas to engage in the centre's activities. Positive links are established with the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and children are engaged in early years services. Sensitive

support is provided to help address parents' individual needs. Disabled parents praise the support they receive from the centre.

Families using the centre benefit from positive learning and development opportunities. Parents' achievements are actively celebrated and this helps to raise expectations for children and families. The numbers of families benefiting from the adult learning programmes is improving.

The quality of information and guidance provided for parents is good. Staff work together well with other agencies and signpost parents and carers to specialist services. For example, parents identified as being victims of domestic abuse and violence are closely supported to seek specialist advice. Well-targeted and coordinated guidance ensures outcomes for some of the most vulnerable groups are at least satisfactory and improving.

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	3
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	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Governance arrangements are clear. Line management arrangements within the centre are extremely clear and the centre's services link seamlessly into the school's provision. As a result, the school's aim to provide integrated early years provision is achieved. The headteacher and her team work continuously to promote the centre's services and are clearly committed towards making a greater impact in the reach area. However, this is currently hampered due to the lack of available data. Strategic partnership arrangements with health services are not in place. Therefore, health partners are not included in service delivery plans or strategic planning. As a result, the centre does not receive regular data and this inhibits the centre's effectiveness in delivering health services which consistently meet local need.

Evaluation arrangements are in place and staff are clear about the priority areas for development. However, improvement towards meeting set priorities is not sufficiently monitored. This is because action plans and key priority areas identified by the local authority are not based on scrupulous, searching analysis of data. As a result, in some areas the centre has found it difficult to produce evidence of the long-term impact of its services. Parents routinely evaluate their experiences at the centre and most are keen to share their views.

The centre works particularly well with agencies to safeguard children and arrangements are firmly established between the centre, children's services and police. The centre is fully committed towards supporting the health and safety of all centre users. All staff regularly undertake appropriate training. Recruitment procedures are robust. Comprehensive risk assessments ensure all areas of the premises and activities are consistently safe. Good networking arrangements between agencies ensure the sharing of relevant information to support families. Outreach teams undertake their role effectively in early intervention and preventative care. Specialist services prevent vulnerable families from being at risk. For example, families experiencing issues such as domestic violence and post-natal depression are supported very well.

Equality and diversity are good. Inclusion is promoted throughout the centre. Every family is valued and data show that families using the centre are representative of the cultural diversity of the local area. Vulnerable groups are targeted appropriately and case study evidence shows the most vulnerable and harder to reach families are now accessing services. Early Years Foundation Stage data shows that all children achieve equally and the gap between the most disadvantaged and the rest is closing. Targeted support is in place for adults and children with disabilities and the reach to minority groups is increasing. Good provision ensures staff are proactive in overcoming barriers for vulnerable families to access appropriate services.

The numbers of families benefiting from the centre's services is increasing. The centre regularly seeks the views of families and is keen to shape services in response to user feedback. Although there are opportunities for parents to become involved in the governing body and be represented on the steering groups, few parents are included. The headteacher is keen to engage more parents and carers in the decision-making process and recently set up a parents' forum, although parents' engagement with this was low.

The centre has a positive impact on outcomes for the numbers of families using the centre. Services offered by the centre are used well by a satisfactory number of families and outreach work to increase this number is being developed. As a result, the centre currently provides satisfactory value for money.

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	3
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	3
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its	2

statutory duties	
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 partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	3
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	3

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

An inspection of the linked early years setting was carried out at the same time as this inspection. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision was judged to be outstanding overall.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected St Paul's Church of England Infant School and Sure Start Children's Centre on 22 and 23 February 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall. We would like to thank all of you who took the time to talk to us about your involvement and experiences at the centre. It was very enjoyable to meet with you and it was very helpful to hear what the centre means to you and your families. You made it very clear to us that you greatly appreciate the staff and services at the centre. Many of you told us about the positive impact the centre has had on your lives. We found the caring aspect of the centre to be particularly good and the headteacher and her staff provide good support, especially to those of you who may be experiencing challenges in your lives.

The centre provides good quality care, guidance and support because the needs of each family are given high importance. Staff work well with other agencies to ensure you receive the relevant support you need. We observed how well the staff work informally with local health visitors to address your health needs and refer you to relevant services. However, at present, there are no links with health managers. This means that the centre does not receive regular information about health issues within the local area. As a result, the centre cannot always offer services which will fully meet your health needs. We have asked the local authority to address this by improving partnerships with health managers to ensure the centre regularly receives health data in a timely manner to ensure services are provided appropriately.

It was clear how the centre is making improvements to your lives. Many of you told us how much more confident you feel and how you have benefited from forming friendships with other parents. We observed how happy and sociable children are and how much they enjoy the group activities. We carried out a separate inspection of the nursery and judged this to be providing overall outstanding care and education. This means children make good progress and are very well prepared for school.

The centre is very safe and offers a secure environment. It is particularly good at working with other agencies to ensure families who may be at risk are very well supported and protected. This means the centre's safeguarding arrangements are good.

The headteacher and her team are very dedicated towards the children's centre and are keen to ensure they provide you with the range of services that you and your families need. They work together very well within the centre and support each other well. Despite the lack of data available to them, staff work hard to ensure they reach a wide range of families, including those from the most vulnerable areas. All staff are fully committed to welcoming all families and adapting provision to meet individual need. This means that all families feel valued.

We met with some of the senior managers and talked about how they monitor the centre and make sure it always makes improvements for you and your families. It is clear that sometimes the centre is not always able to show the impact of its work, so we have asked the centre to address this.

We looked at some data and discussed how the centre identifies what services it provides for you. It was clear the headteacher and her staff find it difficult to consistently monitor the changing needs of the community. This is because they do not receive information from the local authority which clearly shows the areas the centre needs to improve on and how this will be monitored. It was also clear that sometimes the governing body does not always ensure the centre is consistently making improvements and identifying strategies to reach more families. We have asked senior leaders to address this.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to talk to us. We are very grateful and would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your families the very best for the future.

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